

## Sermon Notes

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 3.16.2025

## PART 6 - THE PENTECOST MIRACLE

### I. INTRODUCTION

- The event of Pentecost marked a pivotal moment in redemptive history as the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, resulting in the disciples being enabled to preach in various languages to a multinational crowd that had assembled.
- Main Point: The miracle of tongues at Pentecost signified God's sovereign plan for the gospel to be proclaimed to all nations through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:5-13

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

- The arrival of the sudden coming of the Spirit was marked by three accompanying signs:
  - A sound
  - A sight
  - And Strange Speech
- The sound came from heaven, its source was not earthly but heavenly, it was a deafening sound like the howling winds of a powerful storm and it filled the house where the disciples were gathered together.
- The sight was as of fire, divided tongues like flames that came to rest on each one of the disciples gathered in the house.
- And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and were enabled by the Spirit to speak in other tongues, this was not their normal speech but "other" speech.
- The sound and the fire were symbols of God's power, presence, holiness, and judgment.
- The coming of the Spirit inaugurated the church age as the Holy Spirit would now personally indwell believers.
- The people of God are the new temple of God, a priestly and prophetic community of Spirit-empowered witnesses.

- Pentecost was a unique, unrepeatable, one-of-a-kind event in redemptive history.
- God's people would now have God's Spirit to do God's Work in God's power.
- Luke leaves any discussion about wind and fire behind, nothing more is said of this phenomena, and he focuses on the miraculous gift of speaking in other tongues that accompanied the coming of the Spirit upon those gathered together in the house.
- What happens next is the impact of that gift as the disciples spill out of the house and onto the streets.

## II. A DIVERSE GATHERING

- v5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.
- Because of the Pentecost feast, Jerusalem was filled with observants of the feast. Some resided there and many traveled a great distance on pilgrimage for the holy days.
- During the feasts the population of Jerusalem could easily swell to almost a million people.
- Luke makes note of the international flair of the crowd that gathered.
- These were devout Jews, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.
- They were Jews of the Diaspora.
- This is not literally every nation. He was speaking of the Graeco-Roman world he was a part of.
- This was a multicultural group of people from all parts of the Roman Empire including some areas outside of the Empire.
- God sovereignly gathered all of these devout Jews for the feast of Pentecost, to be in Jerusalem on this specific day, to witness the outpouring of the Spirit, so that in His providence, a global audience would be assembled to hear the proclamation of the gospel.
- That's what God still does to this day. His Church is a diverse people from all people groups, every nation and language.
- We are part of the global family of believers, billions of Christ-followers from every nation under heaven.

## III. A DISTINCTIVE GIFT

- 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?
- The sound attracted a crowd.
- And notice, they hear the disciples who emerge from the house speaking in their own native language.
- Luke makes note of their initial response to this multi-linguistic miracle—bewilderment, amazement, and astonishment.
- The bewilderment or confusion is from the diverse languages pouring forth from the disciples' mouths.
- And as amazing as that was, they are astonished that the individuals speaking in their local dialects are Galileans.
- Galileans were seen as backwater people, ignorant and uneducated.
- They were hearing the disciples speaking in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek and Latin, and they were not trained in all of those languages.

## THE NATURE OF THE GIFT

- “Tongues” (Greek: glōssa / pr. glow-sa) can refer to the organ in the mouth or language and speech.
- “Language” (Greek: dialektos / pr. dee-ah-lektos) refers to known human languages and dialects.
- The Jews from the east would have known Aramaic and Jews from the west Greek, but they heard speech in their own local “dialects.”
- The tongues or languages were not ecstatic utterances.
  
