

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF JERUSALEM

Acts 2:1-47

Key Verse: 2:17

“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”

Acts chapter 2 speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost after the ascension of Christ (1-21). Virtually, the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was an epoch-making event in Bible history. We must study what happened at the coming of the Holy Spirit. After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the apostles became bold witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus before the crowd (22-41). After the coming of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of believers turned out to be a model of the heavenly kingdom, where love and peace ruled (42-47). Today let's think about what happened when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

First, the Holy Spirit came with power (1-3). Look at verse 1. "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." It was ten days after Jesus' ascension. The Feast of Pentecost was the Feast of the Harvest. Also, it commemorated the promulgation of the Law at Mt. Sinai. Therefore, the day of Pentecost was fitting to be the day for the promulgation of the gospel to the whole world. They were all together in one place. Obviously they were together praying, singing songs of praises for Jesus' death and resurrection. At that moment, something very unusual happened. The Holy Spirit came where they were. Look at verse 2. "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting." Here we learn something about the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power. The Holy Spirit is powerful like a violent wind, which can shake anything. Look at verse 3. "They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." The Holy Spirit is as powerful as tongues of fire. As we know, the power of fire is great. It can swallow with its tongues all the trees of a huge mountain range in the twinkling of an eye. With its tongues, fire can lick up a huge building in an instant. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power. The Holy Spirit saves man from utter powerlessness. The Holy Spirit fills man with strength and courage. The Holy Spirit empowers men to be witnesses of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

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In the past, the world long lay under the influence of evil spirits, the agents of Satan. Many people tried to be powerful, powerful enough to control their evil desires and emotions. But the more they tried, the more powerless they became because they were under the influence of evil spirits. The influence of evil spirits made young men like old men, and old men, like little babies in diapers. The world was sick and empty not because of trees, blooming flowers or men and women, but because the world was under the influence of evil spirits. But by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the season of evil spirits was over and the season of Christ arrived.

Second, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom (4-11). Look at verse 4. "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak foreign languages freely. To master the basics of a foreign language requires at least 6 months of diligent study. But the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak foreign languages instantly so that all the listeners in the crowd could understand them well. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom. Evil spirits make man stupid, stubborn and selfish. But the Holy Spirit makes man open-hearted, gentle and wise, wise enough to understand things in the minds of men, as well as the things of God.

In Jerusalem, there were staying God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. Obviously, they came to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Pentecost (5). At the sound of international languages, all the people there first scratched their heads to try to understand what was happening. Then they stood bewildered and amazed and asked, "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?" There were at least fifteen kinds of nationals who witnessed this event (9-11). Both Jews and proselytes from these nations heard the apostles speaking in their own native languages. This event declares that since the coming of the Holy Spirit, there are no more human barriers. By the coming of the Holy Spirit, man can communicate with God and with others as well. The fact that the apostles were enabled to speak in foreign languages has deep spiritual meaning in it.

When God made man and the world, there was only one language through

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which all could praise God and comfort one another. But since Adam sinned, mankind began to use language at random; with language they expressed their proud minds; with language they rebelled against God by building the Tower of Babel, which symbolized human civilization without God. God saw that people had become proud. So he confused their language so that they could not express their proud minds. This was the beginning of the language barrier and confusion and misunderstanding in human history. But by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the language barrier is gone.

Third, the Holy Spirit enabled them to declare the wonders of God (11-12).

Verse 11b says, "...we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues." In the past, the apostles were slaves of their own egos; they were fearful of everything. Whenever they opened their mouths, they expressed their despair and complaints. But now, when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they began to speak "the wonders of God." The Holy Spirit enabled them to open their minds to see the wonders of God. The Holy Spirit made them so bold that they began to witness without fear to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was the dawn of a new age. The coming of the Holy Spirit proved that the ascension of Jesus is the hinge of human history. The coming of the Holy Spirit proved that God had entered the human arena; therefore, to mankind, life and the world would never be the same. The real cause of people's suffering is not their bad human conditions, but the influence of evil spirits. For example, one young woman was proud. So she suffered unbearably. She used to say, "If I get a good job, the kind I want, then I will be a nice person." But since she got the job she wanted, she became worse than before. Man can be happy when he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We must earnestly seek the coming of the Holy Spirit. Then we experience that we can never be the same.

Fourth, the influence of the Holy Spirit (13-21). There was a wonderful work of God among the apostles. Still, some made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine" (13). Peter stood up and said, "These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning" (15). Peter began to explain that this was the fulfillment of God's prophecy by Joel. Verses 17-21 are a quotation from Joel 2:28-32. Look at verse 17. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men

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will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." God promised that in the last days he would pour out his Spirit on all people. He does not pour out his Spirit on certain people; he pours out his Spirit on all people. What a great prophecy it is! What happens when he pours out his Spirit on all people?

