

## **It's Time for Church**

(Acts 2:1-13)

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### **Introduction**

Every day, 69 million people around the world each something from the menu at McDonalds.

That is easy to comprehend if you consider that McDonalds almost 38,000 restaurants scattered over 120 countries worldwide.

McDonalds is also the world's 2nd largest private employer behind Wal Mart.

Currently, 1.7 million people are employed by McDonald's.

McDonald's has more employees than the population of 12 US states.

Yet, for the size and scope of McDonald's today, it had very humble beginnings.

Here is a picture of the very first McDonald's in San Bernardino California.

The year was 1948 and McDonald's was selling hamburgers for .15 cents and was being run by two brothers, Richard and Maurice McDoanld.

They didn't even have indoor seating, but that little walk-up restaurant eventually became the world's largest restaurant chain.

And those two brothers and a couple other employees eventually grew to 1.7 million employees.

So many other companies have similar humble beginnings.

Yet, there has been no organization that started so small and has expanded and lasted as long as the church of Jesus Christ.

From a group of 120 people in an Upper Room in Jerusalem almost 2000 years ago, we now see a church that is also worldwide and has contained numerous people for nearly 2 millennia.

And it is still expanding and growing even today.

Tonight, we get a look at its humble beginnings in Acts 2.

However, it is humble only from a human perspective.

It is glorious and powerful and awe inspiring from God's perspective.

Now, let's set the stage for what we are about to see.

The year is 30 AD.

Jesus had entered ministry in 26 AD.

He had preached and headed and taught and ministered all over Israel and even beyond the borders of Israel for over 3 years.

Yet, he had been killed for his teaching, for his claims that He is God.

But God had raised him from the dead 3 days later.

All that happened in April of 30 AD, and for the next 40 days, Jesus had appeared to his disciples teaching them about the kingdom of God.

Once that teaching was over, it was late May or early June.

Jesus then told them that he was going to ascend to heaven but they were to wait in Jerusalem for the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

And that is where we are when we arrive at Acts 2:1..

We will call these first 4 verses..

## **I. The Arrival of the Spirit (1-4)**

Let's start in verse 1..

***1 When the day of Pentecost [a]had come, they were all together in one place.***

Pentecost was a Jewish festival that always came 50 days after Passover.

It was named named Pentecost because that was the Greek word for 50th.

The Jews simply called it the Feast of Weeks.

It usually arrived in early June or late May, and every Jewish male was required by the law to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate it.

It was one of 3 Jewish festivals with this requirement, -the other two being Passover and the Festival of Booths in the fall.

At Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the beginning of the wheat harvest.

It was a recognition of God's goodness to them in providing food for another year.

Pentecost was also associated with the giving of the 10 commandments and the rest of God's law through Moses.

So, these followers of Jesus who had just watched him rise to the the Father in heaven are now in Jerusalem to wait on the Holy Spirit but also for this feast.

Verse 1 says that they were all in one place.

This was possible the same room where Jesus has gathered with the disciples the night before the crucifixion or it could have been another room.

It would have to be a fairly large room since 120 people are in it.

It is now 10 days after Jesus ascended.

It is 50 days after He was crucified as the Passover Lamb..

Verse 2..

*2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire [b]distributing themselves, and [c]they [d]rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other [e]tongues, as the Spirit was giving them [f]utterance.*

Ok, let's move carefully through this.

The first thing to notice is that the arrival of the Spirit came with sight and sound.

The first thing to note is the sound.

This doesn't say the arrival was a wind.

Verse 2 simply says that the arrival of the Spirit sounded like a violent rushing wind.

And that sound filled the house that these followers were in.

Now, what does a violent rushing wind sound like?

For most people, it sounds like a train approaching.

How many times have you heard someone on the news describe a tornado or a hurricane as a train approaching?

I have never been in either a tornado or a hurricane but the sounds of such wind are violent sounds.

Disturbing sounds.

Such was the sound in this room when the Spirit of God came.

But not only was there sound, there was a sight to see as well..

The sight was tongues like fire.

What does that mean?

It means what it says.

They were human tongues that look like fire above every head of the 120 people in that room.

It wasn't fire.

It was tongues that looked like fire.

Not sure how to describe this, but our minds may go to Moses and the burning bush..

Moses saw that bush on fire but it did not burn up, and the fire represented the Lord.

In the same, these tongues of fire represent the coming of the Spirit of the Lord.

And notice the effect of this coming of the Spirit in verse 4..

***4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other [e]tongues, as the Spirit was giving them [f]utterance.***

There is probably few verses in Scripture more misunderstood and misapplied than Acts 2:4.

