

***International Bible Lessons Commentary***  
***Acts 2:1-16***

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**Sunday, April 14, 2013**

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, April 14, 2013**, is from **Acts 2:1-16**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

**Acts 2:1-16**

**(Acts 2:1)** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

The disciples obeyed Jesus and they waited in Jerusalem until they had received the promised power from on high (the Holy Spirit). Because Jesus had been raised from the dead 50 days earlier, and had appeared to them, they were no longer scattered and hiding. They were all together in one place, probably so they would not miss the sending of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God and so they could encourage one another as they waited and wondered what would happen.

**(Acts 2:2) And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.**

The Holy Spirit did not come quietly. If He had come quietly, that might have left some doubt among some as to whether or not the Holy Spirit had been sent or received. The Holy Spirit came from heaven (from a location above them or outside of this world as the sound came into the room). It might have sounded similar to a roaring tornado or a sudden loud gust of wind. Notice: the Spirit “filled the entire house;” therefore, everyone in the house heard the Spirit’s coming and everyone could talk about their experience.

**(Acts 2:3) Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.**

When the Holy Spirit came, each follower of Christ could see the flames of fire upon each one of them. They saw that no one was left out, and all of them had received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit filled the house in a general way, as air fills a house, and the Holy Spirit also related individually and particularly to each person in the house as He came to each person and gave them the gift of Himself. The Holy Spirit also gave a variety of different gifts to each person, as Paul later described the giving of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost as the power from on high to help the disciples teach others about Jesus and lead them to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

**(Acts 2:4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.**

The Holy Spirit rested upon each one and entered into each one, but not to manipulate them as a puppet master from the outside. The Holy Spirit not only gave them gifts, but the Holy Spirit also gave them himself by coming into the life of each person and filling each person. No part of any person was left untouched by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was heard with human ears as He entered the house. He gave the

disciples the ability to speak various human languages on that day, languages previously unknown to each one of them so unbelievers could hear the truth with human ears. The Holy Spirit came as a spiritual and physical presence in human history, revealing His coming to believers and unbelievers alike; just as Jesus came and revealed himself to believers and unbelievers alike.

**(Acts 2:5) Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.**

Not only did Jews come to Jerusalem to visit on special feast days, but some also came to live in Jerusalem—some for business and work, some visiting family and friends, some who were happy to move from the land of their birth to Jerusalem itself. The Jews had been scattered the first time in 722 BC, and later after defeats by their enemies and through exile. By this day of Pentecost, many had returned to Jerusalem for a variety of reasons, and many would return home with the amazing story of Jesus, the crucified and resurrected Messiah, and of how they had been there when the Holy Spirit came. Some would return home as dedicated followers of Jesus Christ and lead some in their family and some in their community to saving faith in Jesus Christ, so they too could receive the Holy Spirit. As Peter concluded the sermon he preached on the day of Pentecost, he promised “Repent, and be baptized every one of you

in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

**(Acts 2:6) And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.**

Perhaps those living near the house or passing by heard the sound of the Holy Spirit as a rush of violent wind in the house. Perhaps they heard many loud voices, and as they listened each one could distinguish a voice or voices that were speaking their own language. No wonder they were shocked and confused.

**(Acts 2:7) Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”**

Thinking back to the Tower of Babel, where God confused the people’s language into many languages and scattered them into various language groups because of their sins. At Pentecost, everyone from any of these language groups could hear the good news of Jesus Christ preached to each one in their own language. In their own language, each one heard the good news of forgiveness for sin; and each one learned about God’s gift of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. Each one heard Jesus’ disciples from Galilee teaching about Jesus, and they heard them,

not in a Galilean accent or dialect, but in their own native languages.

**(Acts 2:8) And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?**

They all knew the story of the Tower of Babel. Now that they could all hear and understand the same gospel message each in their own language, they may have wondered how the consequences of the Tower of Babel had been substantially reversed. They knew that those in the house were Galileans; therefore, they would not know all of their various languages.

**(Acts 2:9) Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,**

Luke listed the various language groups present on the day of Pentecost. The first four groups he listed lived east of Judea, and the Jews living there spoke varieties of Aramaic. Those from the northern kingdom had been placed in exile there by the Assyrians. More Jews joined them exile in Nebuchadnezzar's time. Many chose not to return when given the opportunity. During the reigns of King David and King Solomon, before their kingdom was divided, they controlled Judea, which included extensive land holdings from the Egyptian border to the Euphrates River. From Luke's list, we see how far millions of Jews had spread after the time of King

David and King Solomon. We see how God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled by his having as many descendants as stars in the sky.

