

The Holy Spirit Comes

Acts 2:1-21



Preparation

The Holy Spirit Comes

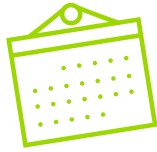
1. INTRODUCTION TO THIS SUNDAY

This Sunday is the first in a block of five passages about the first Christians and the beginnings of the Christian church.

This Sunday focuses on the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus has gone to heaven, and now the Holy Spirit fills the disciples, just as Jesus had promised.

With the **4-8 year-olds**, we will focus on the people who hear the disciples in their own language and can understand what they are saying.

With the **8-12 year-olds**, we will focus on disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit.



2. CONTEXT OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE

The book of Acts was written when the Good News about Jesus had spread to many places. This book explains how that happened. It is a sequel to Luke's gospel: both books were written by the same author. Acts continues where Luke's gospel ends: Jesus has been raised from the dead and has gone to heaven. And his disciples have to share that Good News all over the world.

Acts 1-7 shows how the first Christian congregation came into being in Jerusalem. In Acts 8-9, the circle has widened: it talks of believers all over Judea and Samaria, and of the first non-Jew who becomes a believer. In Acts 10-26, the apostles also go to different countries, and the book ends with Paul in Rome, the capital of the Roman empire.

In Acts 1, the writer speaks of Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:1-14). After that, he says that there will be a new apostle, who'll replace Judas, as Judas had betrayed Jesus (Acts 1:15-26).

In the passage we will read today, Jesus' disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13). Peter then holds a speech, in which he says, "This is what the prophet Joel spoke about." He then refers back to Joel 2:28-32. This way, the writer of the book of Acts shows that in Old Testament times, too, the events now taking place were eagerly anticipated.



3. EXPLANATION OF THE BIBLE PASSAGE

Jesus' disciples are together for the start of the Jewish feast of Pentecost. During this feast (also called the Feast of Weeks), Jews celebrate how God gave his laws. For Jews, the feast is the conclusion of Pesach: after being set free from slavery in Egypt, the people receive the *Torah* on mount Sinai.

In the house where the disciples are gathered, there is a sound like a strong wind blowing. From the opening pages of the Bible, the wind has been a symbol of God's presence. There are tongues of fire above the heads of the disciples. Fire, too, is a symbol of God's presence in other Bible stories. For example in the desert years: during the day, God was in front of the Israelites in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and during the night he went in front of them in a pillar of fire (Exodus 13:21).

So in the book of Acts, fire and wind are the sign that the disciples are being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, too, people are sometimes filled with God's Spirit. For example the judges in the book of Judges, or some kings and prophets. These people are filled with God's Spirit for a limited amount of time, so they can fulfill an unusual task. For example Saul in 1 Kings 10:9-12. The Holy Spirit plays an important role earlier on in the New Testament as well: as Jesus is baptized, he appears in the shape of a dove (Luke 3:22). And just before Jesus goes to heaven, he says, "And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you" (Luke 24:49). The Holy Spirit makes people live differently, "the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

When the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit, they speak in all sorts of different languages. And everybody who is in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost hears the believers talking in their own language. This is the exact opposite of what happened in the story of the tower of Babylon (Genesis 11:1-9)! People were scattered all over the earth, but now they can all understand the Good News about Jesus.



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4. FROM THE BIBLE

4-8 years

With the younger children, we will focus on Acts 2:8.

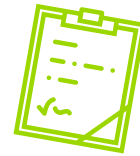
“How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages?”

8-12 years

With the older children, we will focus on Acts 2:4.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

5. WHAT WILL YOU NEED?



4-12 years

During the church service

- a disposable confetti cannon

4-8 years

Just Draw It!

- A3 paper
- felt tip pens

All Over the World

For each child:

- an empty cd (you could also use an old cd)
- a tealight in an aluminum container

And also:

- strong glue
- washi tape
- decorative craft supplies (such as feathers, beads, ribbons)

8-12 years

Bible passage

- a bible

A Blowout

For each child:

- an empty toilet roll
- a balloon

And also:

- paper in different colors
- several pairs of scissors
- glue
- duct tape

Gone with the Wind!

- gone with the wind
- straws
- cotton wool

Building blocks of the Sunday

The Holy Spirit Comes

During the Church Service



6. CHILDREN'S MOMENT IN THE SERVICE

Pentecost and the Holy Spirit

Today we're celebrating Pentecost. But what is Pentecost?

What do you need?

- a disposable confetti cannon

Time for confetti! Aim the confetti cannon high above the children, so that the confetti swirls down, covering the children's heads. The confetti shows that Pentecost is really festive! And the confetti comes down on all children and grownups, just like the Holy Spirit.