In fact, there has been much harm done to the church in the last century from this verse alone.

The problem would have been mitigated some if this verse simply read..

***4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit was giving them [f]utterance.***

In fact, if you have the Holman Bible, it says languages instead of tongues here.

The New Living Translation, which is not one that I recommend, also translates this as languages.

The Greek word that Luke used here is glossa, and it simple means a known language.

Yet, many see the word tongue and think of something that sounds like babbling simply because many have said that speaking in tongues resembles babbling an unknown spirit language.

However, nothing could be farther from the truth of Scripture.

Speaking in tongues is not some unknown language.

Speaking in tongues is the ability to speak in another known language that was previously unknown to the speaker.

In fact, if you follow the context of what is going to follow, these 120 people do not break out in some kind of babbling.

They simply begin to speak in known languages.

The first effect of the coming of the Spirit is that it equips God's people to be evangelists to the world.

Because the Spirit enables them for a time to speak the gospel in other known languages.

This is so key to not being led astray in thinking that tongue speaking is some sort of mindless gibberish.

Tongue speaking in the NT was always the Spirit-empowered ability to speak a known language.

And the point was simple.

The gospel of Jesus Christ needed to go into the entire world.

And the only way for it to go into entire world was for it to be spoken in the languages of the nations.

And the only people capable of speaking the gospel were those who had believed it, and most of those early believers were Jewish.

They spoke Hebrew and Aramaic and Greek, but there were plenty of other languages that they wouldn't know as those being raised in Galilee.

However, on this occasion.

The Spirit arrived and enabled these Jews to speak languages with which they wouldn't have otherwise been able to speak.

So, let's move from the arrival of the Spirit to..

## **II. The Amazement of the Crowd (5-13)**

***5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.***

The arrival of the Spirit at Pentecost was no accident.

As I said before, Jews from all over the Mediterranean world would be in town for the festival.

If you will look down to verses 9-11, you will see the list of countries that were represented at Pentecost..

And here is a map of the areas where you can identify all these areas..

***9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and [k]Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and [l]visitors from Rome, both Jews and [m]proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs***

You see, the Jewish people spread all over the known world.

They were dispersed everywhere in the Mediterranean world..

But they would all come back for these festivals in order to honor the law of the OT.

On top of the Jews living in other areas, there were also Jews who lived in Israel and in Jerusalem.

You see, God waited 50 days for the festival in order that the arrival of the Spirit and the miraculous speaking of other known languages would have the greatest impact..

So the Spirit enable believers to speak in other languages at the same time where people who spoke other languages were in Jerusalem..

Look what happens in verse 6..

***6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own [g]language.***

So the sound of something like a violent wind brings the people in Jerusalem to the area where these believers are located..

But when they arrive, they forgot about the sound that resembled a great wind, because they are overcome by the sounds that they now hear.

And what do they hear?

They hear languages repenting the nations of the world..

Look, when I enrolled at seminary, my first semester was in the spring.

That usually means a smaller class.

So we are all in a room and I have never met the other 20 or so guys that are there..

But we begin introducing ourselves and it is a collection of accents all around the world..

Then this young kid gets up and introduces himself and I recognize the language immediately.

Yes, it was English but it was southern English.

Turns out, he was from Georgia and we have been friends ever since.

But language draws people together.

The crowd probably came because of the loud non-*ie*, but they stand because they heard their own language being spoken.

Now these would be Jewish men, and they would all know Aramaic and Hebrew, but the sound that was amazing was the sound of the language of the nation in which they were now living.

And why is that amazing?

Verse 7..

***7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “[h]Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we each hear them in our own [i]language [j]to which we were born?***

Though I don't want to sound disrespectful, the crowd was amazed because these dumb hicks for Galilee were speaking some very sophisticated languages.

You see, Galilee was not the center of sophisticated learning.

Galilee was the home of the blue collar worker.

Fisherman, farmers, carpenters all lived in Galilee.

Yet, here were Peter the fisherman, John the fisherman, Andrew the fisherman, Matthew the tax collector and a whole host of other people speaking the languages of the world.

Imagine if you were sitting down at crossroads cafe and a farmer who lived here his whole life stood up and started speaking fluent Russian.

You would think one of two things..

Spy or miracle.

Well, this scene in Jerusalem was miraculous.

It was a work of the Holy Spirit on the speaking ability of all 120 people present.

All of these could speak the languages of the nations of the world without any previous training or study.

A sound like a rushing wind was heard.

A sight like a flame in the shape of a tongue was seen.

And now the languages of the world were being spoken by rather uneducated men and women right here in Jerusalem.

