

04b ACTS

We're ready now to study Acts chapter 2 beginning at verse 4. You've already seen that the appearance of the Holy Spirit is not a sneak attack, it's not subtle, it's not invisible. It is seen and heard on this very important anniversary in the national life of Israel. In late Judaism, Pentecost was celebrated on the day after the 7th Sabbath, and hence the 50th day after Passover.

It was originally the festival of first fruits of the grain harvest. And that you will find in Exodus 23.16, Leviticus 23.17, Numbers 28.26, and so on. It was called the Feast of Weeks because it came after a period of 7 weeks.

What's 7 times 7? 49, and the day after that is 50. 7 weeks of harvesting that began with the offering of the first barley sheaf during the Passover celebration and ended with the wheat harvest. So barley comes in first, you have the first barley sheaf, a month and a half later so you have the wheat harvest.

By the time of the first century of this era, it was considered the anniversary of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, and as a time for the annual renewal of the Mosaic Covenant. If you go to some of the books that were written after Malachi, and after the close of the Ezra and Nehemiah period, you have Jubilees and Maccabees and some of those books. You'll find also in the Talmud, Mishnah and so on, references to this time of Pentecost as a time of renewal and rededication to the Law of Moses.

So this is a very fitting day. It was one of the three great festivals where people were supposed to return, make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. One or more of these three great feasts, the first one of course being Passover, the second one being Pentecost, and then the third being the one that was about four months later at the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

So those were the three great pilgrim festivals, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. So this dramatic entrance of the Spirit on this day has significance. It parallels not only the giving of the Law, but also the coming of the Spirit on the Lord Jesus in terms of the appearance of the Spirit.

So now we find ourselves in verse four, because as a result of these cloven tongues of fire, or these divided tongues of fire that sat upon each one of them, it says in verse four, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. And they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now, we want to talk a little bit about this other tongues, because we have a big popular pastime today of supposedly speaking in tongues, this yabber jabber stuff that you see on television.

There's a black lady that gets on Channel 58, and she can tear it up. She starts out slow, and by the time she's 15-20 minutes into the service, she has got people worked up into

a frenzy, and she'll talk English for a while, and then she'll yabber jabber do for a while, and then she'll English for a while, and then she'll kola masanda for a while, and she'll just... She gets the same vocabulary as old Robert Tilton. I think she must have listened to him or something, because Robert Tilton only knew one thing to say when he was speaking in tongues.

He would say, kola masanda, kola masanda. He said, na, na, na, kola masanda. That's all he ever said, which is kind of a combination of Hebrew and Swahili.

Kola, Q-O-L, is a word in Hebrew. Masanda is a word in Swahili. So I think he just kind of mashed them together and said, I'm speaking in tongues now.

Anyway, what are we talking about here? It says they began to speak with other tongues. Well, first of all, in the Old Testament, there was this thing called prophetic utterance, or ecstatic utterance, where as a result of the Spirit coming on them, they would talk from it, for lack of a better way of putting it. You have, for example, Eldad and Medad.

We don't have time to review that whole thing, but if you go back to Numbers chapter 11, Eldad and Medad weren't where they were supposed to be, but they got the Spirit and started prophesying anyway. Moses went and asked God about it, and God said, basically, leave them alone. They're all right.

Same thing with Saul, when he went after David, two or three times, he tried to go snuff out David, but he kept getting the Spirit and having to stop. And that's in 1 Samuel chapter 10. And he rolled on the ground, and that's why they came out with this sort of little joke in Israel, where if we have these little sayings, like if something is certainly true, we have a little saying, like if somebody says, well, Sam, do you want more coffee? I might say, well, is the Pope a Catholic? If somebody says, Sam, would you like some pickled beets? I might say, well, does a chicken have lips? You know, we have these little sayings that mean certainly yes or certainly no, because the Pope is certainly a Catholic, and a chicken certainly does not have lips.

Well, the same thing in Israel. So when they wanted to say something like, does a chicken have lips? They would say, is Saul among the prophets? Because he's obviously not. He was, you know, he was a ding-a-ling, and he went down there and God put the spirit on him to stop him from going, and he prophesied.

He took off his clothes and prophesied naked, and he just embarrassed himself all over the place, because God put the spirit on him to keep him from going after David. So people would say, oh, well, so you think I'm going to pay 50 shekels for that cow? Is Saul among the prophets? You know, this is kind of one of those type of deals. So there was prophetic utterance.

