

Acts 2:1-13

The Descending of the Spirit

Introduction: People often refer to Pentecost as the birth of the Church - But the Church (Ekklesia) - meaning the called out ones - has been since the time of Abraham. Pentecost was the descent of the Spirit of God with life transforming power - it was heaven's power come down to transform earth - particularly human beings. Just as the Holy descended upon Jesus when John Baptized him, so that he entered his public ministry "full of the Holy Spirit", "led by the Spirit", "in the power of the Spirit", and "anointed by the Spirit", so now the same Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus to equip them for their mission in the world. In the early chapters of Acts Luke refers to the promise, the gift, the baptism, the power and the fullness of the Spirit in the experience of God's people. These terms are interchangeable but all refer to the same thing.

Though the event of Pentecost is unique and can never be repeated Luke uses the term Greek term "play'-tho" for being filled with the Spirit. Which means short outburst of spiritual power/inspiration, rather than the inception of longterm endowment of the Spirit. - This fact is helpful to explain why a person might be "filled with the Holy Spirit" on many occasion while at the same time remaining full of the Spirit." -Turner

I say this because as we go through the book of Acts we need to see that though all Christians have the Spirit of God as an endowment - a down payment of our redemption - assurance that we are children of God - We are also to seek and ask to be continually filled with the Spirit of God - for witness and service.

The wind and the fire of Pentecost were abnormal, and probably the languages too; but the new life and joy, fellowship and worship, freedom, boldness and power were not - this is what the Christian life and church is to manifest continually.

Acts 2 has three sections. It begins with Luke's description of the Pentecost event, continues with Peter's explanation of the event and sermon, and ends with the effects in the life of the Jerusalem Church.

1. Pentecost - What does it mean? This is the question the crowd asks, and the question we should keep asking through this passage.

1. What Does it mean -Transforming Power Outside of Us

1. Luke tells us that a sound came from Heaven - that of a mighty rushing wind! - it doesn't come from earth, it doesn't come from within, it comes from Heaven.
2. The first thing of Pentecost, as Peter will go on to show is that this is the fulfillment of all that God spoke in the Prophets - how in the last days He would pour out his Spirit with transforming power giving us new hearts that would be soft and pliable - that we would know God intimately, personally.

1. “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ... I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” - Jeremiah 31:31-34

2. Listen to Ezekiel -“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ 18 And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. 19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

3. Luke shows us something powerful that the Bible teaches again and again - our need for the heart transforming work of the Spirit. The power for righteousness, for goodness, to seek

God, to love others selflessly is not in us. The power is outside of us. Many people have this view that all that we need is within us - all that is wrong is outside of us, just tap into the inner power - the Bible tells us the opposite -inside is the problem, your heart is filled with sin - iniquity - bent in on itself - the power must come from outside of you. - From the transforming work of the Spirit of God. That Power is available through the name of Jesus! Pentecost is about transforming power coming from outside of us (From heaven to earth, From God to man) to transform us within.

2. What Does it mean -Transforming Power inward

1. I Just read you passages about God's Spirit doing this transforming work of the heart - but how does this work?
 1. Luke says that when the Spirit came they saw something like fire that divided and rested on each of their heads.
 2. God's presence in the Old Testament was often depicted in fire - a burning smoking oven to Abraham, the burning bush to Moses, The fire and smoke on Mount Sinai, The pillar of fire that lead the children of Israel by night. This picture of fire was a message of God's holy presence, often it was fatal, it was always overwhelming - as the book of Hebrews reminds us - "Our God is a consuming fire". But here we see the presence of fire that was once fatal now resting on individual believers. Now, every believer is a burning bush - filled with God's personal presence.
 3. I know I'm still speaking in outward terms - so what does the Spirit do inwardly, or what does it feel like? -Remember how I said that Luke is connecting the baptism of Jesus with the outpouring of the Spirit - What did the voice say from heaven when Jesus was baptized? - **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."**
 4. Paul tells us in Romans 8:16 -**"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"** and again in Romans, he says, **"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."** Or in Galatians 4:6, **"God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"**

5. What Paul is telling us is that God the Father says to each of us in giving us his Spirit - my beloved child in whom I am well pleased! Hear that -Love (I love you), delight (I am pleased with you - as you are and not as you should be), identity (You are mine -Proud ownership) The job of the Spirit is to come into your heart and tell you about God's love for you - (the two advocates?) Jesus says in John 14 that the Spirit will come and manifest these truths to us. he will connect the head with the heart, he will make God's love for us a living reality.

