

## **Acts 2:1-4: The Significance of Pentecost**

### **OUTLINE:**

A new creation  
A new temple  
A new people

### **INTRODUCTION**

What is the significance of Pentecost? Too often we have been distracted from the true significance of Pentecost. It gets hijacked as a prooftext for why every Christian should be baptised in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues; or it gets ripped out of context to serve as an experience that every Christian should experience as a second blessing in addition to salvation to walk in perfect holiness, or the miraculous, etc. We have been doing a series through the gifts in our morning series through 1 Corinthians, I thought it would be a good idea to unpack the significance of Pentecost in addition to some of the things we have been saying there. I do not want this portion of scripture to be an unaddressed elephant in the room, or allow a number of wrong assumptions to go unanswered. Firstly, I am not going to deal with the problem of whether every Christian should have a personal Pentecost experience. Pentecost is a once off historical event that belongs in the Historia Salutis not the Ordo Salutis. Just as the Christian does not experience a personal temptation in the Wilderness, or a Gethsemane, or a crucifixion, nor does the Christian have to live through a personal Pentecost. Secondly, I am not going to deal with the question of whether every Christian who is saved by the Spirit also needs to have a second experience of being baptised in the Holy Spirit. The Bible is very clear all those who believe are baptised into Christ by the Spirit upon rebirth and do not need a second experience, 1 Cor. 12:13, 'For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.' Thirdly, I am not going to deal with the various so called Pentecosts of Acts 8; 10 and 19 which are used as a prooftext to prove that all Christians experienced a personal Pentecost in order to have a private prayer language. It is obvious that the book of Acts shows the Spirit breaking new boundaries as the gospel goes from Jerusalem, to Samaria, to the ends of the earth and this is not to be seen as normative for today. No instead I want to look at the positive implications of Pentecost.

Pentecost is a major turning point in history where the benefits of Christ's finished works begin to be applied. I want to tease out three positive implications for us that we might have some positive associations with this monumental event. Pentecost marks the beginning of a new creation where the new age, is already but not yet and begins to break in and make itself felt in the people of God; the phenomena of Pentecost points to God making a new temple where He will dwell with His people; and Pentecost also points to a new international people of God from all nations as His redeemed people. A new creation, a new temple and a new people. These are some of the gains that we need to see at Pentecost and not get side tracked by arguments over the supernatural.

### **A new creation**

2:1-2, 'When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.  
<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.' It is very rare for the Holy Spirit to be manifested in an outward form. Usually the Spirit evidences himself through prophecy or some gift, but on rare occasions the Spirit appears in a manner or form, Acts 2 is one of those rare occasions. When the Spirit appears in this outward fashion there is a very important symbolism that must not be missed. For example, when Jesus was Baptized the Holy Spirit was seen to descend upon Christ in the form of a dove. The form of a dove is very symbolic, and deliberate. God is trying to send a very strong message by the Spirit taking the form of a dove. The symbolism is related to Christ's baptism. As you know baptism speaks of judgement, that God's wrath has been poured out. Noah lived through the flood and after the flood he sent out a dove which returned to him. God is trying to tell us that Jesus is a new Noah. He has come to build an ark, and all who will listen to him and take refuge in the ark he provides, they will be safe from judgement. The symbolism doubles up in Jesus Christ as it often does for Jesus is both the new ark to save the new humanity, and he is the new Noah. Just as he is the offerer and the offering, the priest and the sacrifice, the shepherd and the lamb, God and man, holy and our sin, the one who is slain and alive, etc. God makes these suggestive connections for us so that we will view the event through His eyes, and appreciate what He is doing there.

In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit takes two forms, let's deal firstly with the sound of the mighty rushing wind. The Holy Spirit blowing over the disciples in the upper room is reminiscent of the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters in Genesis Chapter 1. There the Holy Spirit was the vehicle and power for bringing about the creation of the universe. Here the Holy Spirit is seen as acting a second time this time creating a new creation. This pattern of the Spirit, the Breathe of God hovering over the water is one that will become a pattern and mark several new beginnings in God's work of saving a fallen creation. Here are a few examples which roughly gather together the events of God's presence, over water, wind, and beginning. We see the Spirit bringing dry land out of the waters here in Genesis 1, also after the Flood, Genesis 8:1 (ESV) "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided. And when the Israelites were leaving Egypt, and they were trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's armies Exodus 14:21 (ESV) "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind (*Ruach*) all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." Also when Joshua was leading the people from the Wilderness into the promised land, Joshua 3:13 (ESV) "And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap." When the presence of God was over the water, the waters parted. When Jesus the Second Adam was being anointed into ministry we see the Spirit hovering over the waters of His baptism in the form of a dove, and when Jesus describes the working of the Spirit to Nicodemus in John 3 regarding the new birth, He compares to the ways of the Spirit to wind. And, here in Acts, when the NT Church is birthed on the day of Pentecost we see the Spirit manifesting as a mighty rushing wind.

