

ACTS

Part 4 – “All Things New”

Acts 2:1-13

Central Theme: With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost Jesus sets in motion the promised restoration of all things already provided for by his death and resurrection.

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

- Pentecost, literally translated “the fiftieth part” refers to the Festival of New Grain celebrated seven weeks or fifty days after Passover. Pentecost, which was also known as the “Feast of Weeks” was one of three pilgrimages to Israel. Essentially, it was a harvest festival when Jews thanked God for the gifts of the grain harvest. Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks was connected with the celebration of the giving of the law at Sinai since they had arrived at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (Schnaebel, 113).

Things Fall Apart

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

(Romans 8:19-23)

- God is bringing repair to our brokenness in two steps. The first step has come through the life, death, resurrection, enthronement of Jesus Christ and his pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This first step of repair for our brokenness addresses our spiritual decay. It addresses our alienation from our Creator and fellow creatures. The second step of repair will come as the Lord reverses the physical curse of sin (death) through resurrection.

Signs of the Spirit

1. A Mighty Wind

- Acts 2:2

In both Hebrew and Greek the words used for wind can refer either to physical wind or to the Spirit of God. This ambiguity is not accidental. The movement of wind portrays an important aspect of the Spirit’s work. As Jesus instructed Nicodemus in John 3 – “You must be born again...The Spirit blows wherever he wills.”

To first century Jews the sign of a mighty wind would have been filled with meaning.

a. The breath of God

- Genesis 2:7
- Ezekiel 37

b. The trumpet blast of God

- The image of a mighty wind is also evoked in those days following the first Passover and subsequent deliverance from Egypt when God gathered his people at Sinai to receive his law. When the Lord descended upon the mountain his arrival was accompanied by terrifying phenomena: Smoke, Lightening, Fire, and the blast of trumpets. Those trumpet blasts were usually associated with the “breath of God” which declared the law to God’s people.
- At Sinai, God’s people were formed as a community of faith under the trumpet blast of the law. But in Jerusalem at Pentecost the word of the Lord is now proclaimed by the church. It is not a trumpet blast but the voices of the apostles. The simpler means now surpasses the revelation given to Moses at Sinai.

2. Tongues of Purifying Fire

- Acts 2:3
- Fire was a common sign announcing the presence of God. He spoke to Moses in the form of a fire engulfing but not consuming a bush. He guided his exodus people through the wilderness at night by a pillar of fire in the sky. When Christ poured out his Spirit at Pentecost, each of the apostles is given a personal “pillar of fire.”
- The fire of God is normally associated with holiness and purity. When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, he responded by removing his sandals for the ground had become holy by virtue of God’s presence. The prophet Malachi declared that when God comes to his temple he will burn like a refiner’s fire (Mal 3). John the Baptist announced that Jesus would be the One who would “baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Lk 3:16-17). The writer of Hebrews quotes Deuteronomy that “Our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29).
- But it is important to note that the fire which marked the apostles at Pentecost came in the visible form of tongues. This sign of fiery tongues alerts us to listen to God’s Word. This miraculous moment was for the purpose of proclaiming God’s Word.

3. The Tongues of the Nations

- Acts 2:4
- The third sign of the Spirit’s coming was the gift of speaking the wonders of God in the native languages (tongues) of all those present. At Pentecost, God fearers (Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism) from around the known world converged in Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Through the apostles they are now hearing the Gospel proclaimed in their own language.
- The miracle of the languages at Pentecost represented a reversal of the confusion and curse of Babel. Babel was a sign of things falling apart. It was a reminder of our brokenness. Pentecost and the miracle of the languages was a foretaste from the Holy Spirit that all things will be made new; all that has been broken by sin will be restored for the glory of God and the joy of His people.