But after the writing of Old Testament Scripture ceased, and everybody in Israel kind of recognized that there was no more prophecy happening, you didn't have your Ezekiel's and your Isaiah's and your Jeremiah's and so on anymore, so they felt like, well, the spirit of prophecy has ceased in Israel. That's why everybody got so excited when John the Baptist came on the scene, because with his hair, shirt, and his eating grasshoppers and honey, and prophesying with his wild hair and his wild beard, he was a Nazarite type of thing, and he looked like Elijah, and he came in the spirit and the power of Elijah. It was the first time they had seen a prophet in Israel in hundreds of years.

It had been four or five hundred years since they had been a prophet in Israel, and here's John the Baptist, and like we were talking about in the first session tonight, there was no doubt in anybody's mind that John was a prophet. Pharisees didn't doubt it. People didn't doubt it.

Nobody argued that John was not a prophet. They just knew he was from God. So they had the idea that this spirit of prophecy had ceased until the time of John, so in that period of time, they said, well, God only speaks to us through Torah.

He only speaks to us through the law that we got on that big day in Sinai, and so they knew from Joel 2, 23, and 24, and some of these other prophecies, that a day would come. In Ezekiel chapter 34, there would come a day when God would pour His Spirit on all flesh and there would be these supernatural manifestations. They knew this.

They said, this hasn't happened in a long time. So this is what now is taking place at Pentecost with these tongues of fire and this loud rushing noise. Notice, though, it is localized to the people in this room that are gathered in one place and are of like mind.

It doesn't happen to the entire population of Jerusalem. It doesn't happen in Antioch. It doesn't happen outside the land.

It doesn't happen in Galilee. It doesn't happen in Samaria. It doesn't even happen in Bethlehem.

It happens in Jerusalem at one house. Now, what does this tell us about the coming of the Spirit? It was localized to this tiny group, this very small group that could fit in one house in one room. They're all in one place.

And this is one of the biggest things to ever happen in history, but there's a very small group. How did the patriarchal age begin? It began with a very small group, eight people who climbed out of the ark. How did the age of Israel begin? It began with a relatively small group.

I mean, we say, well, this was 600,000 men of fighting age, probably two million total in the group that left Egypt. But by comparison with the surrounding nations, the Egyptians and the Canaanites and the rest of them, they were tiny. The nation began with Jacob

and his 12 sons.

So, big things start small, and we shouldn't be discouraged that they start small, or that God works big things in small groups, and even in individuals. This is the age in which God doesn't need a nation to get things done. He doesn't need, by the way, a megachurch to get things done.

What God is looking for is willing hearts, prepared people, souls in which resides the Word of God. So that God, the Holy Spirit, because the power is from God, the plan is from God, the timing is from God, the task is from God, the accomplishment is from God. All we are are the earthen vessels in which this great treasure can be temporarily stored and brought forth to be used.

But do not think, because you are not some great shapes in some way, that God cannot do great things. Do you think Joseph, when he was in prison in Egypt, thought God was going to do great things with him? Do you think that Elijah, down by the brook Cherith, waiting for the birds to drop scraps of food to him, thought God was going to do great things? Do you think David, out amongst the sheep, thought God was going to do great things? Actually, the answer to that question in those cases is, they did, they knew that God would do great things in their life and in their soul. Joseph was a man of faith.

Elijah was a man of faith. David was a man of faith. Noah was a man of faith.

Abraham, with his wife, who had all the crenellations in her face, all the wrinkled up, 90 odd years old woman, no heir, thinking he was going to have to bequeath his estate to his servant, and God says, no. You've got one wife, that's the one that's going to have the heir, that's going to be the fulfillment of all of these promises, that you're going to be a blessing, father of many nations, light to the Gentiles, it's all going to happen, and it's going to start with your shriveled up wife here, who's past the age of childbearing. Small beginnings, but great things.

We are related to a God who does the impossible, and delights in doing it. He delights in showing us how wrong we are to judge by human standards. We think big things happen in big places with lots of people, and they don't.

We're a very small church, we are probably the smallest church in Dallas, and yet, I suspect, when we get to the judgment, we're going to find that God is able, through His word, to do great things. Some of us are really rock-headed, and I am speaking of myself. There are some very difficult things to overcome, that all of us have, including me.

And I think it's going to be one of God's biggest miracles to have infiltrated His word down far enough to blast loose some of the very deep-seated problems. If I was not a believer, I would be a psychopath. I am sure of it.

