

Pentecost part 2

Last week in our walk through Peter's life with Jesus we began Acts Chapter 2 under the heading "Pentecost, the Presence and Power of the Coming of God's Spirit". I began by explaining that I found it daunting to speak upon this passage because sadly, it has come to mean so many different things to so many people! From the spiritual 'have and have not's' through to mystical babbling-like speech such as we see in voodoo and black magic, to other mystical understandings of God's Spirit: three questions need to be answered. What actually happened on the day of Pentecost? Why did it happen? And what does it mean for us today?

We began our look at Acts chapter 2 with those two signs of the coming of God's Spirit: both the presence and the power of God's Holy Spirit. Acts 2:2 "Suddenly the sound like the blowing of a violent wind filled the house where they were sitting". I asked the question why this sign of the wind for God's Spirit? Well in Ezekiel 37:9 Ezekiel describes his vision of the Valley of dry bones. "Then He said to me, prophesy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, this is what the sovereign Lord says; come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live."

Jesus came to a spiritually dead people kept in bondage by hundreds of laws. Through His death He had paid the price to set them free. And He had promised that the Comforter would come. The wind was the sign of His presence and the tongues of fire the sign of His power! Looking at many verses we saw that fire was always the sign of light to God's people, but also judgment upon rebellious mankind. It was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came, bringing light and understanding to God's people, yet also the power of His judgement and wrath to rebellious mankind!

So now we continue in the text. Acts 2:4-13 "Pentecost Part 2".

Acts 2:4 "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them". Now brothers and sisters, I have touched on this before in previous messages. This term "filled with the Holy Spirit" has nothing to do with the modern usage of the phrase. What I mean is that there are many today who use these words to describe an emotional experience. For example, after one of those mountain top experiences which are part of the Christian walk which we all love, such as a conference or a rally. An example is the Katoomba men's convention where 3000 men are all gathered in one place being taught, praying, singing hymns together and praising God. After the experience someone might say they could really feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps of a particular person it might be said, 'oh that man or woman was really filled with the Spirit of God'. But what we would actually be saying is not that this person is filled with God's Spirit, but that *I felt* they were. There is a huge difference!

Friends, as I have said before, the day a person is saved (born again), they are filled with God's Holy Spirit. At no point in their life from that day on will they *not* be filled with God's Spirit! They might "grieve the spirit" as the scripture says, by being caught up in some sin, or by being apathetic to Christ's gospel message of eternal life, or by having little desire to serve our Lord. And yet they are "filled with God's Spirit" if they are truly saved: they still are and will always be, of this there is no doubt. Jesus said "all that the Father has given me, I will by no means lose any."

Recently during a moment of real struggle, our daughter Hannah Rose phoned me in tears asking "Do you think that Jesus could really love me?" Or in effect, am I really saved? I had to reassure her that such a question comes only from someone who is concerned for their soul! Both King David and the Apostle Paul

where murderers by proxy. So I told her, yes, sweetheart, Jesus' blood is more than sufficient to cover your sin.

I hope you understand my point brothers and sisters. The way we feel is not the measure of God's Spirit within us. If it were, if you are anything like me, The Holy Spirit would be coming and going from you over 100 times each day! No, this is not what Acts 2:4 is describing. Measuring our salvation upon our emotional or our spiritual performance is fraught with danger, and can lead only to despair and spiritual insecurity.

This is what Satan desires, but it is not what Jesus wants for us. What do we sing in that wonderful hymn? 'Blessed assurance Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine!' One of the wonderful consequences of Jesus' death was to give us eternal security. Friends, heaven belongs to us now. It is just that we have not yet taken possession of it. But Jesus has gone there to prepare our room for us. Praise God!

No, the coming of God's Spirit into the hearts and mouths of the apostles, was not an emotional, a 'spiritual experience'. No, this was the inauguration of the beginning of Christ's New Testament church, sealed by the King as such, through the pouring out of His Spirit. The men spoke through that God breathed wind, which had been poured into their souls. They spoke with the kind of power which could even loose the chains of hell!

Yes the Spirit of God, through those tongues of fire did now manifest Himself in the power of Christ's gospel! "They spoke in other tongues (languages), as the Spirit enable them." Friends, we need to understand that not only was this a momentous moment in Christ's church, it was also a pivotal point in the history of mankind itself.

Genesis 11:1-9a "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. They said come let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth. But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, if as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stop building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there The Lord confused the language of the whole world."

So in response to this affront and this defiance by men, to refuse to do as God had commanded them saying "go into the whole world, and to fill and subdue the earth" at Babel, the Lord God "confused the language" of mankind, and then "scattered them" over the whole earth. Men refused to go. No, they would build a city. (The commentators say that Babel refers to Ancient Babylon). They would, "make a name for themselves" and they would "build a tower" that would reach up to the heavens, and even to God himself!

