

That Day of Pentecost – Acts 2

Introduction – Pentecost, an Old Covenant festival, an annual celebration that had marked the end of the grain harvest (Lev 23:15, Deut 16:9), marked the beginning of a new harvest in the New Covenant, the harvest of the world. After Christ's ascension and having been given universal authority by His Father, Jesus then gives power to His church by means of and in the Person of the Holy Spirit. The age we live in is the age of the great Pentecostal Harvest.

That Pentecost Day (vv1-4) – Jesus had said the Spirit was like the wind, blowing wherever it wishes (John 3:8) and on this day the small band of disciples heard “*a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind.*” The Spirit was not coming to the Temple but to a new House of the Lord. The sound filled the whole house and the Holy Spirit filled them all. The Spirit kindled the altars of this new temple (Rom 12:1), and “*they began to speak with other tongues.*”

Reversal of Babel (vv5-11) – Even though it has led to much sin, God is responsible for the division of mankind (Gen 11:6-7) for our united rebellion would have been worse. On that day of Pentecost, “*men, from every nation under heaven*” heard these tongues, known languages to them, speaking the wonderful works of God. God had planned since that day of Babel to bring forth the salvation of all nations through the Seed of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). In Christ, and in Christ alone, all the nations can be brought back together again.

Whatever Could This Mean? (vv12-21) – The event was astonishing to these devout men. Some asked for an explanation. Others waved it off as nothing more than an early morning frat party, twisting the words being spoken (Psalm 56:5). This always occurs in the works of God; some always mock and turn away. But Peter stands up and, nearly ignoring the charge (v15), gives a positive and profound interpretation from the prophet Joel.

This was a fulfillment of the prophecy that sons and daughters would have Yahweh's Spirit poured out upon them (vv17-18). It was also the sign of a collapsing universe (vv19-20) and this has caused some confusion, but it need not. Tongues (foreign languages) was also a sign of judgment (Jer 5:15) upon unbelieving Israel, and Jerusalem and the Temple which had rejected the Messiah would now have all of its authority and power stripped from it. Collapsing universe language was always used symbolically to describe this kind of judgment upon a city or a nation (Isaiah 13:10, 34:3-5, Ezek 32:7-8, Joel 2:28-32, Amos 8:9) and Jesus had used the same symbolism to declare such judgment upon unbelieving Israel in that generation (Matt 24:29-35).

Whoever Calls on the Name of the LORD Shall be Saved (v21) – In the Hebrew of Joel, those who called upon the name of Yahweh were promised to be saved. In Greek, uses the word “*kurios*” which has a broader meaning. But clearly, in this Pentecostal message in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is being called Lord, but even more importantly, Yahweh. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Yahweh.

The Gospel Preached in Holy Spirit, Pentecostal Power (vv22-36) – In the following verses, a potent, damaging, winnowing, and blessed Gospel is declared. Not only was Jesus God, but He was a man (v22) attested to be God's Son by miracles. He was delivered over to be crucified by the Free Will of Man and when that happened, God had fully ordained all that would take place in His Absolute Sovereignty (vv23). In the Scriptures, Free Will and Divine Sovereignty do not have to be reconciled. His death occurred because of our wicked, lawless hands; He died because we are sinners – all of us (v23, Rom 3:23).

He was raised from the dead, physically and really, by God, as previously prophesied (vv24-29), for Psalm 16 could not be speaking directly of David, who died and did not rise, but of Christ, David's Son who ascended to His throne (vv 30-33). There, He reigns, having poured out His Holy Spirit upon His church, until all His foes are conquered (vv34-35). His universal dominion is promised in this age. The One we crucified is both Conquering King and Saving Messiah (v36). Pentecost declared that there was no escape for anyone from the event that turned the temple and the world upside down.

Cut to the Heart (vv38ff) – This message, preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, had its affect. Men cried out and out of a perverse generation, three thousand souls were added that day (vv40-41). But why do we not see this today? At least one thing to notice is that this Gospel is not preached today. The wickedness of mankind is not preached. The absolute sovereignty of God is not preached. The absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ over all the earth is not preached. The promise of His ultimate victory while He sits at God's right hand is not preached. The requirement to repent and be baptized is not preached. The extent of the covenant promises to generations is not preached. All of these are offensive doctrines to our autonomous, individualistic, and wicked sensibilities.

Strong Whiskey – The gospel of Jesus Christ is like strong whiskey. It goes down hard and makes you cough and sputter. But we have been trying to water down and sweeten up this gospel to make it more drinkable – until it is no gospel at all. If God has indeed poured out His Holy Spirit like overflowing fountains, rising rivers, a rock that will not stop growing, and like a sword that divides, then we must preach that gospel in the unapologetic strength of its message. And as recipients of that overflowing grace, we ought to speak and act as those who have been conquered by all that is good and glorious.