- What was the nature of the gift? How does Luke explain the phenomena?
- First, it was not a result of drunkenness as some in the crowd insinuated.
- Peter quickly dispels that ridiculous notion.
- We also cannot conclude that the perception of the people who said they were intoxicated were making that assessment because to them it looked like they were drunk or had lost control of their mental or physical functions.
- From Luke’s language, the statement was made in mockery, to jeer and make fun of them.
- Second, the miracle was not one of hearing but of speaking.
- It’s not that the Spirit enabled the crowd to hear the disciples in their own languages even though the disciples were only speaking in their native Aramaic.
- It’s not that the disciples broke out into some unintelligible ecstatic speech, and the Spirit made each one in the audience hear that and it was divinely interpreted into their own native language.
- Some make that mistake because of what is described, v6 “each one was hearing them speak in his own language,” and v8, “how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?”
- However, Luke makes it clear in v4, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.”
- This was a miracle of speech first and foremost.

## THE MESSAGE OF THE GIFT

- The crowd hears “the mighty works of God” proclaimed in their own native language.
- The miracle of the gift of tongues wasn’t for show, it was for proclamation.
- The disciples were testifying to Christ’s life, death, and resurrection in languages they had not learned.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFT

- Why was this miracle necessary?
- We come back to the multinational and multicultural makeup of the crowd who are “hearing the mighty works of God” proclaimed.
- All of the nations were there not literally, but representatively.
- Luke narrates the event by having the hearers list off their nationalities and places of origin.
- Moving approximately from East to West.
- They begin with the far eastern border of the Roman Empire, (Parthians, Medes, and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia), from the Caspian Sea westwards.
- Then Judea (Jerusalem) at the center.
- Then the western regions of the empire in Asia Minor: Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia.
- Then the southern regions of North Africa: Egypt, Libya near Cyrene.

- Then visitors from the empire's center—Rome.
  - Lastly, islanders from Crete and desert-dwellers represented by Arabians.
  - This was the international, multi-lingual crowd which gathered around the believers.
  - They represented Jews who had been dispersed during the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman conquests.
  - Additionally, they not only Jews, but proselytes present.
  - Proselytes were Gentile converts to Judaism.
- What comes to your mind when this list of nations is presented along with the inclusion of Gentiles?
  - First, the Great Commission mandate to make disciples of all nations.
  - Second, Jesus's instructions to his disciples on the day of his ascension, v8, You will be my witnesses, in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
  - The gospel is to go to the ends of the earth.
  - The gospel is for all the nations.
  - The gospel is for all peoples, irrespective of nationality or language.
  - The miracle of tongues enabled these Spirit-empowered witnesses to transcend racial, national, and linguistic barriers.
  - The miracle of tongues at Pentecost with the multinational crowd represented prefigured the gospel's spread beyond Israel.
  - The gospel proclamation through Spirit-empowered witnesses meant there would be no communication barriers.
  - Nothing can hinder the spread of the gospel of the kingdom.

## THE CURSE OF BABEL REVERSED

- Bible Scholars and commentators have rightly made the connection between the events of Pentecost and seeing that as a reversal of the curse of Babel.
- Luke's listing of the nations present at Pentecost is reminiscent of the table of Nations in Genesis 10. The descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.
- The list of nations in Acts 2 are all people groups and nations descended from Noah's sons.
- In Genesis 11, we have the account of the Tower of Babel.
- Genesis 11:1-2 Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.
- God's mandate to Noah after the flood was for the whole earth to be populated with his image-bearers. "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth." (Gen. 9:1)
- Instead of spreading across the earth as God intended, they chose to settle in one place and build a great city, directly opposing God's plan for humanity to disperse.
- In opposition to God's command to scatter over the earth, they determined to rebel, fearful of being scattered over the face of the earth.
- What did God do at Babel?
- He goes down to them and confuses their language, he makes their language unintelligible to each other, and makes it impossible for them to live in unity and community, which forces them to scatter across the earth as he had commanded them to do.
- How is Pentecost a reversal of Babel?
- What the Spirit does at Pentecost is break down the barriers of comprehension.
- At Babel, God came down and human languages were confused and the nations were scattered.
- At Pentecost, the Spirit descended and the language barrier was supernaturally overcome symbolizing that the nations would be gathered

and united under Christ.

