

The Coming of Power

Acts 2:1-11

¹ *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* ² *And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.* ³ *Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.* ⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

⁵ *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.* ⁶ *And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.*

When Luke tells us, “*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come...*” he is speaking of precise day and timeframe within the Jewish calendar. In Leviticus 23 we see a listing of the Jewish Feast Days.

As a bit of a very short side note, we also see in these feasts an outline of the life of our Lord Jesus. The very first feast of celebration is the Feast of Passover. This was to take place on the 14th of Nissan (the first month in the religious calendar) when they were to kill the Passover Lamb. Passover is the perfect picture of the sacrifice of the perfect, sinless, spotless Lamb of God.

Next came the Feast of First-Fruits, the wave offering to the Lord of the first-fruits of the harvest. At His resurrection, Jesus became the *First-Fruits* of those who would be resurrected to life after death. The Apostle Paul in the book of 1 Corinthians 15:20 declares –

²⁰ *But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

But, back to the passage at hand: after Passover and the Day of First-Fruits, they were to count seven Sabbaths or forty-nine days and the next day, the fiftieth day was to be the celebration of what we call **Pentecost**, which is *from the Greek word pentēkostē*

meaning fiftieth... In Judaism this festival is called *Shavuoth* (or Weeks), referring to the *Feast of Weeks*.¹

So now, fifty days after the Passover, we find the 120 or so in the house, as Luke says in Acts 2:1

“...*all with one accord in one place*.² **And suddenly...**”

Suddenly, (απηνο, aphno, **af**-no), it has the direct meaning of *abruptly, without warning, without notice, immediately, at once and unaware*. Their prayers have gone up to the heavens for ten days, seeking the *promise of the Father* (1:4), which Jesus said they would receive, **and suddenly...**

You and I need to realize, we see this **all in retrospect**, after the completion of all things. For them, as they prayed and even on that day: they were looking to be *endued with power from on high* (Luke 24:49).

But, they had no idea what to expect...

What it would look like...

Or, even when it would happen.

And so, “*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*” (1:14).

And while *they were all with one accord in one place, suddenly...*”

“...*there came a **sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting***.³ *Then there appeared to them divided tongues, **as of fire, and one sat upon each of them***.”

What Luke is describing here is **a manifestation of the supernatural**. God was at work and as best as they could, they had described the event.

Remember, Luke wasn't present at the occasion. He received his information from the others who were there: Peter, Mary (the mother of Jesus) and perhaps others. Each of those who experienced this supernatural outpouring would have described the same

¹ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, “[Pentecost](#),” *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1639.

event, yet possibly even using differing characteristics or descriptors. And so here, after he had gathered all the information, we have Luke telling us:

“...*there came a sound from heaven*”, this was understood to be a work or special event from God – again, a **supernatural manifestation** – this wasn’t something that they would experience every day. Here it was, coming from the *heavens, even as Jesus was taken up from them into heaven*. It was a **sound**... there was this **supernatural audible connection made to the physical senses**... a perceptible and no doubt very loud sound...

“...*as of a rushing mighty wind,*” (KJV, NKJV)

“...*like the blowing of a violent wind,*” (NIV),

“...*a sound like a mighty rushing wind,*” (ESV),

For how long or to what intensity, we don’t know, but the sound was loud enough and long enough that it was described by those who experienced as “*like the sound*” or “*as the sound*” of a **violent and powerful wind storm** – perhaps it was for **only a few seconds** (we don’t know for certain). But, it was long enough that it made an **unforgettable impression** on those who experienced it.

We also know from the text that it went throughout the whole house, wherever people were at the time: *and it filled the whole house where they were sitting*.

Then, just as suddenly as the **audible manifestation** came, there appeared a **visible manifestation** of that same supernatural work of God: “...*then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire*...”

“...*what seemed to be tongues of fire*...” (NIV)

“...*what looked like flames or tongues of fire*...” (NLT)

Again, how do you explain the supernatural?

It **appeared like**; it **seemed like**; it **looked like** *tongues of fire*. And not on just a few, not on just the Twelve. No, it came to **all who were in the house** at that time: “...*and one sat upon each of them.*”

In one way or another God was about to use all of those who were there. Now, because we have the book or the text in front of us, we know that in a very few, short moments God was about to use Simon Peter to declare to the crowds what was happening. But at this time, each and every one in the house heard the *sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind*, and saw the *divided tongues, as of fire* land on each one.

The **Glory of God** had come upon them. The Holy Spirit of God had fallen upon them. And what does verse 4 say?

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The power, the presence and the glory of God came upon them in a real and dynamic way. The *dunamis* (*dunamis*) – that power from on high – had now descended from the Father, just like He had promised.

Jesus had told them only a few short days ago –

*“...you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now.”*
(Acts 1:5)

He had shared with them –

*“...you shall **receive power when the Holy Spirit** has come upon you.”* (Acts 1:8)

Prior to that He had revealed to them –

*“I (will) send the **Promise of My Father** upon you...”* (Luke 24:49a)

And once that Promise of the Father came, they would be –

*“...**endued with power from on high.**”* (Luke 24:49b)

This is what was taking place at that very moment; **and as the presence and power of**

the Holy Spirit overwhelmed their lives, they began to give glory to God. As they experienced for the first time that filling of the Holy Spirit in their lives, they broke out in a time of praise and honor to God. And as He filled their lives, they began to overflow; to burst out with joy and praise to God Almighty.

