

ACTS 2:1-13

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 1 of the book of Acts the disciples were to wait patiently for the coming of the Spirit now in this chapter the Holy Spirit comes. In chapter 1 the disciples were equipped and prepared but now with the coming of the Spirit they are empowered for the task given to them in 1:8. In chapter 1 they were held back until the Spirit comes now that he has come they are sent forth in this chapter.

In chapter 1 the Saviour ascends but in this chapter the Spirit descends.

1. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE SPIRIT'S COMING (vs. 1-4)

There is no mistaking the coming of the Spirit it is impossible to miss its importance because His coming with power is clear, the evidence leads one to conclude that this event must be the promised Holy Spirit coming. The Day of Pentecost found all the believers together in one place (v 1), no doubt they were in the same upstairs room that they were in as they waited and prayed for the Spirit to come.

It was the day of Pentecost and the word Pentecost means fiftieth and Pentecost is the New Testament name for the feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22-23), which was the time for celebrating the Harvest (Exodus 23:16). This feast was held 50 days after the Passover (Leviticus 23:15-22) and is sometimes called the feast of first fruits.

The term "Feast of weeks" gets its name from the fact that it was celebrated after a week of weeks had passed since the Passover. It is interesting to notice how God's timetable in the New Testament ties in with his timetable of feasts within the Old Testament. The first great feast mentioned in the list of feasts found in Leviticus 23 is the Passover.

The killing of the lamb pictured the death of Jesus who was the ultimate Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The second feast was the feast of unleavened bread, which was celebrated on the day after Pentecost. During that feast an offering of the first fruits of the grain harvest was made. According to Leviticus 23:15 that offering was made on the day after the Sabbath therefore it was always offered on the Sunday.

If the day that the first fruits were offered was a Sunday then we have a good picture of the Lord Jesus resurrection as the first fruits of those who are in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Fifty days after the first Sunday following the Passover the feast of weeks or Pentecost was celebrated and another offering of first fruits was made (Leviticus 23:20). This is a good reminder to us that the coming of the Spirit 50 days after Jesus resurrection was the first fruits of our inheritance in Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14).

So you see an understanding of the Old Testament and especially the festivals, which can often seem boring and irrelevant to us, helps us to see how God is working out his timetable in the New Testament in accordance with the pattern established in the Old Testament.

But this event was unforgettable for all that were gathered in that room on that day of Pentecost. Suddenly there was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven. Luke tells us that this was sudden even though the disciples waited and longed for the coming of the Spirit when the time arrived it came suddenly upon them, it surprised them.

That surely is true of the Lord's Second Coming even though we are waiting for it and longing for it to happen when it does happen it will be sudden and will surprise us.

By describing the noise from heaven Luke wants to emphasise that this was a supernatural action, no natural causes could account for this event. It sounded like a violent wind and in both the Hebrew language and the Greek language the word for "wind" and "spirit" are the same the meaning has to be decided by context.

This wind comes and fills the whole house, which I think, means that the believers who were in the house received the Holy Spirit in a new a fresh way as verses 3-4 indicates. This audible manifestation of the Spirit is accompanied with a visual one. They saw what looked like tongues of fire that rested on each one of the believers meaning that all who were present received the fullness of the Spirit at that moment (v 4).

These were not literal tongues of fire any more than the wind was moving air as the words "what seemed" makes clear (v 3). They were filled with the Spirit, which means more than they received the Spirit but being filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. Every Christian receives the gift of the Holy Spirit at conversion it is known as the baptism of the Spirit and it is God's gift to us. It is a sovereign single and unrepeatable act of God to give to repentant sinners the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore no Christian is encouraged or instructed to seek the baptism of the Spirit. However being filled with the Spirit is different in that it is a continuous thing and we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

The tense in that verse means that we are to be continuously filled with the Spirit, which means daily confessing our sins to God and dying to our own selfishness and sinful nature. It means seeking the Spirit's power to bring our lives completely under his control and influence. Being filled with the Spirit comes to us as we submit ourselves to God and walk obediently according to his word.