**(Acts 2:10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,**

Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia included large Jewish communities in Asia Minor (see Acts chapters 13-19). In all of these places, Jews numbered in the millions. The Israelites left Egypt with Moses, but Jews have lived continually in Egypt since the sixth century BC. Libya was the name for North Africa west of Egypt on the Mediterranean Sea. Cyrene was a city in North Africa and the capital of Cyrenaica, a province of Libya. Rome is the only city mentioned on the European mainland. Proselytes were Gentiles who had fully converted to the Jewish faith, law, practices, and teachings.

**(Acts 2:11) Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.”**

Cretans and Arabs included those from the island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea and in the area of the Nabatean Arabs east of Syria and Palestine whose capital was Petra. On the North, South, East, and West, Luke listed all the lands that surrounded Judea under Roman rule, including Rome itself. People from

all of these places heard the disciples speak in their own languages, because the disciples under the power of the Holy Spirit were speaking in their own languages. The Holy Spirit worked a miracle of speaking in well-known foreign languages, and many of those who heard returned home and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ before the disciples ever left Jerusalem as missionaries.

**(Acts 2:12) All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”**

Praises to God would be heard in Jerusalem in languages from all of the above places. On the day of Pentecost, the curse of the Tower of Babel (see Genesis 22) was reversed. Now, all of the Jews from all of these places heard Galilean Jews speaking in their own individual languages. No wonder they were amazed and perplexed and wanted to know what it meant. The Holy Spirit created eager listeners by His gift of tongues on the disciples of Jesus. Any Gentiles in Jerusalem at the time could have also heard the gospel in their own language. From the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to the day of Pentecost and beyond, Gentiles have had the opportunity to hear and believe the good news.

**(Acts 2:13) But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”**

No matter how convincingly the Holy Spirit may work, or how human reasoning may be flawless, or how the Bible may be taught without error, some will sneer, disbelieve, and slander Christians who give their testimony about God and share the good news of Jesus Christ. Eventually, some who sneer will come to believe. On the day of Pentecost, refusing to believe, some sneered and thought these Galileans could suddenly speak in their own native language because the Galileans had drunk too much wine. What an unreasonable and unrealistic belief on the part of those who sneered! Refusing to believe in God and the gospel is never logical, and the objections of unbelievers to the Christian faith are never reasonable.

**(Acts 2:14) But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.**

During the trial of Jesus and before Jesus rose from the dead, three times Peter fearfully denied knowing Jesus. Now, filled with the promised Holy Spirit, Peter courageously addressed the crowd and gave his defense of Jesus and His promises. As Peter spoke in his Galilean dialect, something different happened. Before, the Galileans spoke different languages. Now, Peter speaks in his own native language, one language, and each one hears in his own native

language in order to understand Peter. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit worked both a miracle of speaking in the disciples and a miracle of hearing in those who listened to Peter talk in his Galilean tongue.

**(Acts 2:15) Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.**

The first miracle was one of speaking and the next miracle was one of hearing. Peter reasoned with those who sneered by saying that no one is drunk at nine o'clock in the morning. So, Peter began his defense by using logic and appealing to human reason. Then, he turned to the Scriptures and made his defense from what their Scriptures (the Old Testament) taught. When Peter began with a logical explanation, he helped many begin using their human reason to understand an experience as he taught them from the Scriptures (and of course Peter spoke with the leading and power from on high, the Holy Spirit).

**(Acts 2:16) No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:"**

Once again, the Bible gives us at least two witnesses to the facts (or Peter presented at least two witnesses) to prove the true facts about the event. The experience of the tongues or various languages they all heard were not from being drunk (this first witness they could verify from their own experiences and observations).

The second witness was the Holy Scriptures; notably, from the prophet Joel. Joel foretold this event, so they saw his prophecy fulfilled. Peter gave good and sufficient reasons from their experiences and from the Scriptures for them to believe; furthermore, and the Holy Spirit worked to help many of them come to believe and trust in Jesus for salvation.

### **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why do you think the disciples obeyed Jesus and waited in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit?
2. Why do you think the Holy Spirit came with a loud noise instead of quietly?
3. Why do you think the Holy Spirit visibly rested individually on each one in the upper room instead of simply giving each one a special feeling?
4. Describe the miracles of hearing and speaking?
5. Why did Peter refer those looking for an explanation to what the prophet Joel had said?

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