Tip

If you can't use a confetti cannon, you might be able to use a dandelion blowball to blow over the children!

During the Children's Service



7. TO START OFF

4-8 years

Just Draw It!

Can you understand each other without words?

What do you need?

- A3 paper
- felt tip pens

Have one child come forward. Show him or her a picture or whisper a word. The child draws this on a large sheet of paper. How quickly can the other children guess the word?



Tip

Use words that are used in the Bible story. For example: noise, house, wind, fire ...

8-12 years

Who's that?

Can the children discover who keeps signaling? Send one child into the hallway. He or she is the "searcher". Then appoint one child who is the "signaler". He or she has to signal the other children without talking. Invite the searcher back in and the search can begin!

All children are walking through the room. The signaler tries to keep signaling different children, without the searcher noticing. The signal could be softly blowing (=wind), or gently moving the fingers on one of their hands (=flames). If the signaler has signaled the child, they have to sit down. How long before the searcher knows who the signaler is?



Tips

- Is your group very large? Send out two children to act as searchers. Can they find the signaler without talking to each other?
- If your group is very small, join forces with the younger group for this exercise.

8. PRAYER AT THE START OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICE



Dear God,

Today, we are celebrating Pentecost.

We celebrate that the Holy Spirit came to people.

Thank you that your Spirit helps us understand everything, and that we can also hear more about you.

Help us to understand you better and better.

Amen.



Tip

Sit down in a circle for this prayer. You could light a candle.

Building blocks of the Sunday

The Holy Spirit Comes



9. BIBLE STORY

4-8 years

Acts 2:1-21

Tell the story to the children. While you talk or after reading the story, look at the picture together. Ask the children to look carefully and say what they see. You could also use the older children's Fact File for more information.



Do You Get It?

I am bored. All the grownups are sitting inside, talking all day, until it is time to return to the temple for Pentecost. "Boring!", I whisper.

"Ismi Timon", someone answers behind me.

Ismi Timon? I don't get it. What language is that? I turn around and see a boy standing on the square. He's pointing at himself, "Ismi Timon."

Now I get it! He means his name is Timon!

"I'm Eli", I say. Finally, someone to play with. I tap his shoulder and run away as fast as I can. "You're it!"

There's a look of surprise on Timon's face, but soon he runs after me and tags me back. We're playing tag!

Suddenly, the wind goes, "whoosh!" That's weird! Timon and I look up, but we don't see the branches of the trees moving.

"Eli!" Timon shouts. He points to a house at the edge of the square. It appears the sound is coming from that place! Out of curiosity, we peer through the window. What's going on here? The people in the house all have a flame floating over their heads! The fire is touching them. But their hair is not on fire! And they look so happy! Behind us, the square is filling up with people from all sorts of countries. They've all come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. They have come to see where the sound of the wind comes from. They all talk in their own language.

'Vento!' a man says behind me.

'Anemos!' a woman says. I don't understand ...

'Riah', Timon whispers beside me.

Suddenly, a man says, "I am so happy! Jesus is alive!"

Wow, someone is speaking my language! I quickly stand on my toes to try and see. Look. It's the people who had the flames! They have come out of the house. When they talk, I can understand them. "Jesus has returned to heaven", one of them says.

"But today he has sent us the Holy Spirit!" the other shouts.

I carefully think about that. Jesus ... Wasn't that the man who was killed on a cross a few weeks ago?

Is it true that he's alive? I look at Timon. It's such a pity that he speaks a different language. Otherwise, he could also understand Jesus' friends. But wait a minute ... Timon is listening very carefully. It's almost as if he understands what those men are saying, too! But that's impossible, isn't it?

"This is unbelievable!" a woman stammers. "How is it possible that everybody understands what Jesus' friends are saying?"

So it is true! Timon understands them, too. Everybody on the square can understand those men. How strange. Could the Holy Spirit they were talking about be doing that?

One of the men in front of the house steps forward. "My name is Peter. Would you like to know what is going on?" Timon and I nod at precisely the same time. We look at each other in surprise. That's such a strange feeling. We speak different languages, and yet we both understand what Peter is saying! We laugh at each other. I wrap an arm around Timon's shoulders and then we look at Peter together. We'd love to hear more about that Holy Spirit!

8-12 years

Acts 2:1-21

The coming of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking

Building blocks of the Sunday

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like this are Galileans! How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!” Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, “What does this mean?” But others made fun of the believers, saying, “These people are drunk!”

Peter’s Message

Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. These people are

not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o’clock in the morning. Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

‘This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message. I will perform miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below. There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke; the sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood, before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes. And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.’”