One day there will be a new heavens and a new earth, but the new creation does not begin with the cataclysmic changes of the second coming of Christ, but with making the new people of God. A new order is coming, and has already in small

yet monumental ways already come, it is because of this that Paul says in 2 Cor. 5:17 (ESV), "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." You aren't just a new creature in Christ, you are the first constructions of the new heavens and the new earth. The foundations and the first bricks of the new heavens and the new earth have already been laid. The new life that you have, that is not the life of this dispensation, that is resurrection life, that is new heaven and new earth life. It is alien, it is from the future, and we are experiencing now. Not fully but definitely. Think of regeneration as a heavenly heart transplant where the heart of your new body has been taken from the future and put within you now.

Now how should this truth affect your thinking? If you are a Christian and are a new creation in Christ, experiencing the new heavens and the new earth in part already, how can that truth change our lives? Assurance and hope, that's how! Tell me do you think that Jesus can ever die again, do you think that the life that he has now is feeble enough that anything can kill it? Obviously no! Well, that is the life that you have now. Your spirits have been made alive with a never dying life, and one day your bodies will enjoy it too. This means you are safe, alive never to die, sin, satan and death are powerless to do any real damage. As permanent as the life of heaven will be, is the permanence of your life now, and one day your bodies will be resurrected to the same never dying life. Not only that are you suffering now? Has the fall impacted your minds or your bodies, your circumstances or your family? The beginning of the end has come upon us, this age must now pass away. The new creation is not a maybe but is a definite and has already here in the salvation of the people of God.

### **A new temple**

V3, 'And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.' Wind however is not the only manifestation that the Spirit took that day, the other manifestation was tongues of fire. Fire is a significant symbol, and a favourite symbol of God's presence. In Genesis 15 when God made a covenant with Abraham, God appeared as a firepot, and a flaming torch. In Exodus 3 when God appeared to Moses in the bush, it was with fire that did not consume the bush. When the Lord went before the nation of Israel, it was as a pillar of fire (Ex 12:8). When God descended on Mount Sinai to give the Ten Commandments, it was as a fire (Ex 19:8, 24:7). When God's presence was in the tabernacle in the desert it was as fire (Ex 40:38). The fire upon the disciples signifies that God is present with his disciples. And more significant still is the fact that there is an individual tongue of fire on every single disciple. In other words every single disciple is a temple of God. This is the point that Paul is making in 1 Cor. 6:19-20 (ESV), "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

In the OT, the nation of Israel had God living in their midst, but they were separated from his presence in the tabernacle. They could only approach God through a representative, and only through sacrifices. All that is now changed. Christ has acted as our Highpriest, and by the single offering of his life he has covered all our sins. There no longer remains unpaid for sin in us which forces God to keep his distance lest he have to kill us. He is now able to take up residence in every heart that is cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ. Collectively we are God's temple, but individually as well.

This however is a terrifying and invigorating thought. It is terrifying because the Holy God who cannot dwell with sin is now residing in us. The God who killed Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire, who gave leprosy to Uzziah when he came into the tabernacle and offered unauthorised offerings, who struck Uza dead when he touched the Ark of God's presence. If you have seen your own sin, you will know what a dirty and horrid house your heart is for the king of the universe. The humble dwelling that Christ was born in was a five star hotel compared to our hearts. But this is the miracle, he has spring cleaned, he has covered all sin, the offence of all our sins has been removed. He lives inside you and you don't die. Amazing! This does not give us an excuse to have a sloppy life, it is extra incentive to live the holy life. Just as you keep the house cleaner when you have house guests going to extra efforts to keep the toilets, bathroom, kitchen and carpets clean. God is a permanent house guest and we should use that as extra incentive to keep our house in order.