After being filled with the Spirit the believers began to speak with other tongues as the Holy Spirit enabled them (v 4). There have been many debates through the years over what is meant by other tongues. The text however is very clear for these tongues spoken on the day of Pentecost were a known language.

The Greek word used "glossa" is a word that can mean tongue or it can mean Languages and the context clearly shows that those present heard what was being said in their own language, but we will come to that in a moment. Now I dealt with tongue speaking when I went through the book of Corinthians and I do not intend to cover that material again; except to say that the tongue speaking that some churches practise today are not known languages and therefore are not the same as the tongue speaking found within the New Testament.

The point of all these signs is that there could not be any mistake about what is happening here this is the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, their ears and eyes clearly understood that. But why these particular signs, what significance is there with wind and tongues of fire?

Well it is important to remember that the word for "wind" and "Spirit" is the same word so when this was being read in the original language in which it was written that link would not have been missed. There is a rich biblical background for this word for wind or spirit is seen right at the beginning of the Bible when God created the heaven and the earth we are told that the "Spirit (wind) of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

The picture in Genesis is of the Holy Spirit as God's breath or wind as the creative moving dynamic breath of God. This is a life giving wind. Then in Genesis 2 we are told that having made

man God breathed into him the breath (spirit or wind) of life and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).

This indicates that without the breath of God the man was just dead matter. In order to have life God who is the source of all life had to breathe life into his being.

Then if we move into the New Testament we see Jesus talking with Nicodemus (John 3) about the new birth and he picks up on this idea that we have been considering. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he needs to be regenerated in order to have eternal life. He must be born again. The word Jesus uses for "again" means "again just like the first time", it means "from above."

What Jesus means is that just as God breathed life into Adam, which means he gave him life by the Spirit. Now Jesus is saying that the new life that Nicodemus needs must be breathed into him in a similar way as it was at creation. Just as Adam became a living being after God breathed life into him so we become spiritual living beings after God breathes life into us by his Spirit. Well you might ask what does this mean for our discussion on the images used on the day of Pentecost.

When we put all that we have said together we get a sense of why the image of wind was used at Pentecost. The wind or Spirit of God breathes life into people and so the coming of the Spirit breathes life into the people present in a way that they never knew it before.

God is initiating a new era in his history of redemption; the Spirit has come to breathe Spiritual life into sinners. My dear friends if you are not a Christian then you need the Spirit to breathe Spiritual life into you; you must be awakened from your spiritual death. You can never make yourself a Christian only God can do it.

That's why you must ask him to do it for you and we who are Christians must pray that God will breathe spiritual life into the hearts of sinners.

The second image used here is one of fire and once again it is used as a symbol for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The believers saw what seemed to be "tongues of fire", so what does fire usually symbolise in the Bible. Well Fire is the symbol of God's presence for if you remember when God appeared to Moses it was in a burning bush and when God appeared on Mount Sinai his presence was accompanied by fire and thunder.

So if fire represents God's presence then these "tongues of fire" represent the fact that God in the person of the Holy Spirit has come and He rests upon each one present. Tongues probably represents the fact that when a person has the Holy Spirit and is filled with the Holy Spirit then his tongue will be loosed to speak about Jesus Christ.

This is exactly what happens in the rest of this chapter and indeed in the rest of the book of Acts, when Peter stands up to preach but we will have to wait until next week before we look at his sermon.

We tend to forget that fire is actually a source of light and this is a good symbol for the Holy Spirit for when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost, then those who received the Spirit are enlightened. This certainly happened at Pentecost for 3000 were added to the church through Peter's sermon. That is only possible because of the work of the Spirit opening people's darkened eyes and showing them the glorious light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Likewise when we are filled with the Spirit, then we are further enlightened in that we have greater understanding as we study the word of God and a greater experience of the reality of God within our hearts. Whenever the Spirit is at work then there is light.