It occasionally crops up, even though I am a believer. And the fact that I can walk around and be considered respectable at all, probably no one knows it but me, but it is a tremendous, well, maybe a lot of people do know it, but it is a tremendous tribute to the power of God, and the grace of God. And I think all of us can look at our souls, and see where God has done amazing things, where He has taken away big deficits, where He has healed deep wounds, where He has given us strength where we had none, and He is in the process of rebuilding and remaking.

He is a powerful God. This sound of rushing mighty wind is not just a noise, it is the harbinger of a power that is going to shake the world. Think what Christianity has done to this planet.

Think what New Testament, Bible-believing Christians have done through the generations, and it started with this little group of men in this upper room. Probably men and women, by the way, in that upper room. One room, in one house, in one town, in one little tiny country, and look at the impact and the effect of Christianity over the last twenty centuries.

It is unthinkable huge. You can't imagine the world without the influence and the impact of Christianity, both for good and for ill, over these last two millennia. And this is where it begins, because it is the power of God that makes things happen.

Well, these ecstatic utterances were associated with the coming of the Spirit in the Jewish mind. So it is not surprising that along with the noise, along with the tongues of fire, which bespeak the presence of God in an immediate sense, you suddenly have this supernatural utterance. Well, what was it? It had to be one of two things.

It was either gibberish, it was spirit language that nobody can understand unless someone is given the gift of interpretation, or they were foreign languages. Well, one of the primary passages where we find out a lot about tongues is in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. 13 is the big love chapter.

You notice 12 and 14 talk about tongues, and right smack in the middle he says, you know, if what you're doing isn't characterized by love, you are wasting your time. Paul knew that this was going to be a touchy subject and a controversial subject. So he starts in 1 Corinthians 12 talking about tongues, and then he stops.

He gives a whole chapter on love. He says, you know what? Tongues are going to cease. Prophecy is going to fade away.

There's only three things that are going to last. Remember what they are? Faith, hope, and love. And what's the greatest of them? Love.

Because you cannot have love unless you already have faith and hope. Faith is belief in God's Word. Hope is belief in God's promise.

Love is the way you live as a result of those two certainties in your soul. Hope is the motivation. I am certain that these promises are going to be fulfilled.

I am just as certain that there is a coming millennial kingdom and that I have been charged with getting ready for it and being ready to serve in it as I am when I go to work and I am given a task and I'm expected to fulfill it. Somebody talks to me and says, Sam, we need this website fixed. We need these sermons edited.

We need you to make a presentation to this board on such and such a day. Well, that's an appointment. And I do whatever I have to do to be ready and make sure I do the very best job I can.

Here's the God of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ, my Savior, telling me, Sam, there's an appointment with destiny that you've got when the Lord Jesus comes back. I need you to spend your time getting ready so that you can serve, so that you can reflect the glory of God when this comes. Well now, which is more important? Somebody saying, please give us a slideshow next week? Or the God of the universe saying, get your soul ready, equip yourself, lay up for yourself treasure that you can use in the millennium and in the eternal future because the time is short.

Which one should I prioritize? Which one should be constantly nagging at me and should I constantly be asking myself in the name of faith? Faith, hope, and love. The greatest of these is love because if I truly understand the hope of the kingdom, the hope of the return of Christ, the hope of the eternal future that stretches out before us, I'm going to live my life in that light, aren't I? I'm going to look into the word of God and trust that God will supply my needs because think about it. If you get this view and understand what God is up to, you're in a tiny minority.

Who do you think God is going to pay more attention to? The great unwashed masses of heathens wandering around who are not even saved? Or the great unwashed masses of people who are saved and don't know why they're here? Or the handful, the scattered remnant, who are like the little pinpoints of life where God's glory is starting to reflect just a little bit? Where do you think God is going to spend his time? Who do you think God is going to be watching every moment of the day, encouraging, providing for, detailing angels, making sure of provisions, sending blessings, sending encouragement, answering prayer, sending remembrance and the ability to apply his work? Who do you think he's going to focus his attention on? If you were a teacher and you had 100 students in a class, but 97 of them were dim bulbs and there were only 3 of them that ever looked at you with any sense of comprehension, where would you spend your time? You'd say, you know, 97 of these people is a waste of my time. Let me just give them some busy work and let me see if I can cultivate and bring along these 3 that are actually catching and getting. That's where you spend your time.

