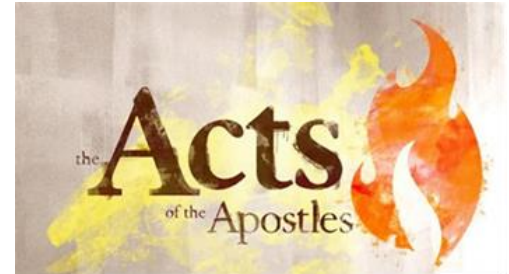


ACTS: THE STORY OF THE CHURCH – Part 3

The Most Unusual Pentecost of All

Acts 2:1-41

In this season we shift from the Ascension of Jesus and the replacement of Judas (likely not a job with many applicants) to the hugely dramatic Pentecost event.



We may connect Pentecost with the emphatic supernatural movement of God (violent rushing wind, apparitions of flood, fire and language miracles) but it simply means “Fiftieth Day.” Originally Pentecost was a mid-level Agricultural Holy observance called the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22). Why Fiftieth Day? It took place exactly fifty days post-Passover.

At this junction, Jerusalem had visitors from across the known world who came to celebrate Pentecost in person, as well as a surprisingly large number of Jewish immigrants from across the world.

Of course, this Pentecost was unlike any other in the life of Israel. It was at this event that God chose to unleash the Holy Spirit and change the salvation equation, as well as how He interacted with His people.

This was not the God of the still small voice. This was the outpouring of spiritual power in ways unlike any other, and, it all had a reason and rationale. And let’s not forget, God had been present in/as Jesus for over 30 years. God dwelt among us, died, resurrected and ascended, then came in the form of the Spirit at Pentecost. Something big was up.

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

Acts 2: On the day Pentecost was being fulfilled, all the disciples were gathered in one place. 2 Suddenly they heard the sound of a violent blast of wind rushing into the house from out of the heavenly realm. The roar of the wind was so overpowering it was all anyone could bear! 3 Then all at once a pillar of fire appeared before their eyes. It separated into tongues of fire

that engulfed each one of them. 4 They were all filled and equipped with the Holy Spirit and were inspired to speak in tongues—empowered by the Spirit to speak in languages they had never learned!

5 Now, at that time there were Jewish worshipers who had emigrated from many different lands to live in Jerusalem. 6 When the people of the city heard the roaring sound, crowds came running to where it was coming from, stunned over what was happening, because each one could hear the disciples speaking in his or her own language. 7 Bewildered, they said to one another, “Aren’t these all Galileans? 8 So how is it that we hear them speaking in our own languages? 9 We are northeastern Iranians,

northwestern Iranians, Elamites, and those from Mesopotamia, Judea, east central Turkey, the coastal areas of the Black Sea, Asia, 10 north central Turkey, southern Turkey, Egypt, Libyans who are neighbors of Cyrene, visitors from all over the Roman Empire, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs. 11 Yet we hear them speaking of God’s mighty wonders in our own dialects!” 12 They all stood there, dumbfounded and astonished, saying to one another, “What is this phenomenon?”

13 But others poked fun at them and said, “They’re just drunk on new wine.”

Big Point here: God had historically spoken to His people in a corporate way primarily through single voices. God would call a prophet and that person would convey God’s words, often for years on end (same message). Here God is shifting from a prophet to prophetic language given to literally thousands of people, who would then take the Gospel/reality of Jesus to others. God is moving from a primarily corporate approach to one based on individuals, where each individual becomes a prophet in their own right.

So, the miracle here was not that Peter spoke in multiple languages to the people, it was that people “heard” him, understood him in their own unique and personal language.

God was preparing to expand the message (what later became known as the Gospel) beyond Jerusalem and in doing this created what we now call missions and evangelism.

It is also important to note that even in the midst of a dramatic supernatural event where there were naysayers and those who quickly discounted the reality of what was taking place: “Hay, look, they’re drunk.” There always have been and always will be naysayers. Peter addressed this and elaborated on why God was interacting with His people in these new ways.

