

Acts 2: 1

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Let me begin this morning by asking you a question. What are the identifying marks that we might point to that would identify a church as being a successful endeavor?

Some might say; nice buildings, or a strong financial position, or political influence or social status or a recognizable senior pastor, but the early church had none of those characteristics.

In fact, the first church was made up of only 120 people who had just lost their leader. They had no building, no money and were not welcome in their religious community. And yet these 120 souls would soon have more power than the Roman world had ever seen. They were about to receive the supernatural Power from the Holy Spirit.

Before Jesus was crucified, He promised his disciples that after his death He would send a helper. Listen to John 14:17

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."

Jesus' disciples understood that the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament was to come and go at will. But notice the language in John 14:17. This time, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will be "in" them. What is the difference between being "with" the believer and "in" the believer?

Christ promises the believers that He would be “in them,” permanently residing in their very bodies. Prior to his ascension, Jesus repeats his promise in Acts 1:5 & 8.

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...

Now I don't know about you, but I am a pretty skeptical person when it comes to supernatural things. If I could identify with any of the apostles it may be with Thomas. For me “seeing is believing.” Am I the only one?

What do you think the disciples thought when Jesus told them the Holy Spirit would indwell them and give them power?

What kind of power were they looking for?

They were looking for the kind of power that would enable them to build big building and have strong financial position and political influence and social status or be recognized in the community. They were still looking for their kingdom!

Look back at Acts 1:6

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

They didn't get it. But something wonderful was about to happen. Look at Acts 2: 1.

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The word Pentecost literally means “fiftieth.” We have words like Pentagon which mean 5 sides, etc. In terms of the Jewish calendar it referred to the time of the harvest 50 days following the gathering of the first fruits of the harvest and concluded with what the Jews called Harvest Home. At the end of Pentecost there was a gigantic celebration. It was similar to our Thanksgiving Day.

The Jewish calendar is important here. Jesus died on the Jewish Passover. What was the significance of Passover with respect to the death of Jesus Christ?

Passover pictures Jesus’ death as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist said of Jesus, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Feast of Firstfruits always takes place on the Jewish calendar the first day of the week following the Passover. Now since the Passover would occur on a Saturday or Sabbath, the day following would be a Sunday. Jesus arose from the dead on a Sunday and became the firstfruits of them that slept.

1 Cor 15:20 says:

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who are asleep.

50 days after the celebration of the firstfruits, they celebrated the giving of the Law which they called Pentecost. Interesting that 50 days later would also have been a Sunday and God choose to give the gift of the Holy Spirit on a Sunday and the Church was born.

Now I was a math major, so trust me on that.

The interesting thing is that there that were 3 celebrations that the Jews observed: Passover-Firstfruits-Pentecost. And God used all 3 very carefully to proclaim to the world the message of His son.

Someone once said that the average Christian and the average church are bogged down somewhere between Calvary and

Pentecost. They have been to Calvary for pardon, but they have not been to Pentecost for power. If that is where you are now and let's face it, each of us has been there at one time or another in our Christian walk, then I hope that the rest of this will be helpful.

Think about this.

Immanuel means “**God With Us.**”
Calvary means “**God For Us.**”
And Pentecost means “**God In Us.**”

I like that.

On the day of Pentecost 3 things happened to the believers.

1. The Spirit came and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire
2. The Spirit baptized and filled the believers, and they spoke as they praised God in various languages
3. The Spirit empowered Peter to preach and then He convicted the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved.

Let's look at each of these events one by one.

1. The Spirit came and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire.

Look at Verse 2:

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

The word suddenly tells us it happened unexpectedly. There apparently wasn't any warning. It just happened. Now 10 days had gone by since Jesus' ascension into heaven so I take it that their surprise must have been startling.

The noise, we're told, sounded like a violent rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. It appears the sound was like that of a hurricane or perhaps like the roar of a jet fighter plane. Notice that they didn't feel the wind, they only heard the wind.

What do you think that means?

Next there appears to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves and they rested on each one of them. We are not told that there was actually fire, but something that looked like fire. It must have looked like a flickering flame that came into the room and was parceled into pieces and looked liked tongues.

So, those in the room heard something and saw something. Now when you combine wind and fire your have a blaze.

Now these 120 people must have been in a place where others could see when this all happened.

Notice verse 4.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. 5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

This is the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made just prior to his ascension when he said in Acts chapter 1 verse 4:

Jesus commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

We said last week that the Greek word "baptize" has two meanings, one literal and the other figurative. The literal meaning is to dip or submerge and the figurative meaning is to be identified with.

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit here is the act by which God identifies the believer and enters into that believer once sealing the believer's salvation forever.

This first occurred at Pentecost. And what happens?

2. The Spirit baptized and filled the believers, and they spoke as they praised God in various languages

It is interesting that as believers we are never exhorted in the scripture to be baptized by the Spirit of God. We are exhorted to be filled by the Spirit of God. What is the difference?

When are we baptized by the Spirit of God?

When are we filled by the Spirit of God?

The words used here in verse 4 referring to other tongues clearly mean other known languages. Now I am aware that there are references in scripture to heavenly languages and we will get to that in when we get to Acts 19 but stay with me right now. God chose to allow these new believers to speak in other known languages.

Why?

What were they saying?

Not only did the crowd hear these Jews speak their language but they also spoke their dialect. It was a miracle. Notice verse 7.

7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, " Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs — we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Please note that the believers were praising not preaching and they used known languages not an unknown language. Luke names 15 different geographical locations and clearly stated that the citizens of those places heard Peter and the others declare God's wonderful words in languages they could understand.

Many of you have been in a situation where a commotion occurs and everyone wants to see what is going on. Reactions vary from individual to individual.

Some are curious and just have to know what is going on and so they draw close. Others don't want to have anything to do with the situation and move in the opposite direction. Others are more cautious and may ask someone what is happening and if interested decide whether to stay to go. I imagine all of those reactions occurred when the day of Pentecost had come.

Some may have been confused. Some may have been amazed. Others may have been curious and others mocked. Look at verse 13.

13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

But God was faithful. Skip down to verse 41.

3. The Spirit empowered Peter to preach and then He convicted the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved.

Acts 2:41

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

J. B. Phillips, who gave us the familiar paraphrase of the New Testament, wrote something like this a few years ago. He said, "Churches today are Fat and Out Of Breath because of Prosperity. We are muscle-bound because of over-organization. What we need today is the wind and the flame of Pentecost."

I think many of us might agree that this is true.

Vance Havner said, “We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God.”

We too have access to the Power of the Holy Spirit. He wants to fill our cup, lift us up and make us whole.