

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Dawning of The Church, Pt 2

Acts 2: 1-13

Keywords: Acts, baptism of Holy Spirit, empowerment, Church, tongues, filling of Holy Spirit

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb: In one of the most exciting, world-tilting events in the bible we also have a place where confusion can easily come into play. In our passage we see the birth of the Church, an entirely new entity never before known or seen. And with this we have very unique events that come about which are unique in their own right. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the speaking in what are known as tongues are just three examples of these unique events. Today we will examine the nature of tongues as this is the first time it is seen in the New Testament.

I. Introduction.

- A. As we move into the book of Acts we will all be challenged in one way or another.
 - 1. These early chapters are full of events that are simply one-of-a-kind type of events as the transition from the Old Covenant and the focus on Israel is replaced with the New Covenant and the new focus on the Church.
 - 2. Transition is the word-of-the-day. Unique would be another one we will use. Normal is not one for us in these early chapters.
 - 3. But that is exactly what we end up doing too often. We look at these chapters and forget what is happening and that entire world views are passing away before our eyes.
 - a. We think about how life-changing the Covid virus has been for many and how discomfiting it has been.
 - b. But this is nothing compared to what is going on in the early part of Acts.
- B. Open to Acts 2:1-13.
 - 1. In one of the most exciting, world-tilting events in the bible we also have a place where confusion can easily come into play. In our passage we see the birth of the Church, an entirely new entity never before known or seen.
 - 2. This whole section is a fulcrum/hinge moment in history. All of Luke and Acts 1 pointed to this moment where the Spirit would be poured out upon mankind.

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3. And with this we have very unique events that come about which are unique in their own right. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the speaking in what are known as tongues are just three examples of these unique events.
 4. Today we will examine the nature of tongues as this is the first time it is seen in the New Testament.
- C. First we will deal with the text itself and then go outward from there.
1. The Day of Pentecost.
 - a. It was an annual feast in the Spring. It was when they would offer the first-fruits of their wheat harvest.
 - b. Exodus 34:20-23.
 - c. Deuteronomy 16:9-11.
 2. They celebrated it at the end of seven weeks (it was known as a week of weeks) following the Passover Feast. Means “fiftieth” and was the fiftieth day after Passover.
 3. It also was thought by the Jews to be the anniversary of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai.
 4. According to Exodus 34:22-23 male Jews were to present themselves at the temple. If you lived within 20 miles you were expected to be there, but many came from long distances. Think pilgrimage such as the Islamic Hadj going to Mecca.
- D. The coming of the Spirit.
1. “Like” a wind but not a wind. It was the noise like a wind.
 2. Not actual fire either but rather, like tongues of fire..
 3. The fire apparently was one and then sub-divided to rest on each person.
 - a. This is significant because it showed that each of them has the Spirit come upon them
 - b. The coming of the Spirit affected not just the group as a whole but shows an emphasis upon the individual as well.
 4. But what happened afterward is much more important than this visual example of the filling of the Spirit upon these people.

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- a. The direct result was that the Holy Spirit would cause each of them to speak as He wished.
 - b. They began to speak with other tongues. Note the plural. There were multiple different tongues.
 - c. But that is not helpful if you don't know what is meant by "tongues." And this is where the beginning of confusion arises with this whole subject.
- E. Countless churches and individuals have suffered under vague, weak or hasty reactions to the phenomena of tongues.
1. Splits, arguments, confusion, excitement, ecstasy, concern, fear and many more reactions are common.
 2. Experience today is far more authoritative in a person's life than the written word. Two examples in how this shows itself:
 - a. Example one: you find yourself in a very emotional situation perhaps with friends around you or in a church service with a lot of things happening. You are encouraged to just let go and let the Spirit flow in your heart. You are perhaps encouraged to begin to just make sounds as you feel led and suddenly a strong emotion overwhelms you and you begin to have sounds come out of your mouth that you did not expect and a wonderful emotion washes over you. *My response is simple, this is fine and I seek to make no argument against what you experienced. But it is not found in Scripture at all, so it should have no authority in your mind as you think about what is true.*
 - b. Example two: You are trying to determine what is right and true about some doctrine or activity in the church. You say, "I just need to pray about this and seek the mind of God." *My response to you is again simple, prayer is good and right. But exactly how are you expecting God to reveal Himself to you? If it is through impressions, dreams, thoughts or a feeling of peace then you are not under the authority of the Word.*
 - c. Both of these are common and both are used to argue for the validity of decisions and beliefs. But neither of them actually are under the authority of the Word.