And what were these believers speaking in other languages?

Were they just putting words together?

Not at all.

Look at the end of verse 11..

***we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.”***

These believers were speaking in foreign languages declaring the power of God that had been seen in the OT.

The Jews of Jesus' day had their issues but they knew the OT.

And so when these believers rise and speak, they are speaking in a foreign language of God's miracles seen in the OT.

They were speaking of the miracle of creation perhaps.

They were speaking of the miracles performed by God through Elisha and Elijah.

They were speaking of the miracles of God performed through Moses.

It is also likely that they were speaking of the mighty power of God to raise Jesus from the dead after 3 days in the tomb.

The point is that they needed to speak of something that these Jews would know about.

They needed to speak of the mighty acts of the God of the OT in order for all these Jews in Jerusalem to connect this miracle to their God.

But the crowd didn't quite get it..

***12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of [n]sweet wine."***

These are common reactions to miracles of God..

Some people simply mock them.

Jesus was mocked by the Pharisees..

They even said that His miracles by the power of Satan.

Jesus was mocked by one of the criminals beside who called him a fraud because he couldn't save himself.

Jesus was mocked the Roman soldierers who placed a crown of thorns on his head and a sign on his cross..

Some people will always mock God.

But there are always people that are amazed by God as well.

And though that sounds better, it isn't.

Jesus had plenty of curious people around him his entire life but not all believed.

Some people are simply drawn by the crowd.

Some people simply liked to be entertained.

The same is true in the church age.

As the church begins right here in Acts 2, some simply gaze at the church with curiosity while others mock.

And those reactions continue today..

Now what should those crowd have concluded from what had just happened?

Well, they should have concluded that God was working among this group of people who were followers of Jesus.

They should have concluded that speaking a foreign language was not some magic show but a miracle of God.

They should have concluded that this Jesus was no mere man because His followers were now doing some extraordinary things..

They have concluded that God was now speaking to the Gentile world through their own languages.

They should have seen the power of God, the identity of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, and then fallen on their faces to repent of their sin and put their trust in Him.

But neither of those options happened.

They simply were amazed or they simply mocked.

And how tragic is that?

## **Conclusion**

Now what can we learn tonight from this incredible event in world history?

***#1 - The church is founded on the reality of God's Spirit indwelling His people.***

The church didn't begin with a covered dish meal and Friday night.

The church began with the coming of God's Spirit.

And His Spirit enables us to do extraordinary things.

A lot of people ask can we speak in foreign languages today, but that is not the point.

This was a necessary miracle for that time before the New Testament was written.

Eventually the Bible is inspired by the Spirit and God's people simply take the message in it to the world in their own language.

The point is this.

God's Spirit is still active in His church.

He is still empowering in many ways, which leads to point 2..

***#2 - The church is focused on evangelism.***

It is no accident that the first activity in the church was taking the gospel to the nations.

This is who we are.

WE are God's people and God's messengers in this day and age.

Acts 2 is a reminder that the church gathers in order to be quipped to take the good news of Christ to the world.

Yes, the Spirit of God ministers to us.

Yes, the Spirit teaches and encourages and sanctifies believers.

Yes, the Spirit comforts and strengthen and conforms us to the image of Christ.

But the Spirit first came to believers to help them evangelize the world.

And ultimately, this is the mission of the church given to us by Christ.

*19 [e]Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you [f]always, even to the end of the age.”*

***#3 - The church is the partial fulfillment of OT promises.***

The great hope of Israel was that God’s Spirit would one day be poured out on them.

They recognized their inability to keep the law and to love God as they should.

But the promise of God through Jeremiah and through Ezeiel and through other OT prophets was that God was going to send his Spirit to help them, to heal them, to make them obedient to His word.

But that outpouring of the Spirit only comes to those who embrace the Son.

Israel rejected the Son when He came, and they have never realized the blessing of walking in the Spirit of God.

But we have.

And we have because we see Jesus as He is.

We see him as the Son of God, and therefore we have been the Spirit of God.

It is a fantastic era in which we live in the church age.

God's Spirit has been poured out on us.

But that day will also come to Israel.

Isaiah tells us that Israel will one day look upon Him whom they have pierced, and they will see their sin and see Jesus as their Messiah.

In that day, Israel will fully fulfill the promise of God's Spirit being poured out on them.

They will be able to keep the law and they will be able to be the world's evangelist in the 7 worst years of world history.

Church, we are blessed beyond belief.

WE are a picture of what is coming when God fulfills His promise to Israel.

But let us as the partial fulfillment be faithful to our mission and that is take the gospel to the world.

Let us pray.