10. FACT FILE



The Prophet Joel

Peter says something about the book of the prophet Joel. That book is in the Old Testament. Joel says that one day, God will give his Spirit to everyone: to men and women, to children and old people, to rich and poor people. Peter explains that his has now happened during Pentecost.

Jewish Pentecost

A lot of people have come to Jerusalem because there is an important festival: Jewish Pentecost. This is also called the Feast of Weeks. Jewish people celebrate how God gave his laws to the people on mount Sinai. Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after Pesach (Passover).

The Opposite of Babylon

Do you remember the tower of Babylon (Genesis 11:1-9)? There, everybody started speaking another language, and people couldn’t understand each other anymore. When the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit, they start to speak all sorts of different languages. Because of that, everybody can hear everything in their own language. The exact opposite of what happens in the story of the tower of Babylon. The people have been scattered across the earth, and yet everybody can now understand the Good News about Jesus.

11. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Below, there are two kinds of questions you can discuss: “knowledge questions” and “thinking questions”. You can look up the answers to the knowledge questions, for example in the story. But the thinking questions can keep your group thinking. There are no wrong answers in those!

4-8 years

- Eli plays with Timon. They can’t understand each other’s language, but they play together any way. Has that ever happened to you, too? For example on a holiday? Tell us a little more about that.
- What happens when Eli and Timon are playing?
- Imagine you’re at the feast in the Bible story, just like Timon and Eli. What would you see? What would you hear? What would you love best?

8-12 years

- What happens when the disciples gather together?
- If someone were to ask you, “Who is this Holy Spirit?”, what would you say?
- In the Bible Story, there is wind, and the believers see flames. Those two things are sometimes symbols of the Holy Spirit. The dove is another symbol of the Holy Spirit. Why do you think the dove is also used as a symbol for Pentecost sometimes? Which symbol do you think suits Pentecost best: wind, flames or a dove? Explain why.
- If Peter had kept a diary, what do you think he would have written in it about this day of Pentecost?

Building blocks of the Sunday

The Holy Spirit Comes

12. DOING

4-8 years

All Over the World

The Holy Spirit makes sure the Good News about Jesus reaches the whole world. Jesus' light is for everyone. Have the children make their own tealight holder to show that.

What do you need?

For each child:

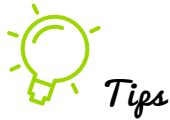
- an empty cd (you could also use an old cd)
- a tealight in an aluminum holder

And also:

- strong glue
- washi tape
- decorative craft supplies (such as feathers, beads, ribbons)

Let's start!

- Place the cd with its shiny side facing up. This is the globe.
- Decorate the aluminum holder of the tea light with washi tape.
- Then glue the aluminum holder to the middle of the "globe". Now you can see that the light of the Good News is for the whole world.
- You can decorate the globe with anything you like.



Don't decorate too close to the tealight.

You can glue the aluminum holders to the cd in advance, so the children don't have to do that.

8-12 years

A Blowout

During the children's moment in the service, you used a disposable confetti cannon. The confetti shows that Pentecost is a real party! And the confetti comes down on everybody, just the Holy Spirit. The children are now going to make their own confetti cannon.

What do you need?

For each child:

- an empty toilet roll
- a balloon



And also:

- paper in different colors
- several pairs of scissors
- glue
- duct tape



Let's start!

- Cut off a small piece of the top of the balloon. Then attach the bottom of the balloon to the toilet roll. Use duct tape for this.
- Decorate the roll with colored paper.
- Make confetti by tearing paper into small pieces. Put these pieces into the toilet roll.
- Pull the balloon's nozzle and ...



If you have little time, use a hole punch to make confetti quickly.

8-12 years

Gone with the Wind!

The wind is a sign that the Holy Spirit has come. Just like the wind moves the leaves on a tree, the Holy Spirit moves people. Have the children move some cotton wool using their breath.

What do you need?

- one or more tables
- straws
- cotton wool

Make two teams. The teams stand opposite each other, each on their own side of the table. Give each of the children a straw. Then place a piece of cotton wool in the middle of the table. Let's move that cotton wool!

The team that manages to blow the piece of cotton wool to the other side of the table, has won.



This exercise could also be done with the 4-8 year-olds!