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- d. The authority of the Word of God is key to spiritual growth and vitality.
 3. The reality is that there are very few examples of “tongues” in the bible. Around sixteen times. Here in Acts and 1 Corinthians where Paul is correcting and rebuking the church in how they handle tongues.
 4. You can listen to my sermons on spiritual gifts and work your way through 1 Corinthians 12-14 in detail.
- F. Today I want to focus on the use of tongues in the book of Acts by observing how they are used and what they actually are.
1. In doing so I hope to encourage anyone who has never spoken in tongues but wondered if they were missing out somehow. I want them to see that they are not missing out in any real way.
 2. I also hope to help prevent unnecessary unkindness to those who do or have spoken in tongues. They too can be made to feel like they are off base or wrong in ways that hurt the health and peace of a church.
 3. So I do ask you to have your bible open so that you are able to observe each point with me.

II. Eight observations the help explain and contain the practice of “tongues.”

- A. Tongues is a gift of the Holy Spirit (4).
1. Remember that this is the first occurrence of this term and event and it is directly tied to the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 2. In other words this is unique and special. It is not learned or acquired on your own or with your own efforts.
- B. Tongues is simply language.
1. Luke makes the observation in vs 5 that there were Jews living in Jerusalem. Why? Remember to always ask why Luke includes some detail in the book of Acts.
 - a. These were called “devout men.” And they had come from many different places in the world.
 - b. One of the things that happened during the celebration of Pentecost was that serious, devout Jews would travel extreme distances to be present.

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- c. These are the people of the *diaspora* and they are called ‘devout’ because they did not forget what and who they were even though they were thoroughly Hellenized.
 - d. So, they travel to the land of their forefathers but it was a strange land with a strange language. It would be like a ninth generation Romanian going to the village of his forefathers.
 - e. Due to the extreme distances they would stay in Jerusalem for many weeks after the celebration before the long trip home.
2. The people who began to speak in tongues must have all erupted at once and this is the sound the others heard.(6). Likely this all happened in the temple square where everyone would be gathered.
- a. Note that this was not some vague, ecstatic gibberish that made no sense.
 - b. All of the languages represented in the crowd were now heard coming from these people. Note the word “own” as it is a specific term that means each unique language. This would get down to the very idea of dialects even.
3. And the language spoken was unknown by the speaker (7).
- a. This is the point of their shock. The manner of dress and appearance made the speakers obvious.
 - b. Today in America this is not easy to understand. But you go to most parts of the world even now and it is rather easy to distinguish who people are and from where they come.
 - c. So now, in this passage, we have a baseline to understand the nature of what are tongues. They simply are actual languages spoken by others but not known to the speaker.
 - d. Unfortunately the translators choose to still translate the word *glōssa* as “tongues” rather than languages. Listen to how much easier the meaning is if you did.
- (1) *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. (Acts 2:4)*

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- (2) . . . we hear them in our own language speaking of the mighty deeds of God. (Acts 2:11)
- (3) . . . and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages. (1 Cor. 12:10)

e. Here is a key conclusion we can make right now. Most of what is called “tongues” today is not what the bible calls tongues, because it is not an actual language.

- (1) What you hear is not a language that is known by others and though it may be dearly loved and desired it isn’t tongues.
- (2) It does not mean that it is wrong or bad. It just is not speaking in tongues and it is why we would not allow it to be part of the work and worship of when our church gathers.

C. Tongues is outward focused (8, 11).

- 1. This is important to note since the idea of speaking in tongues has become almost completely inward focused by those practice it.
 - a. It is assumed that this allows you to talk directly to God. But even a little bit of thought shows how that makes no sense. Any language talks directly to God.
 - b. It is also commonly believed that through tongues we experience personal transformation and godliness, even though nothing in the Scripture indicates this.
 - c. And finally, it is believed to be the perfect prayer language to God, but the speaker has no idea what was said, nor does anyone who is listening, so neither is actually changed.
- 2. Tongues, like every gift from the Holy Spirit, such as teaching, leadership, mercy and such, are for others. So that we might minister to others. It is not about what we get out of it.
- 3. And this is simply what we see happening in vss 8 and 11. The people are surprised to hear their own language as the others spoke.

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- a. In our travels it is not uncommon to be asked to attend a Sunday service and it is hard to do. We must sit for hours as the entire service is done in some other language. We appreciate the desire to bring us into their worship but it does not help or instruct us.
 - b. But when they take the time to translate for us what is happening, then we can share in the events. We can be blessed by their joy and words because we know what is happening.
 4. That is the point here. The ability to suddenly speak in these foreign languages was for the hearers, not the one speaking. It was outward-focused rather than inward.
- D. Tongues is overly God-centered (11).
1. This a simple point but important to grasp. Speaking in tongues is nothing more than a language you do not know but the hearer knows. But the content of the speech is far more important.
 2. The mighty deeds of God.
 - a. The psalms use this term to speak of when they are describing the glory and greatness of God. They reference the crossing of the Red Sea or the destruction of some enemy by the hand of God.
 - b. The point of it is to encourage the people to look to God and find hope in God rather than man.
 - c. And here in the Temple square the people are not hearing in their native language a message that is built around them and their desires. Rather they are hearing come out of the mouths of these people words about the greatness and glory of God. Or to put it a different way, they are not hearing the type of drivel coming from too many pulpits today about being a better you and having victory over your troubles.
 - d. Why?
 - (1) First, because it is the Holy Spirit who is bringing out these words. They are not the thoughts of the people, but of God. And the Holy Spirit will always bring our focus to be upon God and His majesty.