If we recognize what God tells us, if we catch this fire, God is going to be getting very

close attention to you and to me because there aren't very many of us. Narrow is the road and straight is the gate that leads to life, Jesus told believers and he said there are very few that find it. Well, we want to be in that very few.

They have that song, when the saints go marching in, there's this huge number. You know what? All of those saints may start marching toward the gate, but there's only going to be a trickle to get let in. It's not going to be, oh, when the great hordes of the saints go marching into the kingdom.

The vast majority are going to be turned away at the gate. And I don't know about you, but it is pointless and fruitless to know this and not live in the light of it. Faith, hope, and love.

So, when God marks out this age and he says, look, I'm sending you my spirit, I'm giving you the power to do this. I'm not calling you to something that requires you to climb a tall mountain or descend to the depths of the sea and hold your breath or do some great travail. Just wake up and pay attention to the plan.

That's why the spirit is coming and so he's going to give them this ability. Now, God doesn't do things just for show. The great rushing mighty wind wasn't just a stage effect.

It has a purpose. It harks back to Sinai. It is a reminder of the spirit in terms of the vocabulary.

In the same way, these tongues of fire that come down are called tongues for a reason. Because they signify the power by which people are going to be able to speak in other tongues. So, when we look at the phraseology here and it talks about they began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance, we find out that these are languages.

There is understandable speech that comes out here. This word here, *apothengamai*, which means to speak in other tongues. Luke is the only one that uses it.

It is used here in chapter 2 verse 4, *apothengamai*. It is used again in verse 14 when Peter is talking to the crowd about this event. And it is used in Acts 26.25. Turn to Acts 26.25 and this will tell us what this kind of speaking is talking about.

Paul is defending the faith in front of Festus. He says, I witnessed a small and great saying, only the things that the prophets and Moses said should come. He says, this Christianity that I preach, this Christ that I preach, is not some new fangled thing.

It is in the law and the prophets. It has always been there that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first to rise from the dead. It should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles.

As he does speak for himself, it says in Acts 26.24, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself. All your learning, too much education has made you mad. You have gone off your rocker.

Too much information has squashed your brain and now you are crazy. But Paul says, I am not mad, most noble Festus. I speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

I speak forth words of truth and soberness. Apothengomai. Is this gibberish that Paul is speaking? He is saying, no, I am not mad.

I am speaking forth clearly, objective truth. And it is the very same verb that is used in Acts 2.4. So, don't let anybody take you to the day of Pentecost and say the rat-a-tat-tat gibberish. By the way, it is interesting to do a study of the glossolalia, this Thomas-type phenomenon that has swept through so much of our charismatic branches of Christianity.

Because there are many completely heathen, pagan religions. For example, if you go to aboriginal cultures or you go to some of the African cultures, you will find that as they work themselves up, circling the fire and dancing and waving and beating on drums and so on, there is ecstatic utterance of an identical kind. Sociologists and anthropologists have gone and studied these tribes in Africa, the tribes in Australia, the tribes in South America, and then they have gone to Assembly of God meetings and have found it is the identical, same thing.

It is possible to work yourself up to where you spew forth gibberish. It has nothing to do with Christianity, nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. It has everything to do with unhinging your mind.

At any rate, what we want to look at here is the speaking in other languages. Now, why would this be the particular sign? Why would this be the manifestation? Why not levitate everybody two feet off the ground? Well, this is the way you get to heaven and I am just giving you a little foretaste. I will take you up two feet.

You are cut above everybody now because you have got the Spirit. You float. He did not do that.

He did not split a rock. He did not take the top off a mountain. He did not plant the mulberry bush in the sea.

He gave people the ability to speak other languages. Why? Well, it is a sign. It is a prophecy.

The Jews should have been alarmed at this because if Israel is the people of God, how many languages do you need to be able to speak to give them the message? Just one. Good old native born Aramaic. Speak in Aramaic, all of the Israelites who are the only

people to count will understand you.

They begin to speak in Syrian. They begin to speak in the language of Asian life. They begin to speak in the language of the ones from Gaul.

They begin to speak in the languages from northern Africa and from Spain and from Italy and from the far off regions where people have come in and they hear these languages being spoken. This is a warning. This is an alarm.

Why is the message of the gospel being spoken in languages that are not Hebrew slash Aramaic? Not even Greek. Why? Because with other languages, with other tongues will I speak to this people, the prophet said in the Old Testament. I will make them jealous by taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

It is a heads up that there is going to be a change and that the gospel and the stewardship of the mysteries of God is no longer going to be confined to the nation of Israel. That is why it is individual tongues coming down. It is going to spread out.