Peter’s Pentecost Sermon

14 Peter stood up with the eleven apostles and shouted to the crowd. “Listen carefully, my fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem. You need to clearly understand what’s happening here. 15 These people are not drunk like you think they are, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16 This is the fulfillment of what was prophesied through the prophet Joel, for God says:

17 ‘This is what I will do in the last days—I will pour out my Spirit on everybody and cause your sons and daughters to prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will experience dreams from God. 18 The Holy Spirit will come upon all my servants, men and women alike, and they will prophesy. 19 I will reveal startling signs and wonders in the sky above and mighty miracles on the earth below. Blood and fire and pillars of clouds will appear. 20 For the sun will be turned dark and the moon blood-red before that great and awesome appearance of the day of the Lord. 21 But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

22 Peter continued, “People of Israel, listen to the facts. Jesus, the Victorious, was a Man on a divine mission whose authority was clearly proven. For you know how God performed many powerful miracles, signs, and wonders through him. 23 This Man’s destiny was prearranged, for God knew that Jesus would be handed over to you to be crucified and that you would execute him on a cross by the hands of lawless men. Yet it was all part of his predetermined plan. 24 God destroyed the cords of death and raised him up, because it was impossible for death’s power to hold him prisoner. 25 This is the very thing David prophesied about him:

*‘I continually see the Lord in front of me.
He’s at my right hand, and I am never shaken.*

26 No wonder my heart is glad and my glory celebrates! My mouth is filled with his praises, and I have hope that my body will live
27 because you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor will you allow your sacred one to experience decay. 28 For you have revealed to me the pathways to life, and seeing your face fills me with euphoria!

29 “My fellow Jews, I can tell you there is no doubt that our noted patriarch has both died and been buried in his tomb, which remains to this day. So you can see that he was not referring to himself with those words. 30 But as a prophet, he knew God’s faithful promise, made with God’s unbreakable oath, that one of His descendants would take His throne. 31 So when peering into the future, David prophesied of the Messiah’s resurrection. And God revealed to him that the Messiah would not be abandoned to the realm of death, nor would his body experience decay.

32 “Can’t you see it? God has resurrected Jesus, and we all have seen Him!

33 “Then God exalted him to his right hand upon the throne of highest honor. And the Father gave him the authority to send the promised Holy Spirit, which is being poured out upon us today. This is what you’re seeing and hearing!

34 “David wasn’t the one who ascended into heaven, but the one who prophesied:

‘The Lord Jehovah said to my Lord,
I honor you by enthroning you beside me,
35 until I make your enemies
a footstool beneath your feet.’

36 “Now everyone in Israel can know for certain that Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one God has made both Lord and the Messiah.”

The Crowd Responds to Peter’s Words

37 When they heard this they were crushed and realized what they had done to Jesus. Deeply moved, they said to Peter and the other apostles, “What do we need to do, brothers?”

38 Peter replied, "Repent and return to God, and each one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus, the Anointed One, to have your sins removed. Then you may take hold of the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For God's promise of the Holy Spirit is for you and your families, for those yet to be born and for everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

40 Peter preached to them and warned them with these words: "Be rescued from the wayward and perverse culture of this world!"

41 Those who believed the word that day numbered three thousand. They were all baptized and added to the church.

Peter quotes Joel and tells the full, unvarnished Jesus story and in the process preaches the greatest sermon of all time. O.K., O.K., the Sermon on the Mount was a biggie, but Jesus taught that one as any excellent Rabbi would do. Peter was preaching!

Peter covers so much in this sermon but it's important to see just how expansive God's new plans were and who they included. "I will pour out my spirit on everyone (note: not just rabbis, priests and prophets.) Your sons and daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions and your old men will experience dreams from God. The Holy Spirit will come upon all my people, men and women alike and they will prophesy" (2:17-18). Now virtually all people could prophesy, and the world quickly expanded beyond Jerusalem.

So how did the people react and respond to this supernatural event and spirit-filled sermon? Verse 37 says they were crushed and realized what they had done to and with Jesus. The Spirit opened their eyes and hearts (souls) to the actual reality of Jesus and it crushed them. Imagine thinking, "We crucified God." So they asked, "what can we do? What should we do?"

In verse 38 Peter tells them to repent and return to God to be baptized. God still loves them and wants them to return to Him, but repentance was necessary. And they did, thousands of them, and the church-age took off.

Takeaways:

1. The equation goes like this: Jesus the Son (or God the Son) Ascended, and the Holy Spirit (or God the Spirit) descended to empower and create a new age – the age of grace – the church age.

Would God have done all of this if He did not love us, all of His creation, with the most profound love possible? And the majority of those present at Pentecost (basically all Jews) accepted Peter's message and repented and returned to God.

2. And a new age of missional evangelism took off. And the same message remains even today: repent, return to God (all people are asked to return to the point of their creative origin) and be baptized. And then what? Prophecy. Tell the story. Share the Gospel. Live into our calling and opportunity to bring this message to the world (and around the corner...) But, we already knew that, right?

Amen & Amen,

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