

4. Christ Sent the Spirit and Started the Church

In our last topic, we saw that the disciples gathered in the upper room and spent the time in prayer as they waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit. As they prayed, the Lord led them to select a replacement to take the place of Judas. We saw that Matthias was chosen by the Old Testament method of casting lots since the Holy Spirit had not yet come to give them guidance. In our topic today, we are going to see that Christ baptized the disciples with the Holy Spirit and then sent them out to begin to church.

In Acts 2:1-4, we read, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” As we begin this chapter, we see that the Lord had chosen a particular day for the church to begin. The word “Pentecost” means *fiftieth day because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Passover*. It was the first day of the Feast known as the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks.

The Jews had three feasts that they were supposed to attend each year. The first was the Passover and the second was the Feast of Weeks. Since the Jews had been scattered to many nations, those Jews who lived in distant areas made it their goal to attend these two feasts in Jerusalem at least once in their lifetime. Those who came from a long distance would come for the Passover and then remain the fifty days so that they could also be there for the Feast of Weeks before returning to their homes. For the Feast of Weeks, the Jews were instructed to bring the firstfruits of their harvest. Leviticus 23:20 says, “The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.” Here, we see that the firstfruits of their harvest were to be used as a wave offering.

Since the Holy Spirit comes into each believer at the moment of salvation, this was the time when God planned for the church to begin. This is a beautiful picture because the Holy Spirit is the down payment and guarantee of our eternal salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here, we see that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our eternal inheritance until that day when we enter into the presence of the Lord in heaven. He is our firstfruits of eternal life. We also see that all of the disciples were in agreement and meeting in one place.

Here, we see how the Holy Spirit came that day to begin the church. There came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind. In other passages, the Holy Spirit is compared to a wind. John 3:8 says, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” In addition to the sound like a mighty wind, there were divided tongues that looked like fire that came and sat on each of the people that were in the upper room that day. God wanted each disciple to realize that they had

received the Holy Spirit. We also see that each disciple was filled with the Holy Spirit. They also began to speak in other tongues. The word translated “tongues” is used to speak of a language or dialect that is spoken by a particular people and is different from any other language. In fact, the languages of at least sixteen different areas are mentioned. They were able to speak in these different languages because it was the Holy Spirit that gave them this ability.

Acts 2:5-8 goes on to say, “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?’” Here, we see that God had even prepared the people that He wanted to hear this message. There were Jews present that day from every country where the Jews had been scattered.

We see that these Jews were described as devout men. The word translated “devout” means *an individual who had a great reverence for God*. The word is used in Luke 2:25 where we read, “And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.” Here, we see that the word was used to describe Simeon, the man who took Christ and blessed Him when Mary and Joseph brought Christ to the temple when he was forty days old. As a result, devout individuals had a great reverence for God and were waiting for the coming of Christ. This reminds us that there were Jews who were looking for the coming of Christ in all of the countries where the Jews had been scattered.

The sound of the rushing wind caused people to gather to see what was happening. The disciples began sharing the wonderful works of God in many languages. In addition, we read that the Jews from all of the different countries heard them speaking in the language of the area where each Jew lived. At first, this caused confusion because the people could not understand what was happening. The word translated “confusion” means *to disturb the mind of a person*. Acts 9:22 says, “But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.” In this verse, the people were confused and disturbed because Saul was teaching the very things that had caused him to come to Damascus to arrest and imprison the Jews. This helps us to understand the great confusion that was in the minds of the people at Jerusalem.

The Jews both from Judea and from the other countries recognized that all of those who were speaking were from the area of Galilee. The people of Galilee had an accent that was easily recognized by the other Jews. The Jews from Galilee were considered uneducated and untrained by the rest of the Jews. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The fact that these Galileans who were considered untrained and uneducated Jews were able to speak in many languages only added to the amazement of the other Jews.

Then, we have a list of some of the areas from which the Jews visiting Jerusalem had come. Acts

2:8-11 says, “And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” The areas from which these visitors had come stretched from the modern country of Iran to the city of Rome in Italy. It also included people from Egypt and other parts of North Africa. These areas had very different languages with little or no similarity.

The people from these different areas were both Jews and proselytes. The word translated “proselytes” means *people who came from a Gentile religion to Judaism*. The Jews talked about two different kinds of proselytes. One group had been circumcised and tried to keep the whole Mosaic law. This group was called proselytes of righteousness. The people in this group were considered full converts to Judaism. A second group of proselytes were called proselytes of the gate because they attended the synagogues but had not been circumcised and did not try to keep the entire law. Most of the proselytes were in this second group.

We read the disciples were speaking “the wonderful works of God.” Mary used this same word in Luke 1:49 to describe what God was doing in her life. That verse says, “For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.” In this verse, we see that the word is translated “great things.” During the various Jewish feasts and festivals, the people would often quote verses that spoke about the wonderful works of God. The amazing thing to the Jews this day was the fact that Galilean Jews were able to quote these verses in the many different languages that were represented there that day. A good illustration is Psalm 96:3, which speaks of the plan of God. That verse says, “Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.” Since there were Jews from all these nations, we see here that God had a purpose for beginning the church on this particular day. It has always been the desire of God that His glory and His wonders would be declared in all nations to all peoples.

We see the various responses of the Jews in Acts 21:12-13 where we read, “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’ Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’” Here, we see the most common responses to the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. Some were amazed. Others were perplexed. Then, there were those who mocked. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that these will each be common responses when we share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. However, the Lord will use His Word to accomplish His purpose in the lives of others. We will see that is what happened the day that the church began. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how the Lord worked the day that the church began.