So, moving on... at that time in the history of Israel nearly every Jew knew and could converse in at least three languages:

- Hebrew, the religious language of the Jews
- Aramaic, the trade language of the Middle East since around 900 B.C.
- Koine Greek, the common Greek language used at that time in the culture of the Greek and Roman occupation

But *as the Spirit gave them utterance* these within the house began to shout out and give praise. As they did, they were no longer just speaking Hebrew, although some could have been... also, there may have been some, but not all of them possibly even crying out in Aramaic.... and some could have been praising God in Koine Greek..., but, there was **also a multitude of languages** being spoken, well beyond the learning and experience of those there in the house.

A bit later in the passage we read that there were men there from -

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⁹ "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Let's pause here to clarify a few things and take a look at a bit of detail. Back up with me to verse 4. Here we see there are clearly **three separate phrases** which the Holy Spirit led Luke, the author of Acts to write:

*⁴ And they were **all filled** with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Phrase One: There is no doubt that *they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.* Luke is very clear at that point. All who were in the house were *filled with the Holy Spirit.*

Phrase Two: (they) *began to speak with other tongues*. The word translated as tongues here in the NKJV is the Greek word *γλῶσσα* (**glóssa**). Depending upon the context, the word can mean: **1)** the **physical organ** which the rich man in Hades asked father Abraham to have Lazarus cool down with a bit of water (Luke 16:24) and James warns us that we need to tame it because *“it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”* (James 3:8); **2)** ‘speech,’ or ‘manner of speech,’ or ‘language’².

In the context of what we have in this passage, it is undoubtedly the second definition we see here in Acts 2:4, **“a language”**. But we will come back to that in a moment.

Before we forget or get too far off track, let’s consider the **Third Phrase** found in 2:4. **Here is the troubling modifier** in trying to fully understanding what exactly took place in First Century Jerusalem and what even takes place today. The **Phrase** is:

“...as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

Stick with me here, because we have to look **honestly** at this particular modifier or qualifier which the Holy Spirit led Luke to write in that same verse. There is no doubt that by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, God did a miraculous work in these Believers... ***out of the ordinary, out of the normal; not a natural move, but a supernatural move.***

But when Luke writes: *“...as the Spirit gave them utterance,”* its meaning can be construed a couple of different ways:

- a)** The Spirit gave utterance to **some** to speak in foreign languages and **to some He did not**. In other words, some spoke an unknown foreign language and others simply spoke in a language they knew (Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek), or
- b)** They all spoke in foreign languages as Spirit gave utterance: to one speaking one foreign language and to another, another foreign language.

The reason this is important is because of the belief of some that if you are baptized or as Luke writes here *“filled”* with the Holy Spirit, ***you will speak in tongues.***

² Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 123.

It is here where we need to be as honest with the exegesis (clear **interpretation of the text**) as we possibly can.

One thing we find later in the text, we read that the **tongues** spoken were not incoherent, ecstatic tongues, but they were actual languages. Also, as we bring the whole balance of the passage into view, I believe we clearly will see that **some spoke in foreign languages, while others spoke in known languages**. Let's look at the passage –

⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Also, in the context of what Luke has given us, we need to see that there were no fewer than 14 and no more than 15 different groups represented there on that day – those men hearing these Believers speaking *...the wonderful works of God... in our own language in which we were born...*

⁸ And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ 1)Parthians and 2)Medes and 3)Elamites, those dwelling in 4)Mesopotamia, 5)Judea and 6)Cappadocia, 7)Pontus and 8)Asia, ¹⁰ 9)Phrygia and 10)Pamphylia, 11)Egypt and the parts of 12)Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from 13)Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ 14)Cretans and 15)Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

As we read this, it would seem that those *visitors from Rome* would have heard the words in Greek; those who were from Judea, would have heard the praises in Hebrew or Aramaic. And if Aramaic was spoken, then some from other countries around the *Mesopotamia* area would have received that as “*...(their) own language in which (they) were born...*” and they would have been able to “*...hear them speaking in (their) own tongues the wonderful works of God.*”

Don't get me wrong here. There was **a powerful, supernatural miracle of God** which took place in Jerusalem on that Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit fell with **power and**

supernatural signs, just as Jesus had promised. On that day **many** of the Believers were gifted to be able to declare the *wonderful works of God* in **languages they did not know**. God glorified Himself through the vessels of His servants and in doing so drew men to Him – as we find later in the chapter ⁴¹ ... *about three thousand souls were added to them.*

The reason I've focused upon this idea of **some** speaking in foreign languages and **some not**, is the problem that I see all too often within the Church and in the particular lives of Believers... They feel that, "*If God doesn't work in my life in the same way He worked in so-and-so's life, then He must not be working in my life.*"

Beloved, God is not maintained in a box. He moves in a way that brings Him glory and honor – and some times that doesn't fit our personal theology or agenda. We need to realize that God moves the way He desires to move, in order to accomplish His will – both in our personal lives and in the overall plan of His kingdom.

The Word of God tells us that the Believers spoke that day *as the Spirit gave them utterance*. We dare not make that more than what it is.

We also read in the Apostle Paul's writings that *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all...* (1 Corinthians 12:7), then he moves on to speak of the diversity of that manifestation through a variety of gifts to a variety of individuals.

Paul clearly states, "*...one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.*" (1 Corinthians 12:11)

So much more we could say on this particular subject, and we will be hitting it throughout the book of Acts... so stay tuned. But for now, realize that as we seriously, honestly and humbly seek after the face and presence of Almighty God through faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God will reveal Himself. As the Holy Spirit of God fills our lives, He will work in us to make us usable vessels for His glory. And He does that in a variety of ways, as the Spirit of God chooses.