Beloved, can you see the depth of the mercy of God revealed on the day of Pentecost? Not only the heralding of the inauguration of Christ's church with the coming of His Holy Spirit, but also God in His mercy overturning that judgment upon the language of man through the preaching of the gospel! Everyone heard them in their own native tongue or language. Yes, in the gospel, poured out through Christ's Spirit, the judgment of Babel had been repealed! And brothers and sisters, it continues to happen today. But not in that Pentecost way of everyone hearing in their own native tongue, (though there are those who dispute this). But certainly, that confusion of the tower of Babel continues to be overturned, not through one language, but through one message. And it is that Jesus is risen, Jesus is Lord, and Jesus saves!

Friends, in Acts 2:4-10 I want you to notice the progression of the gospel. The word is preached (v4), the Word is heard and people gather together (v6), astounded at the message (v7). These guys are “Galileans”, the people say, “how is it?” (v8).

Beloved, this is what the Gospel of Jesus’ does. It turns a person’s world upside down. Or perhaps I should say, right side up. It takes what they hold to be true and turns it on its head. Remember the words of the Roman centurion, given the task of overseeing Christ’s crucifixion? “Surely this man was the son of God.”

Oh beloved, isn’t this what God is doing through this coronavirus? He is turning man’s self-centred security on its head. He is shaking the very foundations of our self-sufficiency and bringing it to nothing. The unsaved world must be asking itself how this can be. How can the whole world be brought to its knees in only a few short months? Everything we trusted in; everything which we thought was sound and solid and secure is crumbling at the very foundations!

Well dear friends, the answer is that God will not be mocked, and He will not tolerate sin forever! As at the tower of Babel, when the Lord acts, His message is always, remember Who I Am. I Am God and there is no other. Return to me, while there is yet time! Yes in Acts chapter 2, what we have in this gathering of people is, in effect, the whole world turned upside down. Or perhaps as I mentioned before, right side up by the gospel! Yes “a crowd came together” (v6) “utterly amazed” (v7), then asking “how is it?” (v8).

Praise God beloved, because that is what He does to us and for us. He rights our ship, as it were. He gives us “ears to hear and eyes to see.” He changes our world from darkness to light as He puts His Spirit into us! Ecclesiastes 3:11 “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” I heard a preacher recently rightly explain how this text tells us that we all have a place created inside of us for God and by God. We seek to fill that place with everything under the sun, but nothing fits, you see. Try as we may, we will never fill that empty space. This is because that place can only be filled, only be made whole, only be made complete, by the presence of the Spirit of God!!

Brothers and sisters, I want you to notice in Acts 2:5 “they were God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.” They were “both Jews and converts to Judaism,” and look at the message, “we hear them declaring the wonders of God.” Now friends, certainly the sign was that they all heard in their own language. But far beyond the sign, the wonder was in the message of God which the apostles spoke. It is extremely easy to lose sight of this fact. The wonder was not in the sign, the wonder was in the message.

And again, notice the words “both Jews and converts to Judaism.” If you remember, when Jesus uttered those words from the cross “it is finished”, and then when He had breathed His last breath the curtain between the holy place and the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom. This signified that the way to God was now open to all kinds of men. There were no longer any distinctions between men. Prior to this the only place for the non-Jew was the outer courtyard of the temple. That is why Jesus was so horrified and angered when he overturned the tables of the money changers. It was the only place where gentile converts could worship the living God.

But when Jesus shed His blood, He tore apart everything which prevented men from coming to God. There is now “no longer any Jew or gentile, slave or free male or female for all are one in Christ”. And on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God through Peter’s preaching reaffirmed all of those things. The hearts of both Jew and non-Jew alike were opened at the hearing of those “wonders of God”.

Friends, what were those specific wonders of God which were preached and revealed? I do not know. But one thing I am convinced of: Jesus was at the heart all of them all. His death, His resurrection, and His ascension into heaven. Praise God!

Acts 2:12 “Amazed and perplexed they asked each other what this meant. “Some, however, made fun of them and said ‘they have had too much wine’.”(v13) O Beloved, yet again we have before us the reality of the two edged sword of Jesus. As I have said many times over the years it cuts both to mercy for heaven, but also to judgement for Hell! Truly the “gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing.”

How unimaginable to be in the process of speeding down the road to hell, and being totally oblivious to all the horror that awaits you! Beloved, the world mocked Jesus even in the face of the evidence of the miracles which He performed. The Jews and the soldiers mocked and beat Him at His trial. The crowd standing by mocked Him upon the cross. And even those thieves who hung on His right and His left hurled insults at Him, until the Spirit of God entered into the one who cried out, “Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

Acts 2:13 “These people are all drunk, some laughed.” If only they knew their bibles, they would have been cut to the heart and falling to their knees! Friends, we should not be surprised or disheartened at our treatment from the unsaved world. “A servant is not above his Master; he can only hope to be like his Master”. And in another place in the Bible, “if this is how they treated the son of the vineyard owner, what will they do to his servants?” Yes, the almighty power of the gospel made manifest on that day at Pentecost, when the spirit of God was poured into the hearts of the apostles, and men spoke from God!

Who will you be my dear friends? Railing with the crowd, “they have had too much wine”, or with the thief upon the cross whose soul had been delivered from hell to heaven: “Jesus remember me when you come into your Kingdom”. And to, in effect, hear those words in your heart, “I tell you the truth, this very day you will be with me in paradise”.

Let's pray.