

Acts 2:1-13: “Sent by the Spirit”

Introduction:

Today, we will encounter the first of several passages in the book of Acts that mention tongues. Since this is somewhat of a hot topic, at least a somewhat controversial one, let’s start by dealing with some very quick questions.

Quick Questions:

What was tongues? **Human** language.

How did it happen? Suddenly, by the sovereignty of God

Why did it happen? For the purpose of authentication of new **revelation** and inauguration of the New Covenant.

Is it for today? No, but come back later for a more clear and extended discussion as to why.

Context:

Last week, we saw how the people of God have historically waited for the work of God.

Today we see how that work is part of a grand narrative of God’s fame, glory, magnificence.

He, Himself, comes to indwell His people and they themselves, become the temple, or presence of God on the earth.

Therefore, where they go, they bear witness to Him. His glory, His power, His rule, His presence. That the whole earth will know, from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the outermost parts of the world.

There is a mission being played out here. The Father sent the Son, the Son sends the Spirit. The Spirit indwells His people for the purpose of sending them to be heralds of the Good News of the conquering King. The

I. Background:

A. Definition:

“Wind” “Breath”

Ruakh Hebrew, Pnuema Greek

Power and life, Spirit: Energy, vitality

B. Old Testament

Creation: Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep (power). God breathed into Adam life.

Joseph: Spirit of God enables him to interpret dreams

Building: Exodus building of the tabernacle (Bezalel in Ex 35:30-35) equated with skill. Ability or power to do something.

Judges: Mighty warriors: power

Anointing: for kings as the figurative presence of God in Israel through the person of the king. Power and life

Prophets: Ezekiel 37: 1-14 “ruakh” used 9 times in 14 verses

Resurrection connection

Spirit WITHIN them

Knowledge or recognition of YHWH as the point.

Life (see cf. below w/ fire)

C. New Testament

Jesus’ baptism -Luke 3 “HS descended as a dove”

“another helper” (John 14:16-17)

Jesus resurrected by the Spirit (Rom 1:4, 8:11; 1Pt 3:18)

“breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit” -connection with sending (John 20:21-22).

II. Immediate Scenario

The next installment of the work of the Spirit is to indwell His people, here in Acts 2.

A. Pentecost: Early supper Jewish Festival 50 days after Passover. **Celebrating the wheat harvest.**

Ex 23, 24; Lev 16; Num 28; Dt 16

“First fruits” or “feast of weeks” 7 weeks or 50 days after feast of unleavened bread or Passover. This was at the beginning of the wheat harvest. The high priest would offer two loaves of freshly baked bread and offer them before the Lord. It usually happened somewhere between mid-May and early June. It was also a Pilgrim Festival, meaning that men from all over came to Jerusalem to celebrate.

Harvest analogy is on purpose, just like the Passover feast when Jesus was crucified as the sacrificial lamb. Here, the anointing of the people of God with the same Spirit as Jesus and giving them the power to bring in the harvest of His people from every tribe, nation and tongue.

B. Audio/Sound: Rushing wind; not a wind. Sounded like wind.

Visual: Fire

Both of these are Theophanies or physical **audio/visual manifestations of God** in a perceptible way.

Fire: Gen 15 Abraham fire pot in covenant, Burning Bush, Pillar of Fire, Fire of the Lord fell Elijah

What was this phenomenon?

The flames seemed to be visual v3 but not permanent because by the time the people hear them speaking, they apparently don't see the flames.

Multiple flames, not one flame.

C. **Connection to Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9)**

Many theophanies in us.

Tongues: Intelligible languages

-Acts 10:45-46 with Cornelius

-Acts 19:6 disciples of John at Ephesus

D. **The world is in Jerusalem.** “every nation under heaven.” He spends time and effort to list the nations.

Trilingual: Hebrew, Greek, native language of the land.

Gallilians -unsophisticated, uneducated, uncultured. Cf Acts “uneducated men who have been with Jesus.”

Jews and proselytes: “God fearers”

E. Content: “speaking about the mighty **deeds** of God.” They were witnessing. They were giving testimony. They were recounting what they had seen and heard.

III. Theological Significance: **SIGN:** of the coming of the Spirit and the inauguration of the New Covenant.

1Cor 14 tongues is a “**sign**” or signifies something: Part of the “sign” gifts which also include interpretation, miracles, healing, and prophecy. 1Cor 13 says that these things will cease. The purpose was to authenticate the message as being from God and not man.

A. **Three** Groups:

- 1) Believers
- 2) Nations or world: (Jewish understanding of people) Jewish and proselytes
 - a. Partial or mixed Jew (Samaritans)
 - b. Gentiles
 - i. good (God fearers) orthodox but not circumcised ex: God fearing Centurion
 - ii. bad, dog, no good. “Goim”
- 3) Unbelieving Jews... judgement

B. 4 Pentecost type Events: Each of them is the first time that the gospel penetrates these groups.

- 1) Acts 2 (Jews),
- 2) Ch 8 (Phillip and the Samaritans),
- 3) Ch 10 (Peter “no” 3x) see v 34,
- 4) Ch 19 Paul not God fearers, regular Gentiles

Sign of the coming of the Spirit and the inauguration of the New Covenant.

Controversies:

1. Some (dispensationalists) say that the church began at this time. We, as Reformed people who hold to covenantal theology, reject that claim and say that the church has always included the true people of God.

2. Pentecostals take their name from this event as a moniker for their denomination. They equate the work of the Spirit in our day as the same as in the early days. Not all together wrong. Perhaps wrong headed but not all together wrong in their intent.

Application: Like the early disciples, we are empowered by the Spirit of the living God to give testimony and make disciples of the King.

- 1) We need to **own** our sphere. Illustration about being a missionary to the family and workplace.
“Do you see your family, workplace, friendships as a mission field?” What are you doing to reach them?
- 2) Concentrated and strategic **prayer.**
 - A. At least 14 occasions of an emphasis on prayer in the book of acts (one every other chapter)
1:14; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4&6; 8:22&24; 9:11; 10:9, 30-31; 11:5; 12:5 & 12; 16:13, 16, 25; 21:5; 22:17
 - B. What does your prayer, on behalf of the lost, look like?
- 3) **Obedience** to God’s sovereign opportunities. Are you obeying the urging of the Spirit or are you making excuses?
Are you obeying Him as He convicts of sin and gives opportunity to witness or are you chickening out.