

Acts: Barrier Breaking Faith

Session 2 – Chapter 2:1-41

The record of Pentecost is one of God keeping His promise to empower the church to be witnesses of the gospel, accompanied by signs and wonders. When God shows up, He does so supernaturally. We often refer to as miraculous. And it is!

John the Baptist prophesized that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. *I **baptize** you **with** water, but He will **baptize** you **with the Holy Spirit**.*" Mark 1:8

Prior to his ascension Jesus repeated this promise. *For John **baptized with** water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit**.*" Acts 1:5

- **Old Testament Background - Pentecost**

Pentecost is the Greek word for fiftieth. The feast begins fifty days after Passover.

It is the Jewish Feast of Weeks/Harvest/First Fruits as designated in Exodus 23:16 and repeated in Proverbs 3:9-10. It is a harvest festival at the end of seven weeks of harvesting that starts with the barley harvest and then the wheat. The "first fruits" of the wheat harvest is presented in worship in the temple as a wave offering. It is a feast of thanksgiving to God for his provision and blessing of the harvest. It is an acknowledgement of God, as in 1 Corinthians 3:7, *So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.*

It is significant that this event was in the midst of a Jewish festival that would include many pilgrims who had come from other parts of the world to celebrate. The population of Jerusalem would have an international nature. A message to the world.

It is also significant that God chose the feast of "first fruits" to give the Holy Spirit as a witness to Jesus' resurrection. *But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* 1 Corinthians 15:20

Then, those who believed are also firstfruits. *But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at his coming, those who belong to Christ.* 1 Cor. 15:23

- **Prayer Preparation 2:1**

Jesus walked with his disciples *forty days* before his ascension (Acts 1:3). It was on the 10th day afterwards that the Holy Spirit came. It was a time of complete preparation in body, mind, and spirit, for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

- **Fire Falls upon the Gathered Church 2:2-4**

2:2 The Wind Blows

Jesus taught that the Spirit is like the wind that blows in John 3:8. The Spirit came as God's sovereign decision, in his timing, and upon those who obediently waited in prayer. The Spirit filled the house. When the tabernacle and temple were dedicated God showed up and filled the temple with the cloud of the glory of His presence (Leviticus 9:23; 2 Chronicles 5:13b-14).

Now, the ecclesia = church body/fellowship, was filled by the Holy Spirit and became the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). The witnesses of God are mobile, and

they now take God to the people, rather than the people having to come to a building. There is great value in the gathering of the church to hear the Word, Spirit filled praise to God, and to encourage one another (Rom. 10:14-15, 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Eph. 5:18-19; Heb. 10:25). There is also a lesson to be learned about taking God to people as witnesses. That is what a "nation of priests" do, take God to the people and bring the people to God.

God chose Abram as part of a Habiru / Hebrew people, who wandered about as herdsmen, to be His witnesses to the nations. Isaiah 49:6 says they are to be a "light to the nations" and Matthew 28:19 tells us to "go to the nations." The mission of the people of God has always been to be a nation of witnesses to other peoples 1 Peter 2:9. Our mission is to be missionaries or witnesses to the world of the salvation from sin Jesus provides by grace.

2:3 Tongues of Fire

Leviticus 9:23 Fire fell and consumed the offering as a sign of God's approval at the dedication of the tabernacle. In 1 Kings 18:38 fire fell upon the altar built by Elijah in his battle against the prophets of Baal. It gave approval and witness to God's power.

The tongues of fire that fell upon each person's head, "enabled them" or gifted each person individually (cf. Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:4-5), with the power of God as a sign that He is at work fulfilling of the prophecy and keeping the promise.

2:4 Tongues of Witness

They were enabled by the Spirit to speak in the languages, "different tongues" of the international crowd that were drawn to this event.

God fills believers individually with the Holy Spirit, yet also, for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7), that together we will proclaim the gospel in power to all who have ears to hear.

