

Roy's sermon for 3/5/20

Pentecost: The Presence And Power Of The Coming Of God's Spirit!

Last week's message came from Acts 1:15-20 under the heading 'All that glitters ; and our just reward'. We really only looked at 2 main points. Firstly, we must be wary of *all* teaching, "testing every spirit", as Paul puts it. And secondly, every person who has ever been born has a reward waiting for them, be it in heaven or hell!

We looked at these things through the end result of Judas's wasted life. Through Judas we learn that people can possess all of the external signs, but that does not make them one of Christ's people! Judas was involved in all of the ministry of Jesus. He would have performed miracles and all of the other stuff. He was "one of their number", and yet Satan possessed his soul, and he would go on to betray the very Creator and Saviour of the world.

Outward appearances then, (no matter how impressive they may be), are not evidence of the saved soul. Judas is a clear example of that. We have learned that the Holy Spirit spoke concerning him 1000 years before through the mouth of David. Judas ended up receiving the just reward for his actions. He sought to profit by the wretched betrayal of someone who had only ever shown him love. But those 30 pieces of silver had burned a hole in his black soul. "Full of remorse", though not repentance, he went off and hung himself. Eventually his decaying body (having been separated from its head by the weight of his sin and the gravity of his life), falls to the ground and bursts open with "all of his intestines spilling out." No, not all that glitters is gold. But even if it be gold, would we really betray our Lord for the fleeting riches of this world, which are here today and gone tomorrow? To only then receive from the King's hand the just reward for our wretched actions?

And so now we continue in our walk through Peter's life with Jesus. An ordinary man serving an extraordinary God! We pick up the journey in Acts chapter two, and I've given this talk the heading 'Pentecost: The Presence And Power Of The Coming Of God's Spirit!'

The word Pentecost comes from the Greek word meaning 50. It has been 50 days since the Lord rose from the grave. 10 days since He ascended into heaven. Remember, for 40 days Jesus had appeared to his disciples after His resurrection, even to 500 of them at one time. This period was also known as the Feast of Weeks which lasted seven weeks after Passover, and came to a close on the 50th day, hence the name Pentecost.

In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus had instructed the disciples "not to leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days, you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit". Now those "few days", 10 in all, have come and gone. Acts 2:1 "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place". May I suggest they were most likely praying. Acts 1:4 "They all join together constantly in prayer."

Now brothers and sisters I must confess, that to preach upon such a passage as this, I do find quite daunting. This is because sadly, it has come to mean so many different things to so many people throughout Christendom today. As I have mentioned before there are even those who misuse this text as a kind of sign, suggesting there are spiritual 'have' and 'have nots'! They say that this gift of the Holy Spirit which Jesus spoke of, manifests itself in such a manner, as to have its recipients kind of pour out, even burst out with what is known as ecstatic speech. Such things are prevalent among mystery religions such as voodoo etc. They burst into babble which no one else can understand, so they say (even those who are

speaking it). They say only God himself can understand them. Citing the text of Romans 8:26-27 that “the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our heart knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will”. Now of course I agree wholeheartedly that the Spirit of God does indeed intercede for us, as does Christ himself, standing continually before the Father’s throne interceding on our behalf.

Yet as I have mentioned before, nowhere throughout the whole of the Bible do we find God speaking in a language which man is not able to understand. What would be the point? If God speaks *surely we must be able* to understand him! And of course, this is clearly why Jesus is called the very Word of God. God has spoken perfectly and clearly through his Son, so that we can understand Him completely! Friends, God is the God of order, and not of disorder. No, Satan is the god of disorder and confusion!

We will see that what took place on the day of Pentecost did, in effect, overturn God’s judgement at the tower of Babel, upon the language of mankind. This is when God changed mankind’s language from one language into many languages (and so “confusing it” the texts tells us). There even those who suggest that if we don’t have this babbling, this ecstatic speech, this so called tongue speaking, that we are not saved at all!

The questions which must be answered are firstly, what actually happened on the day of Pentecost? Secondly, why did it happen? And finally, what does it mean for us today?