3. What Does it mean -Transforming Power Outward

1. The next thing we see is the Spirit giving utterance to God's people - they are speaking with other tongues or in other languages. Now this is an absolute miracle because the people realize or know that these people are Galileans. Galileans were known to be that of a lower class, uneducated, and not only that, they had what we would call a hick accent. They were not usually eloquent speakers - but here each nation (Jews who were scattered throughout the World, regathered nation of Israel) mentioned hears these Galileans speaking in their native language - The mighty acts of God, of God's salvation and some say - they're drunk!
2. Peter will dismiss this claim in his explanation and many Bible commentators have gone at lengths to defend the fact that being filled with the Spirit is not like being drunk. But Paul the Apostle connects these two in Ephesians 5 - He says, **“do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit”**. So why do people think they're drunk and why does Paul connect these as well?
3. Because these Christians are expressing a joyful fearlessness - they were speaking the Gospel freely without fear or inhibition. Which is also what people do when they get drunk. You know how people try all sorts of crazy things and say all sorts of crazy stuff when they're drunk -it's because they have this fearlessness. The difference is Alcohol is a depressant - it causes you to forget all your troubles, and that's why you're so happy - no troubles, at least none that you can remember.. Being filled with the Spirit though fills you with Joy - to know the fiery reality of God's love for you makes fills you with such Joy it makes you fearless. These Christians didn't talk about just being happy, but they talked about “the mighty works of God” -

this is a reference to God's historical acts of redemption - from deliverance in Egypt to the Cross. So we could say from this that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be joyfully obsessed with the Gospel... God's gracious love and rescue.

4. What does it mean - A New Man on the Mountain.

1. Why does God send the Holy Spirit down on Pentecost?

Pentecost was the celebration and remembrance of the giving of the Law and Covenant to Israel. It came fifty (That's what Pentecost means) days after the Passover. What we see here in Acts 2 is the New Covenant being inaugurated - again God had said through the Prophets **"I will put my Spirit in you, and I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** Just as the giving of the first covenant had wind (a tempest), fire, and a divine utterance at Mount Sinai so we see all these here in Acts 2. But there is one huge difference - in the giving of the Law as told in Exodus there was exceeding fear on the People's part so much so that they said - Moses you go up, and come back and tell us what God says, were too afraid. Moses was the mediator, the man in the middle, the man on the mountain; to go up and bring the law of God and the covenant down - but even Moses was exceedingly afraid. This is how God could enter into covenant relationship with people through a mediator. When the people sinned Moses would go up and mediate for them. But here in Acts we have something better. The fire of God descends on every single person not on the the top of the mountain, and the word going out is not the word of the law but of the gospel and that is because there is a new man on the mountain - Jesus has ascended to the Father and now he has come back down in the person of the Spirit with a New Law - the Law of the Spirit, with life transforming power.

- 1. "For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion**

and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” -Hebrews 12:18-24

2. This New Law of the Spirit this New Covenant removes all fear - it speaks better things than the blood of Abel - Abel's blood cried out for recompense - but the blood of Jesus shed on the cross has once for all satisfied God's wrath against sin - and it speaks peace! Jesus is better than Moses he's a better mediator because when we sinned Jesus didn't just pray for us, he died for us, he took our place of judgement. He was cast out of God's presence so we could be brought in. He lost the Love of his Father so God could say to us -You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. So Now that Fire of God that was fatal under the Old Covenant can come into your life with transforming power.

Conclusion: If we really want to understand Pentecost we need to go back to Genesis 11 to the Curse of Babel. Remember the story -all mankind spoke the same language and in their pride and arrogance they were building a stairway to heaven to ascend the heavens to be like God and yet they were scattered in confusion and judgment. Here in Acts 2 we have those same nations represented and the language barrier being overcome. Scattered at Babel - under self rule, gathered in Jerusalem under King Jesus. Babel arrogantly tried to ascend to heaven - we don't need God - the answer is within; Whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly descended to earth - the transforming power must come from God. Pentecost, finally - prefigures that great day when the redeemed company will be drawn from every nation, tribe, people and language and sing one song -

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Closing - Refilled with the Spirit? to Know God's love for you existentially - to have a joyful fearlessness to proclaim the Good news because the Spirit

has made God's love for you alive in your heart...It is your father's pleasure to give you this refilling of the Spirit..