Throughout Acts, we find the apostles proclaiming the gospel accompanied by signs and wonders, (cf. 2:43; 4:33; 5:12, etc.). Through the years many great awakenings and revivals have been accompanied by signs and wonders. God does use the Spirit's grace gifts, "charisma", to draw people to hear the gospel and be saved. It can be powerful preaching, testimonies, or miracles. In 1 Peter 4:10 the gifts are speaking, serving or giving signs. The focus isn't miracles, but a relationship to a loving, mighty God who saves.

God gives by the Holy Spirit what people need to be convicted of sin and convinced of righteousness in Christ, and of judgment to come. John 16:8 *When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.* God empowers, we witness.

• The International Crowd 2:5-13

2:5 Jewish pilgrims at the Feast of Weeks were there from all over the civilized world.

2:6 At first the sound of the wind of the Holy Spirit and speaking in different languages confused the crowd. It was clear languages, but it was as babel to them when all the languages were spoken at once. (Cf. Genesis 11:1-9).

2:7-11a From confusion came amazement and clarity. The tower of Babel is reversed. They were given the gift of languages to communicate clearly the message of salvation.

2:11b-13 What is heard is the declaration of the mighty acts of God. They were at the same time "astounded and perplexed", wondering, "What does this mean?" They made

up their own answer, that they must be drunk. They looked for a physical and not a spiritual cause, (Cf. Eph. 5:18 "don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit.")

- **Time for a Sermon** 2:14-36

It was time for clarity for the people with a sermon of explanation. The sign and the sermon go together forming one powerful witness. In this case the miracle set up the sermon. At other times in Acts the miracle confirms the sermon.

2:14-15 Peter is the spokesman, but the other eleven apostles are present. To the Jews first, Rom. 1:16. He explains that they are not drunk, but God is at work doing something new among them.

2:16-21 "On the contrary" it is now the last days under a new covenant as was prophesied by the prophet Joel. He spoke of the pouring out to the Spirit. In addition he speaks of additional wonders that God will do in the heavens. Jesus taught about the same wonders as signs of His return in Matthew 24:29. Peter combines in quoting Joel what God was doing in that moment and what God will do in the future. One comforts that God is gracious and the other reminds that God is judge who holds all accountable, and all who call on the Lord will be saved. In that moment he planted in their minds what they all needed to do.

2:22-28 Peter now attests what has happened to Jesus. Even though evil men had their plans God was at work, and even their actions was used and to show He was in control and not defeated, He raised Jesus from the dead. He quotes Psalm 16, written by David, whom Jesus had referenced in Mark 12:36 as speaking by the Holy Spirit that Jesus is "Lord", and had delighted the crowds in doing so.

2:29-36 Peter now gives an exegesis of this passage from Psalm 16:8-11 as it applied not to David, but to Jesus. The Word is powerful, even able to bring people to salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). He ended his explanation with another quote from Psalm 110:1, the same passage Jesus quoted in Mark 12. What Jesus elevated Peter imitated. Quoting David and Jesus is as good as it gets as sources for His audience. If David the great king called Jesus Lord, then indeed He is. The one crucified was resurrected. He is the Lord, victorious over death and life. And HE IS THE MESSIAH, the long awaited Savior. Peter tells them what they had done, and then what God had done

2:37 The Holy Spirit used Peter's spoken words to convict the crowd. (Jn. 16:8) They wanted to be not against, but aligned with God.

2:38-39 He tells them to repent and be baptized. Baptism is a symbol of what has already taken place in your heart, not a means of salvation. He promises the gifting of the Holy Spirit as a sign they are saved. (Cf. Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5; Eph. 1:13.)

2:40-41 The rest of the conversation is not recorded, but we know it was convincing, for when he gave his invitation, 3000 accepted his message and were baptized.

Barrier Breaking Faith has overcome languages by the power of the Holy Spirit. Look throughout the book of Acts as in 2:47 for this or a similar summary phrase, "...were added to them." We will see the numbers increase to 5k in 4:4 and beyond. God gave the growth as people of faith, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit, continued to give witness.