- He would now form his Spirit-filled community with people from every nation under heaven.
- Language would not be an impediment to the spread of the gospel.
- Languages and cultures remain intact, but God will unite all of his people, from every nation.
  
- Isaiah prophesied this gathering of his people from all parts of the earth.
- Isaiah 11:11-12 In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 12 He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.
- Isaiah 43:5-7 Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. 6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”
- Pentecost was a foretaste of Rev 7 of the picture of the whole company of the redeemed.
- Revelation 7:9-10 After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

## IV. A DIVIDED RESPONSE

- The assembled crowd has a divided response and reaction.
- 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”
- Amazement and perplexity was the common feeling, but some were led to inquire further as to what this event means while others mocked.
- Peter explains what this means by demonstrating this as prophetic fulfillment of the promises of the last days.
- The hearers could not initially recognize that what they were witnessing could only be accounted for by divine action.
- The events of Pentecost are a reminder to us that without the Spirit’s enablement, not only can we not effectively communicate the gospel, but without the Spirit’s power, people cannot hear and receive the message of the gospel.
- Some heard the proclamation in their own native language and were pressed to learn more.
- Acts 2:41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- Others saw and heard the same things, and they were determined to resist. They mockingly opposed the message.
- Right from the beginning, as was seen with Jesus’s teachings, the gospel would be polarizing.
- 1 Cor 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
- Jesus himself taught that he brings division, those whose ultimate allegiance would be to him may find themselves separated from family who oppose Christ and his teaching.
- We will see in Acts, opposition from the enemies of the cross.

- And we will see receptivity to the gospel message as the church grows and flourishes through faithful gospel preaching.
- We too should expect mixed responses when sharing Christ with others.
- Will we persevere when mocked and ridiculed for our faith?
- We must proclaim the gospel trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to salvation in Christ.
- Some will respond by receiving the message and trusting Christ. Others will resist and reject the message.

## CONCLUSION

- Should we expect to speak in tongues like this?
- There are many diverse views on this.
- The reformed view is that the gift of speaking in tongues in known languages but unknown to the one speaking them was a temporary sign gift to the early church.
- It authenticated the apostolic message.
- Hebrews 2:3-4 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, 4 while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.
- It aided with the spread of the gospel as we see in Acts 2.
- But the gift of tongues seems to have faded after the apostolic era.
- Chrysostom, writing in the 4th century, in his Homilies on First Corinthians, writes, *“This whole passage is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place.”*
- But now that we have the written revelation of God in his Word, that gift is no longer necessary.
- But what about tongues in 1 Corinthians 14?
- When Paul writes to the church at Corinth, giving them instructions about the orderly use of tongues, he uses the same words that Luke uses to describe tongues as real human languages, not ecstatic utterances.
- He writes that tongues are a sign for unbelievers, the gift was for evangelistic purposes.
- Those who speak in tongues, “Speak to God, not to men.”
- If someone speaks in a foreign tongue without an interpreter, the congregation cannot understand them.
- Since no one understands them, the tongues are only comprehensible to God, who knows all languages.
- This is not an exhortation to the private prayer language of tongues but rather that uninterpreted tongues are useless for the congregation.
- If they were to speak in tongues, an interpreter must be present. Otherwise they should not exercise that gift as the church would not be edified.
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:9-12
- However, this is an open-handed issue, we don’t divide over this.
- Christ is building his church and using his Spirit-empowered witnesses to continue to proclaim the gospel to the nations.
- We have the mandate to spread the gospel to every people, tribe, and those of every language, for that is God’s redemptive plan.
- Continue to pray for the advance of the gospel to the many unreached people groups in our world.
- Pray for and support the work of those who are translating God’s Word into many languages and taking the gospel to people in their own native

tongues.

- Be Christ's Spirit-empowered witness in the context that he has placed you.
- Give thanks to God for the blessing of the unity we experience in the diverse body of believers that is Christ's universal Church.
- Let's continue to proclaim the good news until that day that we join the whole company of the Redeemed worshipping before the throne of God.

## **APPLICATION AND REFLECTION**

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?