

Reversing Babel

Chris Starn / General

Acts / Spirit; Pentecost / Acts 2

Acts 2

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;
¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.
²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up

according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

“ ‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
my flesh also will dwell in hope.
²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.
²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Ezekiel 37:3

And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

Ezekiel 37:10

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army

Matthew 3:11

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Philippians 2:2-4

2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others

2 Timothy 4:5

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Good morning Church. Thank you for joining us here online. I am excited about being back together with you in person next Sunday.

We are walking through the book of Acts, and last week we saw Jesus return to the Father, but not before giving some parting instructions to His disciples.

He told them that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. He also told them that the Father had plans, but they did not need to know the details.

Jesus rose into the clouds and two angels remind them that Jesus will return.

We then saw how, united in prayer, they chose someone, Matthias, to replace Judas.

So to give you an idea of the timeline,

Jesus is crucified on a Friday, the beginning of Passover.

He rises from the grave on Sunday.

After 40 days he ascends into Heaven

About 7-10 days later, Jews are celebrating Pentecost.

Acts 2

1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Feast of Weeks

Pentecost is actually the Greek name for the Old Testament Feast of Weeks.

Pente means 50 and it has now been 50 days since the wave offering during Passover. (Hence the 7-10 days from Jesus' ascension to Pentecost).

The Feast of Weeks celebrates the end of the wheat harvest. It is one of the three holidays that Jewish men are required to celebrate in Jerusalem.

In Hebrew, this time is called Shavout, which is Jewish for weeks. **This the time when the Jews celebrate the giving of the Law to Moses.**

It is Pentecost, and about 120 of the disciples are together in one place. They are waiting for the Holy Spirit as Jesus had instructed them.

What we are going to look at is one of the **three most important events in redemptive history.**

The first is creation where God creates the stage upon which His sovereign plan of salvation will play out.

The second is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God accomplishes redemption and ushers in the new covenant that fulfills all the promises and expectations of the Old Testament.

The third most significant event in redemptive history **is Pentecost** - the birth of the church and creation of God's new covenant people.

[Acts 2](#)

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

What a dramatic and unique moment.

Luke describes the coming of the Holy Spirit in two common metaphors that are found in scripture: **wind and fire.**

The fact that this event occurs suddenly tells us that this is **not an ordinary act.** The Apostles did not plan this out, but Pentecost was rushed upon with them with sudden, divine power.

Wind

This is more than just a breeze. It is a **“mighty rushing wind,”** and we will see in verse 6 that it got the attention of a lot of people in Jerusalem.

In many parts of the Bible, God’s work is described with wind imagery.

The Hebrew word for “wind” is *rauch*, and it also means “Spirit.”

Ezekiel 37:3

And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

And God demonstrates His power by giving the dry bones muscles and tendons.

But even then they do not live. They only come alive when God breathes the Spirit into them.

Ezekiel 37:10

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army

Only the Holy Spirit can give new life and this life-giving Spirit has come to rest on the disciples.

Fire

The use of fire to describe the Holy Spirit brings to mind Moses before the burning bush in

[Exodus 3](#)

and then the fire on Mount Sinai in

[Exodus 19](#)

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Fire in scripture many times symbolizes the presence of the Spirit of God.

When John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing at the river Jordan, he spoke of the “baptism” that was to come.

Matthew 3:11

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

God is working out His will in redemptive history.

Acts 2:4-11

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, 11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”

What we see here is the reversal of Babel.

Babel

In the Garden of Eden, God blesses Adam and Eve and tells them to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. (Genesis 1:28)

God again repeats this command to Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:7.

In Genesis 11, we find that the people decide to build a tower to “make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” This is in direct defiance of God.

So God comes down and confuses their language, because at this time there was only one language.

Because of this, people are dispersed over the face of the earth.

Keep this in mind as we continue

From Babel to Pentecost

At Babel, the language is confused, but here at Pentecost the language is understood.

6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

The disciples were speaking in foreign languages and the crowd that gathered could understand them.

In Genesis God scatters the nations to the four corners of the earth.

Here we have the nations gathering together

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.

People will scatter to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring into the Covenant the harvest of souls from every corner of the earth.

At Babel, language was used to promote a human agenda, but at Pentecost language is used as a “sign” to announce the mighty works of God.

The Gospel message is universal. It is for the whole world.

Jesus had told the disciples to “make disciples of all nations” in Matthew 28:19.

Remember I said last week that the old covenant was for Abraham’s physical descendants.

What we can confirm now is that the new covenant is for all people, it is universal in scope.

12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.” 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear

to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

Just like the Gospel, this event is polarizing. There are those who hear and believe what they are experiencing, but there were some who refused to believe.