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- (2) Second, it is because what is happening is actually prophesied in the Old Testament about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the people of God. When you talk of the mighty deeds of God you are focusing on how He faithfully rescues/saves His people.
 - (a) So these are declarations of the choosing of Abraham.
 - (b) The Exodus event with the Red Sea and the manna from heaven.
 - (c) It is about Jericho and countless other stories of God's mighty hand in the life and experience of Israel.
 - (d) All pointing to His faithfulness to His promises.
 - (3) This is setting the stage for Peter to preach to the crowd and call them to repent and be baptised and follow Jesus as Lord.
3. You see this again in Acts 10:46.
 - a. Notice the event leading up to this in 10:31, 42-46.
 - b. The point was to prove that they were also recipients of the Holy Spirit (47).
 - c. And it is obvious that this a known language or languages because the Jews understood what was being said.
 4. A quick summary: tongues is a work of the Holy Spirit that results in speaking a different language that is focused on informing others rather than blessing the speaker and the content of the speaking in this language is to declare the mighty deeds of God.
 5. Now we are going to look at the only other place in the bible where tongues are dealt with, 1 Corinthians.
- E. Tongues is not guaranteed to be present in every church and place (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)
1. Note the triune nature of the giving of gifts and how they work.

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2. We tend to think that there is a master list of gifts and each Christian is given one. But it is better to see that any lists in the bible are examples only. The reason is that no list agrees completely with another.
 3. The proper focus should be upon the fact that God is giving them to each believer and it is unique for them (cf. 11). Picture a unique blending of giftedness.
 4. It is also important to realize that never does the bible say that we get a gift and it is ours until death. This giftedness can come and go as the Spirit desires. Often this might be so as to fulfill a unique need in a local church.
 5. So with that in mind we should understand that tongues is not normative for churches. Three times in the book of Acts they happen and apparently quite a lot in Corinth, which was a major foreign trade center. Not Rome nor the scattered churches through Asia Minor.
- F. Tongues is not angelic speech or ecstatic language (1 Corinthians 13:1).
1. I will only make brief mention of this because it is commonly used to defend the unknown babbling (I do not use this in an unkind manner) that is commonly called “tongues.”
 2. The point of 13:1 is not to teach that we might be talking in some secret angelic language. It is hyperbole to make a point. But instead of learning the point it gets misused to defend an activity that is not found in Scripture.
- G. Tongues is not for personal edification (1 Corinthians 14:1-11).
1. Edification simply means to build up or strengthen. The church is to be always seeking to do this among one another.
 2. By simply letting this passage work itself out naturally it becomes very clear that Paul is showing that tongues has a very limited purpose.
 3. Vs 2 is often used to argue for a private prayer language to God but it misses the point of the context. If you speak in another language unknown to everyone present then the only one who knows what is being said is God. Compare that with the great value of prophecy in vs 3.
 4. If a person in Corinth spoke in tongues they must have an interpreter, one who could understand the language and translate it for everyone else. If he, or someone else, can't interpret it then vs 28 says he is to be silent.

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5. So it is really summed up in vss 10-11. Language not understood conveys no meaning and therefore is of no value in itself.
6. Behind all of this that all the gifts in any given church exist for one purpose, to edify (12) the people. To build them up in the faith.

H.

III. Conclusion.

- A. Back in Acts notice vss 12-13 as to the reaction to this event.
 1. Some amazed, some confused, and some mocked. But all reacted.
 2. But none were saved. Not one converted with this event.
 3. Why? Because it was not the gospel. God saves people by the gospel and only the gospel.
 4. What is the gospel?
- B. What this event did, however, is set up the opportunity to give an answer to what was happening.
 1. This is seen in vss 14ff.
 2. And it is here that Peter preaches the gospel to them and it is brutal and glorious all at once.
- C. We will look at that message the next time I speak to you, Lord willing.

“Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Small Group Questions

- What was helpful in this sermon or created more questions for you as you listened?
- How does what was learned help you think through on how to respond to friends and acquaintances who say they speak in tongues? How should you address it?
- I made a point early on about being under the authority of the Word and how this is often to a reality for people. Can you think of ways you realized that the Word was not really authoritative to you and when you saw it the result was repentance?