

The Test for Truth

International Bible Lesson

Acts 2:1-16

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“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel”
(Acts 2:16—KJV).

“Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about”
(Acts 2:16—GNB).

“No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel”
(Acts 2:16—NRSV).

On the Day of Pentecost, many followers of Jesus who were all in one place received the gift of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised them. The Holy Spirit appeared as a tongue of fire that rested on each individual believer. The Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in other tongues so Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem could understand in their own native language what the disciples said. These Jews expressed amazement that these Galilean Jews could speak in all of their different languages. Some who heard wondered what it all meant, while others sneered at the disciples and impugned their character.

Following the example of Jesus as the Holy Spirit filled and led him, the Apostle Peter boldly stood in their midst and explained what they experienced in the context of what the scriptures taught and the Prophet Joel had foretold. Peter insisted that the scriptures must be their authority for evaluating whether or not a spiritual experience was from the true God or not. Later, the Apostle John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (John 4:1). Jesus and the apostles taught that the scriptures, and not just people’s experiences, needed to be the basis for discerning spiritual truths from error. Later, as the good news of Jesus spread, Luke commended the Bereans for using the scriptures as the test for truth, saying, “These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

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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?

Read the verse by verse commentary on this lesson at the BibleLessonForum.com. See the recommended study and worship resources at SmallChurchResources.com.