

a study of the *Holy Spirit*

Special Study: Who were the "They" of Acts 2:1-4

1. Importance of this question

The pronoun "they" determines who was baptized by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. If "they" refers to the 120, then Holy Spirit baptism was not restricted to the Apostles but was given to others. If the Holy Spirit baptism was given to others then there were other avenues of revelation and divine authority other than the Apostles. If the Holy Spirit baptism was given only to the Apostles, then they were the ONLY source of divine authority and man must follow the Apostles' Doctrine in order to be obedient to God's will.

2. The question decided

The pronoun "they," in Acts 2:1-4, refers only to the Apostles. This conclusion is validated by...

- a. **Grammatical reasoning** – The pronoun is identified by the nearest antecedent. The nearest antecedent is found in the last word of 1:26 – "APOSTLES." The position that wishes to make "they" refer to the 120 is forced to go back to 1:14,15 (which is contrary to all rules of grammar).
- b. **Common Sense reasoning** – If "they" refers to the 120 then one should be able to substitute 120 in the place of "they" and have the correct reading. When this exercise is attempted it is found to be ridiculous. The context requires the "they" of 2:1-4 to be only "Galileans" (2:7); to stand and publicly preach the Gospel, thus violating God's prohibition against women preachers (2:8); to be the same group as identified as "Peter and the eleven" (2:14).
- c. **Doctrinal reasoning** – When our Lord offered the guidelines for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, He said the baptism was promised only to the Apostles (Ac 1:8; Jn 14-16). To contend that the 120 were baptized by the Holy Spirit is to teach what Christ did not.

Supporting materials – The following pages contain copies of various reference works that validate the above point:

- Gareth L. Reese, [A Critical & Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Acts](#), 45-47.
- Guy N. Woods, [Questions & Answers Open Forum, Vol. 1](#), 50-52
- James D. Bales, [The Hub of the Bible: Acts Two Analyzed](#), 29-32.
- J. W. McGarvey, [A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles](#), 24-25.
- [The Book of Acts](#), MSOP Lectures 1984, 59.
- J. W. McGarvey, [NEW Commentary on Acts of Apostles](#), 21-23.