

## Acts 2:1-21

### The beginning of the end.

(The power to talk and walk as the body of Christ is made available to us.)

See theology notes #603, #604

#### ***Introduction***

1. In many ways this chapter is the key to what has gone before and what will follow in the book of Acts.
  - a. All that has gone before (Ch.1) looks forward to Pentecost.
  - b. All that follows (Ch.3-26) illustrates the significance of Pentecost.
2. Pentecost will launch the disciples into New Covenant ministries of power. It will change the way people hear the leading of God in their lives. It will create the church. It will dispense the varied gifts that will enable Christians to be the Body of Christ.

#### **A. Pentecost is a transition event.**

“<sup>1</sup> And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

1. The Biblical story is marked by great transitional events.
  - Creation
  - The Fall
  - The Promise given to Abraham
  - Exodus
  - Incarnation
  - Crucifixion
2. In later Jewish teaching Pentecost came to be identified with the giving of the Law and the birth of Israel as a nation but this understanding was not present in Jesus' day.
3. Pentecost was the Jewish feast of weeks, celebrating the barley harvest. It was the beginning of the end of the agricultural cycle. In this sense, there is an apt metaphor for the spiritual saga centered in Jesus Christ. Pentecost marks the beginning of the end times, the age to come, the latter days, the culmination of God's plan.

4. Pentecost launched Christ's church. Acts 11:15-18  
 "15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as He did upon us **at the beginning**. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, "John baptized with water, but you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit**." 17 If God therefore gave to them the same gift as he gave to us also **after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ**, who was I that I could stand in God's way? 18 And when they heard this they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the **repentance that leads to life**."
5. Pentecost launched the **NEW COVENANT** of grace. The Cross, Resurrection, and Pentecost each play an important role in the transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant. Marriage provides an illustration of how three events can be parts of one single event - 1. The ceremony, 2. The signing of legal papers, 3. The consummation of the union.

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| <i>Old Covenant</i>                    | <i>transition</i>             | <i>New Covenant</i>                                |
| <b>Old Testament<br/>&amp; Gospels</b> | <b>Cross<br/>Resurrection</b> | <b>Acts<br/>&amp; Epistles</b>                     |
| <b>Law</b>                             | <b>Pentecost</b>              | <b>Grace<br/>"the Age to Come"<br/>"New Birth"</b> |

**B. Pentecost is a controversial experience.**

"5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because they were each one hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and marveled, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? "And how is it that we each hear {them} in our own language to which we were born? 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them in our {own} tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God. "And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

1. **General observations concerning the speaking in tongues:**
  - a. It came on **all who were present** not just the worthy or the faithful or the seekers. It is not clear how many people were present - at least the 12 but perhaps 120. There may have been an unspecified period of time between

the events of chapter one and chapter two. Many believe that the disciples were in the court yard of the temple when the events of chapter two took place.

- b. There is no indication that anyone was **seeking** or expecting this.
- c. The tongues were **known languages** that communicated a meaningful message at the time. Where the disciples speaking in various languages or was the miracle in the hearing of the crowd? The text is not clear.
- d. It resulted in **bold** worship and witness of God's glory.
- e. There are **two terms** used by Luke in Acts both translated "**filled**". The one used here is always used in contexts of prophetic utterance and dramatic ministry. The term used here has little to do with spiritual maturity for it comes on spiritual adults and babes alike. It also seems to leave as fast as it comes. It is the same kind of filling reserved for prophets, kings, and special workers in the Old Testament.
- f. The experience is best understood as 1) the initial baptism or indwelling of the Spirit and 2) a temporary filling for worship and witness.
- g. This was the **initiation of the new covenant age** and Christianity as we know it. Although the disciples were believers before this event, they were believers in the OT sense of faith. Now their faith becomes a NT faith, a new birth, their eyes are opened, their lives are changed, they become a part of the Body of Christ.