But this picture of our hearts becoming temples is also one of inspiration. That God who is love, the one you lived ignoring, whose advances you coldly refused, the one who knows you more intimately than a closest friend. It is he who dwells within you. Always awake, even if you can't sleep in the early hours of the morning. Always alert and able to give you his undivided attention, he is not distracted with other work or kids. He never has stress of his own that he never has time for you. He seeks to show you treasures and whisper his love to you. He longs to open up to you the unending depths of his love, and lift you up when you are discouraged with the thoughts of the house that he is building for you. He has strength for your weakness, and offers you intimacy beyond anything that can be achieved with another human being. He offers you a private chapel that is available any time of day, and a private preacher who can reveal the word of God to you. He gives you inspiration when you are cold, and convicts you when you are sinning. He is more than a lover, a best friend, a partner, a king. He is the indwelling infinite one. He is our healing and our satisfaction, and to drown in praise as we are overwhelmed by who he is and what he has done. In this giving we only receive. You are a temple. But are we neglecting the opportunity, have we darkened the doors often enough. A thought can transport you to the inner courts. But we would rather spend time with others, and look at all the wears in the market place. God has drawn that extra step closer to us, he has made his temple in our very hearts. We can never accuse God of not drawing near. We can never accuse him of being far off. It is we who are far off. We need to remember that when we became Christians, God did some renovations. He took your life and rebuilt it turning it into a temple, a place where he now abides. We cannot go on treating our lives like we used to. A brothel, a bar, a club, a junkyard, a gym, a storage facility where we amounted things. What building best describes what you used to be. It is no longer a prison, solitary confinement, or a padded cell, it is a temple.

### **A new people**

The last phenomenon that we want to look at is the languages. All the disciples were enabled to speak in other languages/tongues. This tells us several things about the Church being the new people of God. As we look a few verses ahead the first thing we are told by Peter is that this is the promise of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh, Acts 2:17 (ESV), " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;' " The significance of the disciples speaking in tongues

is not that all Christians should now speak in tongues, or that because Peter quotes Joel as saying that daughters will prophesy that women should preach in Church. The significance is that every NT believer gets a portion of the Spirit, and not just the prophets priests and kings. In the OT the Spirit was poured out on prophets like Moses, Kings like David, and the priests were anointed as well. Pentecost changed all that. The Spirit is no longer for the select few, but for all the people of God. All are now prophets, priests and kings. John sees great significance in this fact and tells us that the anointing that we have received gives us the ability to discern true and false teachings, 1 John 2:20 (ESV), "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge." He is the one who teaches us the Scriptures as we read them. God has given teachers to the body of Christ to feed us, but he has also given us the ability to feed ourselves. Unless we realize that we are prophets and that God does work inwardly in each one of us, we will never become mature, but we will always wait to be fed by others instead of depending upon the Spirit within. You will never be a Moses or Jeremiah, but you can be taught of God yourself. This is a wonderful teaching that was rediscovered in the Reformation and took away the mindset that we were dependant upon the Roman Catholic Church for the true interpretation of Scripture. No, if we have the Holy Spirit, with enough hard work and study we too can understand at least part of Scripture.

The many languages shows a reversal of the curse upon man at Babel. In Genesis 11 we see that man became proud and disobeyed God's commandment to fill the earth. God punished them and split them up into nations and alienated from each other by language. In Acts 2 we see a reversal of Babel. And in the many languages we see God's intention to make a single humanity from every nation of the world. A united people, not a divided people. In Babel they were united to set themselves up in the place of God, in Acts, and the Church age we will see unity, but not against God, but in him. The Church is a people who are from many nations and cultures a people from all backgrounds and language groups. It is the most ambitious unifying program known to man, as God seeks to make a single family out of all the peoples of the world. Acts 2 under girds our call to be unified in Christ. It reminds us that there is no place for personal pride or animosity.

These many languages also anticipate the Gospel going out into all the world, we see a mission oriented Spirit being poured out. From the word go the Spirit is communicating with people from all nations. This should galvanise our efforts and concentrate our focus once again on the aim of taking the Gospel to all nations. The out pouring of the Spirit on Pentecost sets the agenda for a multinational Church, something we must never lose sight of as we think of ourselves as the Church.

In verse 7 we see that the people were amazed that it was Galileans who were speaking all these weird and exotic languages. Galileans were not particularly known for their culture, in fact their accent gave them away as they tended to butcher language. But this tells us something else about the new people of God. God doesn't only use the educated, the well known, and respected. God uses Galileans. He uses fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners. And when the Holy Spirit gets a hold of you no matter who you are, you too can amaze and astound. Not because of who you are but because God is able to use the base things of this world to do great things.

Pentecost is a very significant event full of richness and meaning. It is the beginning of the new day. It marks a new closeness in God's relationship with his people, and it redefines the people of God, for all are now prophets, all are now united, and all can be used to amaze and astound. Pentecost is the beginning of new things, if we realize it we can be a part of it.