Building blocks of the Sunday

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13. BLESSING

In the Bible, there is a blessing for all people. It is a wish that we often hear at the end of a church service. And we say this blessing to each other:



“May the Lord bless you and take care of you; May the Lord be kind and gracious to you; May the Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26



Tips

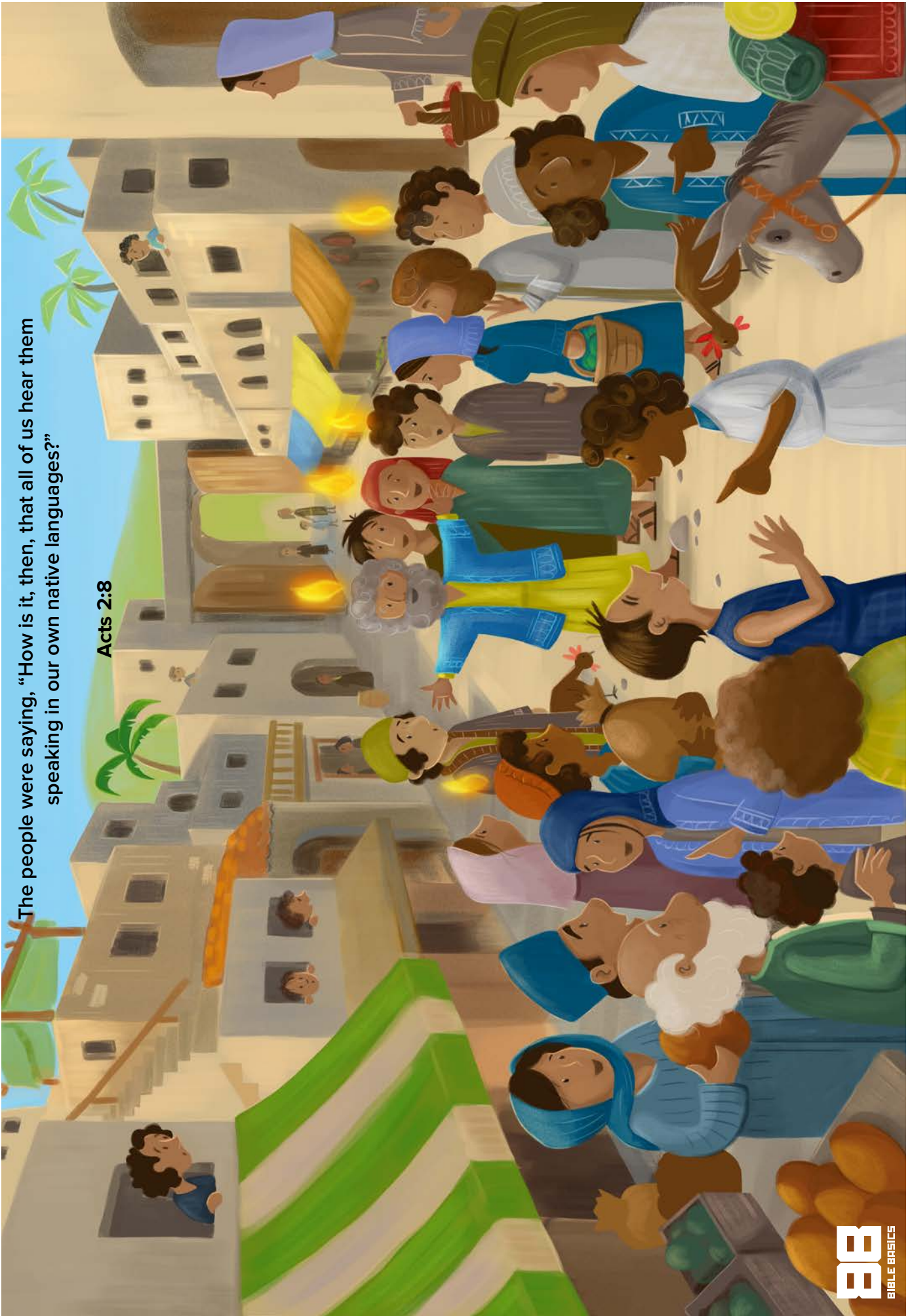
- Stand in a circle and hold hands.
- Let three children say one sentence each, or say the entire blessing together.

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The people were saying, "How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages?"

Acts 2:8



Handout (8-12 years)

The Holy Spirit Comes

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:4

A BLOWOUT

You can make your own confetti cannon. The confetti shows that Pentecost is a real party! And the confetti comes down on everybody, just the Holy Spirit.

What do you need?

- an empty toilet roll
- a balloon
- paper in different colors
- a pair of scissors
- glue
- duct tape

Let's start!

- Cut off a small piece of the top of the balloon. Then attach the bottom of the balloon to the toilet roll. Use duct tape for this.
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THE PROPHET JOEL

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JEWISH PENTECOST

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THE OPPOSITE OF BABYLON

Do you remember the tower of Babylon (Genesis 11:1-9)? There, everybody started speaking another language, and people couldn't understand each other anymore.

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GONE WITH THE WIND!

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