It is the same with the Gospel message. Some will accept it, others will not. Our job is not to convince everyone that they need the Gospel. Our job is to just share it and let the Holy Spirit do what He is going to do.

Those observing what the disciples were doing were perplexed and looking for an explanation. Peter gives them one.

Peter begins by going to the book of Joel to explain what is going on.

16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 “ ‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; 20 the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. 21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

Peter begins to preach one of the most astounding sermons ever preached.

Remember that just a couple of weeks ago, Peter denied Christ three times and now stands amongst a huge crowd sharing the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Talk about a supernatural 180.

Peter immediately points his listeners to the Scripture.

22“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, “ ‘I saw the

Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” ’ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Peter’s sermon is an awesome example of what preaching ought to be. You turn to the biblical text, explain it, apply it, and then call for a response. In other words, expository preaching.

Peter focuses on the work of Jesus Christ, which is appropriate considering what has just occurred.

Peter’s sermon is direct and demonstrates the fulfillment of the promises of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

Just a few highlights I want to mention:

Peter emphasizes God’s sovereignty over the events of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Jesus did not end up on the cross due to the failure of His ministry.

He was delivered by God according to a predetermined plan.

Jesus was the lamb of God, sent to die.

This should bring us some peace and assurance that God is in control.

God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are harmonious truths.

All of redemption comes from God's initiation.

Man had reached a point of total rebellion. There was nothing man could do for themselves. So God acted and took the initiative to save mankind through the work of Jesus Christ.

Peter then emphasizes the lordship of Jesus Christ

In verse 33 Peter says that Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father. The right hand was the side of exaltation.

Jesus is greater than David, Moses, and even Abraham.

Peter's message is saturated with Scripture.

He reasons that the Old Testament shows that Jesus is indeed David's greater son and Messiah of Israel.

The Response

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" 38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Notice that their response to Peter's sermon. They do not ask "How should we fix this problem?"

The people ask, "what should we do?"

This is a genuine response to the preaching of God's Word.

Peter tells them first to repent

Repentance

Sin demands repentance because sin violates God's commandments.

To just make a mental acknowledgement of our sin is not enough.

Feeling sad about the consequences of our sin is not enough. This is only regret.

True repentance is a genuine hatred of the sin with a Spirit-empowered desire to never engage in that sin again and a Spirit-driven determination to obey Jesus instead.

Peter then adds baptism to the what they need to do.

Baptism

Baptism is an essential part of Christian discipleship. It represents our forgiveness of sins.

But is baptism necessary for Salvation?

The New Testament clearly shows that baptism is a visual picture of salvation. In other words, baptism shows that we have been regenerated.

Baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation, if we are saved then we will get baptized.

Baptism is a necessary sign of obedience and discipleship.

And so on that day, 3,000 souls were added to the church.

One final note on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Notice that it was not the speaking in tongues that moved the crowd to ask "what shall we do." The disciples did not heal the crowd of their maladies and then call them to repent.

It was the preaching of the Word of God that moved the hearts of the people.

This is how the Holy Spirit works. **He empowers God's people to proclaim God's Word, and while they are doing this, He brings others to repentance and faith.** And in the process, He grows the church.

The First Church Community

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

I talked extensively about these verses in our final message on Gospel Community, so I do not want to repeat that all again. If you did not hear that message or want to review it just go to the church website and look for the Sunday Message called "Being Part of a Gospel Community."

I just want to touch on the priorities of this first church as a reflection of what our priorities should be.

The Apostles teaching - Word of God

Fellowship

Breaking of Bread - Communion

Corporate prayer

And it was because of these things that the church grew and the ***"Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved."***

Our Response

Pentecost shows us that God keeps His promises. He promised to send the Spirit, the Helper, and He kept that promise.

Pentecost means that we too have access to the promised Holy Spirit and that He gives us gifts in order to live out and share the Gospel.

So “what shall we do?”

Philippians 2:2-4

2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others

2 Timothy 4:5

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Questions for Consideration

- When people see the Holy Spirit at work today, what different reactions might they have?
- How does the Holy Spirit reveal His presence in your life? How does having the Holy Spirit’s power make a difference in how you serve God?
- What would life be like for us today if Jesus hadn’t risen from the grave? If He weren’t seated at the right hand of God?
- What would you do differently if you really expected God to add thousands of new believers to the church today?
- What fears do you have when you think about sharing the gospel? What have you learned from Acts 2 that can help you more fully rely on the Spirit as you witness?
- According to these verses, what are the marks of a healthy church? What attitudes accompanied these actions?
- How does the gospel message go beyond a beginning repentance and faith? What does it look like to live a repentant and faithful life every day?