## 2. What is the significance of speaking in tongues?

- a. Tongues at Pentecost were a reversal of the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel (Gen.11) where man tries to reach God with his own power. As a result, God confuses human language and scatters the people (Gen.11:9). At Pentecost, the different languages that for so long had divided the people were removed as a barrier to common worship through the gift of tongues.
  - One was associated with rebellion, the other with repentance.
  - One scattered the multitudes, the other united the nations.
  - One resulted in confusion and diversity of tongues, the other resulted in unity and a common spiritual language.
- b. While there is evidence in Acts 2 that tongues were known human languages, it is suggested in I Cor.14 that in some contexts tongues can be a language that is a mystery to the speaker and directed to God (I Cor.14:2) as "tongues of angels" (I Cor.13:1).
- c. The gift of tongues described in I Corinthians (which may have been distinct from the manifestation at Pentecost) served to edify the speaker (14:4) but not the hearer, unless interpreted.
- d. Paul sees uninterrupted tongues in a public meeting as a sign to unbelievers. In I Cor.14:20-25 he quotes from Isa.28:11-12 to make this

point, “By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me.”

1. This quote is taken from a context where Israel is taken captive to a land where they do not understand the language as a punishment for not listening to God’s clear message through His prophets.
2. Paul seems to suggest that when tongues are used in a church meeting (without interpretation) they serve as a sign of judgment on the people for not listening to God.

### 3. Speaking in tongues is a controversial subject today.

- a. Some Christians believe that unless a person has a “Baptism in the Holy Spirit” experience with speaking in tongues as in Acts two, they are not properly anointed for ministry. This teaching suggests that there are two classes of believers – **nominal Christians** who receive the person of the Spirit at new birth, and others who are “**Spirit baptized or filled**” **Christians** who receive the power of the Spirit at some point after conversion. But we must note:
  1. Luke never speaks of the Spirit coming in two stages. There is but one coming in a person’s life.
  2. Paul assumes that every Christian has access to the power of the Spirit. I Cor.12:13. He never encourages Christians to seek a “baptism with or in the Spirit.”
  3. It is true that there are “fillings with the Spirit” that are associated with dramatic boldness and power in ministry but this is distinct from the Baptism with the Spirit.
- b. Other Christians have reacted to the above teaching and viewed speaking in tongues (practiced by some groups) as illegitimate. This controversy was also present in the early church (I Cor.12-14). Paul encouraged the church to seek to edify the church, forbid not the speaking in tongues, and respect the diversity of gifts realizing that not all will have the gift of tongues.

### C. Pentecost is a fulfillment of a prophetic expectation.

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words.<sup>15</sup> For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is {only} the third hour of the day; <sup>16</sup> but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

*17 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams; 18 Even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit And they shall prophesy. 19 And I will grant wonders in the sky above, And signs on the earth beneath, Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into*

*blood, Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. 21 And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

1. The “filling with the Spirit” resulting in the speaking in tongues brought a confused reaction.
  - a. Some were “amazed and marveled” as they awaited an explanation.
  - b. Others drew negative conclusions “mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”
  - c. We should not be surprised if the world mocks at the more dramatic displays of emotion and boldness among Christians.
2. This prophecy quoted by Peter speaks of return of prophecy to the nation Israel (The prophetic spirit ended with Malachi). Jews would have associated Joel’s words with the “age to come”, the “Kingdom of God”, the “promise of Abraham”, the “Messiah.” This prophecy has its initial fulfillment at Pentecost. As this end time age proceeds, the rest of the prophecy will also be realized (Rev.6:12 “the whole moon became like blood.”)
3. Two Old Testament prophets predicted two different aspects of the Spirit’s coming.
  - a. **Ezekiel 36:26-27** spoke of the Spirit dwelling IN the people of God.
  - b. **Joel 2:28-32** spoke of the Spirit speaking THROUGH the people of God. Joel is quoted here because his text addresses the meaning of tongues.
4. Before this outpouring, the Spirit came in power only upon a select few – prophets, kings, priests, etc. Now the power is on all who call on the Lord in faith. “he was with you but shall be in you.” John 14:17
5. It will be quite evident in the last part of this chapter (Acts 2:41-47) that one of the fruits of the Spirit’s coming is an experience of “community.”