Without the Spirit's work then men and women have no idea about God or salvation that is why it is important that the gospel is preached for where the gospel is preached the Spirit is present. We need to pray that God by his Spirit may increasingly open the spiritual eyes of people in our family and among our friends and within our community.

We cannot convince anyone of their need of a Saviour but the Spirit can and does but we must pray for His work in the hearts of people. Pray for a greater measure of his work in the heart of believers so that we will increasingly grow more like the Lord Jesus and be enlightened to see even more of the glories of Christ.

2. THE EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT'S COMING (vs. 5-11).

Now the coming of the Spirit had a wide-ranging effect because there were many people in Jerusalem that day. Because it was the "Feast of weeks" there were many "God fearing" Jews the word should probably read "devout" Jews for the term "God fearing" was used of those converted to Judaism but who never became true Jews through circumcision?

These devoted Jews came from throughout the world; they had travelled to Jerusalem in order to celebrate this festival. Now when they heard the sound of the rushing wind a large crowd gathered they either came to the upstairs room where the disciples were or the disciples came out to them we do not know. What we do know is that what they heard and saw astonished them so that they were bewildered.

They could not believe it but "each one heard them speaking in their own language." Now here is the purpose of the supernatural gift of tongue speaking at Pentecost. They gathered together to see what was going on, they realised that this is something special because they could hear and understand what was going on because they heard in their own language.

Soon Peter would preach to them and explain what it all means by presenting to them the clear gospel message. This is God's way of saying this is authentic, this is truly from God therefore listen to Peter and the others. However what really amazed these devout Jews was that those who were speaking were Galileans. That was shocking to the sophisticated city dwellers of Jerusalem who viewed the rural Galileans as ignorant and uneducated (John 7:52).

The sight of supposedly ignorant Galileans speaking to them in their own language caused the astonished crowd to ask how it is possible (v 8). How can it be that people from different countries and languages are able to hear what is being said in their own language? It is clear that what is being spoken are known languages and not some sort of spiritual language as tongue speakers today claim.

But look at the many places where these Jews came from and the number of languages that must have been spoken among them (vs. 9-11) yet they are able to hear and understand because they can hear in their own language. What is being said is described as "the wonders of God." Wonders that would be expounded and explained by Peter in his great sermon recorded for us in this chapter (vs. 14-39).

It is no wonder that they asked the question what does it mean (v 12)? But there were others who made fun of them and thought that they simply had too much to drink. Now this is a typical picture of what happens when the Holy Spirit is at work. Some will be amazed and even perplexed and wonder what God's work by his Spirit means.

Have you never thought like that sometimes Christian? Has the work of the Spirit never amazed you? Have you never been perplexed at his work trying to understand what his dealings with you

personally mean? What is God saying through it all? Have you never been astonished by the work of the Spirit? Of course you have if you are spiritually alive.

But then when the Spirit is at work there will always be others who oppose the Spirit's work. They will attribute the Spirit's work to something else. Someone gets converted and they are accused of needing a crutch to lean on or they are emotionally unstable or some other accusation is made. People will not face up to the fact that God has changed them by the power of His Spirit.

Perhaps there is someone here today who believes that you do not need to be converted that those who talk about conversion are people with real needs and problems. You simply believe that people who claim to be converted are seriously lacking in their mind. You attribute their change of life to something else other than the power of God in their hearts.

If you think like that my dear friend then you need to be converted yourself. You need the power of the Holy Spirit to transform you to turn you from sin and self and to turn you to God.

Finally we as a church must be prepared to face opposition because when the Spirit of God is at work then there will always be opposition. In fact as you read through the book of Acts you discover that unless there is opposition to the work of God then we should worry. Because the lack of opposition means that the Spirit is not at work among us or at least is not at work to the extent that we all long to see him working.

Perhaps we harbour sin that hinders his work; perhaps we fail to submit to his ministry within our lives and church. Therefore let us pray for a greater work of the Spirit within our hearts, let us submit to him and be filled with the Spirit and then let us speak out for Jesus as a result. But remember we must be prepared to face the opposition as well for where the Spirit of God is at work then so are his opponents.

Amen