In the first place, "your young men will see visions." Verse 17b says, "Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions..." What a remarkable prophecy it is! Most parents worry about how their children will survive in the world. Mostly, their anticipation is pessimistic. Most young people are fearful about their future. Many young people are just drifting with the current of world trends, like dead fish. Generally, they are pessimistic about the future, even though they work hard. They have no prophetic insight or vision into the glorious future. But God promised that when he pours out his Spirit, our sons and daughters will prophesy. They will speak about what God will do for them, not about what congressmen will do. When the Holy Spirit comes on them they will never say, "I don't know." Instead, they will prophesy and see visions about the glorious future world God is going to establish.

In the time of President Kennedy, many American young people were filled with vision and frontier spirit. They were full of vision for world peace by means of goodwill diplomacy. Nowadays, there is an impression that young people struggle only to survive, with no prophetic insight or vision. They seem to be blocked mentally because of their worries. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit may come to us, that each of us may have prophetic insight and glorious vision. How about old men? They cannot prophesy about the future like young men, because they are too old to do so. But they can dream dreams, instead of suffering from arthritis. God includes people in the servant class, both men and women, in the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the second place, many wonders and signs will be done. When the Holy Spirit works we can see many wonders and miracles. Wonders and signs are so great and fantastic, like the sun turning to darkness and the moon to blood. Where the Holy Spirit works, the world is not boring at all. The work of the Holy Spirit will be continuous until the great and glorious day of the Lord (19,20). The most glorious wonder and sign is not the change of natural phenomena, but salvation work among men. Verse 21 says, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

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Fifth, Peter's witness (22-41). Peter addressed the crowd further concerning the resurrection of Jesus. Look at verse 22. "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." Here Peter explains that God had done great work through his Son Jesus during his life on earth. In spite of his good work through healing the sick and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, what did his own people do to him? Look at verse 23. "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." What did God do about this good Jesus? Look at verse 24. "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

The crucifixion of Jesus is the greatest crime man has ever committed against God in history. It also shows supremely what sin can do. But Peter says that it was God's set purpose, and not merely evil man's action. It was God who had planned Jesus' coming into the world to be crucified on a cross for the sin of the world.

Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important? Without the hope of resurrection, people are fearful and become shaky. King David had everything. He was a musician, a poet, a warrior and a king. Above all, he was a man after God's own heart. But he was sorry whenever he thought about the fact that he would die and be abandoned to the grave. He was even more sorry that he would be eaten by worms and maggots after his burial. But when he saw God at his right hand, who had made known to him the path of life, his heart was glad and his tongue rejoiced. In brief, when he had resurrection faith in God, he could breathe a sigh of relief (25-28).

In verses 29-35 Peter is out to prove that the death and resurrection of Christ were the fulfillment of prophecy, and the final proof that Jesus is the Son of God. For example, David died and was buried, and his tomb remains to this day. But he died in peace, believing God's promise that he would raise one of his descendants from the dead (30,31). Jesus died on the cross, but he was not kept in the tomb. According to his promises, God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to his right hand. Look at verses 32-33. "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we

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are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." Look at verses 34-35. "For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.''" The Risen Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. He poured out the Holy Spirit on all people. He is the victorious Ruler over all of God's enemies. Look at verse 36. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

How should we respond to the good news of the resurrection of Christ? We must repent that we only had worldly hopes. We must put our hope in the resurrection of Jesus and receive the forgiveness of sins. We must also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit so that we may be saved from this corrupt generation (38-40).

Sixth, the fellowship of the believers (42-47). After the crucifixion of Jesus, the disciples were gripped with fear. Their lives were shattered, their hearts broken. But the coming of the Holy Spirit changed these hopeless men into men pulsating with confidence, from cowards into men of courageous faith. In the past, the followers of Jesus, including the apostles, were individualistic and pragmatic in many ways. Probably their catchphrase was, "That's none of my business." Most of all, their hearts were ruled by despair and selfishness. But after the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, they became changed men. In the past, they were not willing to listen to others. Probably they would say, "Are you talking to me?" But now they were eager to listen to the apostles' teaching. They were eager to share their sandwiches. They were eager to pray instead of sleeping. They were filled with many "vows." They were able to perform miraculous signs. They shared what they had with others in Jesus. This part inspired Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to write their communist theory, leaving God out. But Christians at the coming of the Holy Spirit shared what they had in God, singing songs of praises. In brief, they were no more selfish and fearful; they were joyful. Above all, they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus' people must receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the Christian church must be a fellowship of witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus.