

Origins of Pentecost: Phenomenon of the Time

Viewing the dynamic of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit from the

Epoch of creation to the present age

1971 witnessed the conclusion of a twenty year study concerning a subject that had tantalized the curious for several centuries- that what and how of man's ability to communicate since the beginning of time. History and archaeology had pulled back the curtain of the past so we could see how man planted his potatoes, sharpened his axe on stone, or fashioned a pottery dish; but we've never known how he learned to talk. Language was then, and now, the single most important mechanical feature of human traits. The work, process, knowledge, and function of man are tied to his being able to pass a thought, dream, or plan to another person by verbal expression.

Controversy

Another kind of utterance caused quite a stir nearly 2,000 years ago. A prayer meeting in the upper room of a two-story building in the old section of Jerusalem was setting for this unusual event. Strange sounds drifted out of the open windows and doors. The sounds, to any onlookers who might have gathered to satisfy their curiosity concerning this disruption, seemed to possess the cadence of prayers, but the diction was that of a foreign tongue. What they saw was even more unsettling. Men and women, perhaps a hundreds or more, staggered and stumbled around the room with their arms outstretched, as though in the grip of some unseen force. A shouted question was hurled up from the curious crowd, "*What meaneth this?*"

Thus began the controversy. The new religious phenomenon spread through the surrounding territories like a swift-moving prairie fire. Traditionalists were up in arms, declaring that this could not be of God, because God never operated in similar fashion before. Others simply refused to believe that God would use a supernatural visitation to appear before men.

Nineteen and a half centuries later the resistance continues, Modern day "disciples of John" abound, believing that their experience with God is enough to satisfy His requirements. Modern Sadducees still hold true to the beliefs set by their ancient forefathers; that God would not visit mankind supernaturally. Even some Pentecostals favor a less dramatic conversion, like a gentle and polite repentance salvation rather than the more "awkward" book of Acts events. Out of these positions come a common belief that one does not have to speak in tongues to receive the Holy Spirit, and a challenge of "show me scripture to prove it" always follows. We are guilty many times of not reading the Bible closely enough to discover what it really says.

Several remarkable events take place in Acts chapter two. First, there was a "*sound from heaven, as a though it were a rushing mighty wind,*" that filled the house they were in. Note carefully that the sound came from heaven. Secondly, "*tongues of Fire*" were distributed unto each of them, and at this point, they were, thirdly, "*filled with the holy Ghost.*" And fourthly, "*they began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance.*" Notice that tongues of fire are equal to the nature of God's being (our God is consuming fire). These fiery tongues were given to each of them, including Mary the mother of Jesus and the disciples.

Instantaneously, at the moment the tongues of fire descended, they were filled with God's Spirit, and then the fiery visitation became verbal expression directly produced by the Spirit of God! They did not cause the utterance, the Spirit of God did. Anyone reading the series of events would have to honestly say the God was solely responsible for all that happened.

The Grammar of Truth

We can now focus on Peter, being freshly filled with the Spirit of God, preached with divine mandate and unction to the growing crowd in the Greek language. The verbal tongues of utterance were given by the Spirit as a sign of miraculous ability to the gathered crowd. They were not a translative device as evidenced by the foreigners in attendance who understood the Greek that Peter was preaching in. But, to the traditionalist and weak Pentecostal, the words of Peter in verse 16 and 17 are an unnoticed spring of truth. *"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh."*

Sometimes persons who try to defend the position of the necessity of speaking with tongues as the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost are intimidated by the challenge of being asked to give scriptural evidence for it. Sadly, many of them have failed to recognize the definitive doctrinal statement of verses 16 and 17. The grammar of this historical moment creates a code of interpretation that none can justifiably deny. The word "this" (verse 16, "But *this* is that...") is a demonstrative pronoun that points out the subject being spoken of. "THIS" includes the events discussed in verses 1 thru 15:

- 1) the sound from heaven
- 2) the tongues of fire
- 3) the filling of the Holy Spirit
- 4) the 120 disciples speaking with tongues by divine unction
- 5) the multitudes confirming their supernatural speech by saying "we hear them speaking in our tongues the praises of God"
- 6) some thinking they were under the influence of "new wine" when they observe them under the influence of a higher power.

These events, then, are "that", another demonstrative pronoun pointing to the statement by Joel about God promising to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. This means only one thing in simple language- the baptism of fiery tongues, resulting in a complete filling of the group with God's spirit, and awkward, erratic behavior usually characterized by drunken people, was irrefutably identified as the promised outpouring of God's Spirit! God was saying, *"When you receive my breath into your soul, you will speak out of your lips, my words."* Or, to put it another way, speaking in tongues and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are one and the same in experience. Inseparable! Indivisible!

Notice the same pattern in Isaiah 28:11-12. *"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to his people. To whom he said, this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing."* The effects and utterance of the divine experience are truly inseparable. No one in scripture is ever described as "accepting Christ" or "receiving Christ as their personal Savior." All New Testament converts were saved by a fiery baptism with the above-noted signs.

Back to the Beginning

During the early 1970's, an intense, exhaustive search for clues as to how human beings bridged the gulf between themselves and the outside world, drew to a close. Simply put, researches tried to locate origin of language. Their studies included language, genealogy, cultural history, and ancient history. Ancient Chaldea was revisited, ancient Babylon was revisited, and the creeds of many ancients were scrutinized. The findings of this study came to light during discussion in the classroom while I was taking a course entitled the "History of the English Language." The linguists who headed up the international effort had arrived at a startling conclusion. They had concluded after much discussion and debate that no one had any idea how language originated or where it might truly have been conceived. This realization sent shock waves through the academic community, for no one ever thought that something as basic as language would not be able to be traced back to its primitive roots.

We, in the discussion group became fascinated by this revelation as well as the rest of the findings. In the opinion of the researcher it was concluded- that man in his present mental capacity was not able to create his own language because of the many complexities involved. For instance, the first step in building the English language would be the creating of a phonic alphabet or a system of sounds that would form the foundation of that language. The English language has 36 sounds in its phonic alphabet. The researchers decided the chances of coming up with those sounds for the purpose of creating a language is ten million to one. In other words, it would be practically impossible. The second step would involve coming up with morphemes, the building block words, out of the clear blue as it were. The third step would be the establishment of grammatical categories for the many uses of the language. The researchers decided that no people in any era of history could wade through such a lingual-cultural briar patch and come up with a language. The last conclusion in our discussion group that day hit like a bombshell. The researchers decided that language as they viewed it in its many difficulties and intricacies had to have come from the same source outside of man! At this point a bell went off in my head.

The Sound of Life

Our discussion moved to the library. There I explained to the professor and other students that the elusive answer to the question of the beginning of human language was found in the second chapter of the book of Genesis. We got a Bible, and I read, "But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

I began to explain that God breathing into man was the animating of the first human, enduing him with soul, life itself. This, I announced, was God's act of giving out of His source into Adam's nothingness, the well of eternity being poured into the cup of mortality. It was within itself divinely supernatural and sovereign.

With the interest of my group intensifying, I launched into an illustration of Psalms 8 and the levels of creation described there. Man being given dominion over the creatures of air, earth, and sea yet being inferior to celestial creatures. His superiority to lower levels of life is evidenced by his “crown” of reason. Animals have no thinking capabilities. Man was the master creation of the earth. Pointing back to Genesis 2 we witnessed God placing Adam in the garden. This creature of thought exhibited his unique prowess by naming the animals. Adam’s inner musing materialized into words. This, I stated was a miracle of God. Those words had not left my mouth when the doors of revelation swung open above my own thoughts. Staring intently at the chronicles of truth situated at the beginning of the natural creation and the birth of the church, God divulged to me that the first thing man did after being breathed upon by the breath of the Spirit of God was to speak! The same thing that separated man from base elements of the animal jungle separates man from the base elements of the sin jungle. The patterns continue to hold true. Every doctor that performs the birth procedure persists in his attempt to open the lungs until he hears the dramatic cry of the newborn. God himself works with a lost and seeking soul. He pounds in its pride, and kneads at its self-centered nature until the grip of its stubborn logic is released and the “cry” of the newborn erupts from the lips of the seeker. New life is formed.

A Sovereign Act

Entrenched religious institutions will forever oppose the supernatural experience God give to men. As their forefathers the Sadducees resisted the Holy Ghost, “*so resist they the Holy Ghost.*” However as this present age unfolds and come to a conclusion, God continues to pour out his spirit upon al flesh in a sovereign act of extending His ethereal glory to an entire generation. The verdict is in, the truth is established, and the pattern is the same... from Adam to Pentecost.