The Christian message is going to go beyond the beliefs and expectations of Judaism. So, if they are paying attention, if they are thinking, if they are trying to put two and two together, what are they going to conclude? They are going to realize that God is doing a new thing. We need to be watching for God to do a new thing.

Sometimes we think, well God can't really do anything new. There are just certain fixed objects in our universe that will never change. There are certain habits, certain patterns, certain facts of life that are just not going to change.

Not in this age. With the power of God and the person of the Holy Spirit, you would be amazed at what can change. Some of us know that first hand already of what can change with the power of God.

Do not sell the God of the universe short on His power. There is a symbolism here. There is a function here that tells us that these who... Look at verse 5. These dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven are there.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together. They couldn't contain it in the room. These guys didn't have to go take out an ad.

They didn't put up a billboard. They didn't launch a website. They didn't stand up and start proclaiming.

They didn't hand out brochures and tracts. What did they do? They were where they were supposed to be. They were in one place of like mind.

The Holy Spirit came and it became known. They didn't have to go forth and say, hey look at this tongue of fire in my head. Watch this, I can speak Spanish.

They didn't have to do that. They didn't have to blow any horn whatsoever. Look at what it says.

It says this was noised abroad. It's in the passage. It just happened.

God saw to it that people found out. Somebody looked out their window and said, wow, what's that big noise? There's fire. They set their tablecloth on fire.

I'm going to go see what's happening. They went into the room. Here's people speaking every language under heaven.

They said, wait a minute. I know you. You don't speak Spanish.

And it became noised abroad. God saw to it. And so the multitude came together.

This power of God drew a crowd. They did not disperse and go create a crowd. Do you see the difference? Is this point clear? Look at what Christianity is trying to do today.

The church at large is trying to go gather a crowd. We're trying to say, hey, come here. We're showing a film.

Come in. And once you've seen the film, why, it would be a blight for you to leave. And then we're going to hammer you with our church membership drive and our gospel message and so on.

God assembled a crowd to them by the presence of his power. People came. Peter did not yell at the window, hey, you people, come look at this.

People just came. A multitude came together and were confounded because every man heard them speak in his own language. Was this an apostolic plan that Peter and the guys get together and say, hey, no, this is the way we'll get this church thing launched.

We'll dazzle them. You go spend a couple of weeks learning French and you go spend a couple of weeks learning Anglo and come back here and we'll speak. Wow.

This was all an act of God. God's time. God's way.

They had no previous knowledge. All they did was receive the spirit. They were in the right place at the right time.

God did it all. Do we sit and wait and let God figure it out? Or do we. You look at the church today and the efforts for evangelism and it's just backwards.

It's all seemingly powered by human effort. People get saved, seem to get saved in spite of all of this. It was noise abroad.

The multitude came together and were confounded. Every man heard them speak in his

own language. Is there any doubt now about what it means to speak clearly? And they heard this incredible gibberish and they were attracted and said, I want to speak gibberish, too.

Everyone heard him speak in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? Used to kind of make fun of the Galileans. It was sort of like the deep south.

It was like the farm countries, like the hill buildings of Kentucky. People said, can any good thing come out of Galilea? A bunch of backward hip farming, fishing, a bunch of ruralites. They're not sophisticated.

They said, look, here's these unspoken. The disciples had to put up with that for all these years. But now, look at the impact.

People know they don't have an education. They know they didn't get a correspondence course and learn these languages when nobody was looking. And they say, this cannot be a humanly powered thing.

Parthians and Medes. We hear every man in our own tongue wherein we were born. Dwellers in Mesopotamia and Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians.

We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Notice, they are not just saying the Pledge of Allegiance. They're not just reading signs in another language, street signs or recipes.

What are they speaking? What are they communicating? What are people hearing in their own language? That phrase at the end of verse 11 is the most important thing in the whole first section of this chapter. God gave them utterance to communicate to others the wonderful works of God. They are speaking final doctrine.

They are talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and what God has done through him for the forgiveness of sin. That God has detailed him to be the judge of the living and the dead. How do I know this? Turn with me to Acts chapter 10.

Acts chapter 10, verse 34. Acts 10, 34. This is at the household of Cornelius.

You can get the details later. There Peter opened his mouth and said, In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all, that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached.

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by fire.