

Acts 2:1-42

Aim of lesson

To show how Jesus gave the disciples special power to preach more effectively the good news of salvation.

Background study

Leviticus 23:15-16; Joel 2:28-32; Luke 24:49; Acts 1.

Suggested outline of lesson

The feast of Pentecost

It is not necessary to go into every detail of the Feast of Pentecost but the children should know that it was an important annual festival, a thanksgiving for the harvest, and was observed fifty days after passover. Jesus was crucified at the time of passover. He was on the earth for forty days after his resurrection, and so the Feast of Pentecost would have taken place about a week after his ascension. Jews from surrounding districts and countries came to Jerusalem for the festivities and to worship at the temple. They spoke different languages and dialects.

In the upper room

Help the children to imagine the apostles gathered together, probably in an upper room, praying and thanking God for the life and resurrection of Jesus. They were waiting in Jerusalem for the gift from God, as Jesus had commanded them, though they did not know how it would come to them. Would it come as it had come to Jesus? (One or two of them may have been present on that wonderful occasion when Jesus had been baptized, seen the dove alight upon him, and heard God's voice acknowledging his beloved son). Suddenly the room was filled with the noise of rushing wind, and they saw on each other's heads a visual sign, which looked like tongues of fire. They knew they were being strengthened and comforted by the holy spirit, the power by which God works. Then, as they found themselves able to speak in other languages and dialects, and with great power, they recognized the way in which the gift was going to help them preach. The power they had received was to be used only for preaching about God and Jesus.

Strengthened to preach

It was not long before the occurrence became widely known. People came running to the scene and very soon a huge crowd had assembled. They would have been amazed to hear the apostles speaking in words which they could understand, for even the Galilean dialect was normally difficult to follow. The apostles wasted no time and immediately began to teach about God and Jesus. The people were astonished and asked what it meant, although some realized that a miracle had been wrought by the power of God.

Others, who did not wish to obey God, mocked and accused the disciples of being drunk.

Show how Peter's refuted the accusation of drunkenness as it was only nine o'clock in the morning. His courage in defending them revealed how his knowledge of the resurrection, and the power of the holy spirit, had transformed him. At one time he was a man who was so frightened that he denied even knowing Jesus. Now he was so bold that he was willing not only to speak publicly about Jesus but later to suffer imprisonment and even give his life for him. Peter was now the chief spokesman, and his preaching from Joel confirmed that he knew that he and the other apostles were being specially gifted.

3000 baptised

Peter's message was so compelling that it touched the hearts of the people and they felt the urgent need to repent of all they had done to Jesus. They now realized that he was God's own son. On that day three thousand men and women gladly gave their lives to God's service and were baptized. So the Christian church was born in a thrilling way, and the message of Jesus Christ, the saviour of the world, was taken back to many countries and made widely known as God had planned.

Worksheets

The message reads 'Jesus said, "You shall receive power and you shall be my witnesses"'

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for helping the apostles to become men who were not afraid to talk about Jesus. Help us to learn all that the Bible tells us about him and to value the words of men who were willing to give their lives for him. Amen.

Memory verse

"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8).

Relevance to the children's lives

The gift of the holy spirit changed the apostles from timid men to people who were bold enough to preach about Jesus without fear. Because they were able to speak so that men from other countries could understand them, the good news of Jesus spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire. Because the apostles were bold and spoke openly of Jesus, despite the risk of attack from the religious leaders, many people came to believe that Jesus was the Son of God. If they had not had the courage of their convictions and used the gifts that God gave them, we might never have heard about Jesus. How should we feel about the message they taught, and for which they were willing to give their lives?