Acts 2:1 “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.” But why is the wind used as a sign of God’s Spirit here? Well, in Ezekiel 37:1 he writes “the hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of dry bones”. The vision is clearly symbolic of spiritually dead Israel. They had rejected God, they had rebelled from Him and played the harlot, by embracing the idols of the nations around them. So He had banished them to the four corners of the then known world. The nation as a whole were as dead men to the living God. And they were long dead. Not even bodies decaying in graves: no, only sun bleached white bones spread out in a valley. Ezekiel 37:9 “Then He said to me, “prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to it “this is what the sovereign Lord says: “come from the four winds, oh breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.”” Ezekiel 37:13-14 “Then you, my people, will all know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land . Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it”, declares the Lord.”

Yes “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.” Jesus had come to His scattered people, and again, God’s judgments had sent them to the four corners of the then known world. They were those “dry bones.” Now I am not saying that Ezekiel’s vision was directed specifically to that time, but certainly , the powerful imagery should not escape us! Jesus had come to His spiritually dead, pharisaically governed people. 8-900 laws had kept them in spiritual bondage, and the Saviour had come to set His people free! He had promised that the Comforter would come, and at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had come!

So this “violent wind” fills the house. The wind was not outside, it was on the inside of the house. But the wind is not God’s Spirit . It is simply a sign of His presence. John 3:5-8: “Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying; you must be born again. The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit”.

Yes the spirit blows upon God’s people. We can’t see Him, but like the wind, we see His effects upon a person’s life. As in Exodus 14: “God sent a strong east wind to blow back the waters so that His people could pass through the Red Sea on dry ground”. Exodus 15:10: “But you blew with your breath and the sea

covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters". When we sing the hymn 'Breathe on me breath of God, fill me with life anew, until my heart is pure, till I am wholly thine, so shall I never die' we are singing about His Spirit, are we not? A sign of which this violent wind was.

So, first there is the sign that they could not see, which testified to His presence, and next we have the sign which they could see, that testified to His power! Acts 2:3 "they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them". In Matthew 3:11 John the Baptist said "I baptise you with water for repentance. But after me one will come who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Brothers and sisters, it seems to me that John was saying that when Jesus sends His Spirit to wash the souls of His people for eternity, (through the pouring out of His own blood), the coming of His Spirit would also come with fire for judgment! So, as Jesus did Himself, the Holy Spirit would also come bringing mercy, and wrath! Again, as Jesus did himself, God's fire brings light to His people, but also judgment upon fallen mankind.

A brief study of the word fire reveals this truth. In Exodus 3:2 when God first revealed Himself to the nation through Moses in the burning bush: "there the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire". The fire signified light to His people but indicated that the fires of judgment would fall upon Pharaoh and his nation. Exodus 13:21 "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night."

Yes light in the midst of darkness for God's people, but the ever present witness of the fires of His wrath to the enemies of Israel who were pursuing them. Leviticus 10:1-3 "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. Moses then said to Aaron, "this is what the Lord spoke of when he said: among those who approach me I will show myself holy, in the sight of all the people I will be honoured."

Isaiah 5:24 "Therefore as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord almighty and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel". Isaiah 30:27 "See, the name of the Lord comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; His lips are full of wrath and His tongue is a consuming fire." Finally from Hebrews 12:29 "For our God is a consuming fire."

Beloved, what a tragedy it is that these things of God we do not hear much of today. We hear of His love and we hear of His mercy and praise God that we do. But Him as a "consuming fire", that "His lips are full of wrath and His tongue is a consuming fire"? I feel sadly, that such truths of God would be foreign to many of us today who claim Jesus as their Saviour, and yet this is the God whom we worship! The signs of the coming of the Holy Spirit heralded His presence and also His power. These signs would be for mercy and yet also for wrath. Yes, He came with the two edged sword of Jesus!

My dear friends, those whom I love in Christ. I ask you as one who is concerned for your souls: where does your heart lie today? When the Spirit of God was poured out on the day of Pentecost, did those signs of His Presence and His Power come with a message of mercy and hope for you? Or did they only hold the realities of the burning wrath of the lips of God, and His tongue of consuming fire? Yes, mercy and judgment are both poured out at Pentecost! His Presence and His Power in those signs of wonder at the dawn of the church, when His Spirit was poured out upon all men. Which one fell for you, dear friends, on that day? Heaven or Hell?

Bless you all, you are in my prayers. If you have any questions please ring me or email me.

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