

05a ACTS

Let's begin our study of the Word of God this evening in our usual fashion. We pause at the outset to ensure that we are susceptible to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, that we have acknowledged and received God's cleansing grace for whatever sins we are aware of. And we lay aside the various issues and problems and distractions that might have followed us in.

We can pause and reflect and reorient ourselves to the plan and purpose of God as we look together at His Word. So let's start with a moment of prayer. Father, thank you for the opportunity we have of studying your Word together.

We are thankful that our ability to see and understand and apply the things in your Word does not depend on our strength or on our wisdom or on our intelligence or our perspicacity. It depends on our willingness to receive the ministry of your Spirit, which has been given to us in your grace. And as we study the initial giving of the Spirit in our dispensation, we pray that you will enable us, through His work on our behalf, to understand and to see the application of these truths in our daily lives.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. We resume our study tonight in Acts chapter 2. We have purposely been going a little bit slower than we will in the remainder of the book in these first couple of chapters because, like the book of Genesis, there is so much information packed into these verses that to go very quickly would be to miss a lot of the richness of what God has here.

And even at the rate we are going, we are not able to address a lot of wonderful things. I could probably just make a lifetime career out of the book of Acts. But Acts is sort of the book of Genesis for the church, or the Pentateuch for the church, if you will, because it records the inception, the beginning of what is happening in our dispensation.

And you will probably see the parallel between those two inceptions, those two beginnings. Israel did not form, was not created ex nihilo. It didn't arrive out of nothing.

It was composed of things that came earlier, and so is the church. And that is exceedingly important to remember. A lot of people forget that when they come to Acts and arrive at squirrely practice in the modern day.

And I mean squirrely, squirrely, squirrely, squirrely practice in the modern day because of overlooking this principle. They go back to Acts and they say, well, this is what the early church did, so we should do it. In the same way that in the beginning in Israel, there is a time of transition.

We are seeing this in the book of Exodus, aren't we? There was a time of transition in the end of the book of Genesis. You started out, let's just start with Jacob and his 12 sons.

They lived in the land for a while.

They came down to Egypt. They were in Goshen. There was a time of captivity.

There was a time of deliverance. There is the time of wandering in the wilderness and waiting out the death of the generation that did not have the faith to enter and the growth and maturity of the generation who does have the faith to enter. All of those, but that's a transitional time.

Israel, once they got into the land and survived the time of the judges and got into the ministry of Samuel and then the monarchy, they didn't hark back and say, well, now let's go back and do exactly like we did in the wilderness. Let's go back and do things. Let's get that tabernacle and set it up in the middle of Jerusalem.

Let's camp the tribes on all four sides. Israel is a nation, but at the inception of the nation, the beginning of the nation, there is a time of transition. When two single people have lived for any length of time independently as adults, they don't get married when they are 18 or 20.

They get married when they are a little bit further along. Early 20s, mid 20s, late 20s, 30 or beyond. When they get married, there is a time of transition.

Probably a time of transition for everybody, but I don't know about the ones that get married when they are 18. I do know about the ones that are older, so that's my illustration. There is a time of transition.

Why? Because two individuals who have been organizing their own life, have had their own stuff, have paid their own bills and driven their own cars and held their own jobs and done everything themselves, suddenly begin to share a blended existence. It isn't a bad thing, but it is a necessary thing that there be change. There has to be accommodation.

There has to be adjustment. There are new ways of doing things now that two have become one and you are operating as a corporation instead of an individual. You divide up responsibilities.

I'll do this and you do that. It's an adjustment. Then after that period of adjustment, in however many months or years that may take, and there is probably another adjustment when children come along, but you don't necessarily go back and say, well, remember the first few weeks after we were married and the way we spent our time gazing into one another's eyes and just being as inseparable as we were right before we got married.

That is a time of transition. You are learning to get over the infatuation and the stimulation and the relief or whatever all you might have felt at finding and becoming married to the person that you were looking for and settling into an ongoing, stable, deepening and maturing relationship. I'm not saying it well, but you know what I'm

talking about.

The same thing is true in the church. You can't go back because there are people that do this. They go in for counseling and they say, oh, the magic is gone.

We used to just gasp and die when we were apart and we would call up on the phone and just breathe at each other. What happened to the magic and the romance? And people will bail out of their marriage and go look for that somewhere else or they will go look for it in an affair. They'll say, you know, I want that.

You know what I saw on the web? I was trying to look something up and there was one of those sidebar ads for the online dating services, and you know what it said? It said, are you looking for those first date jitters? And they're saying, you know, remember when, go back and play the Bee Gees and go dance and run out and see if you can find somebody. You know, there's excitement. Morris, or no, he's the one that died, the other one, the one that sings with his falsetto voice had that song, the Bee Gees, they had a number one song, and what was it? He said, what are you doing in the back when you should be dancing? What you doing in the back? What you doing in the back? You should be dancing.

And there's people who reminisce and think about that and say, that's gone now. I don't know what happened to that. I want it back.

Does that lead to happy, healthy, normal things in a marriage or in a relationship? It does not. It leads to abnormal, unhealthy, bizarre behavior, and people wind up doing all kinds of unfortunate things because they're trying to recapture something that was a part of a time that is no longer, and you ought to be glad. Well, in the same way, that's a long, winding introduction to get to the inception of the church.

Acts chapter 2, a lot of bizarre things are happening, and it is marking out in a special way the beginning of something new, the same way that God marked out with the plagues and with the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire and the parting of the Red Sea and the manna in the wilderness and all of these other amazing displays of divine power and divine provision. But Israelites did not go into the land of Canaan, and 150 years after they settled down in the region assigned to the tribe of Gad, walk out of their house and say, how come there's not manna falling on my lawn? Where's the pillar of fire? You have to know where you are in the age, and you have to recognize what is part of a time of transition and what is not. And don't be looking back, longing with all kinds of sentimental, foolish thoughts for a time of transition.

It was great. It served its purpose in achieving the transition and in getting certain things accomplished, but now we're in a new phase, and it's a better phase. God does greater things after the transition.

We tend to look at it in reverse. But signs and wonders are for the infant. This would be like saying, why doesn't someone spoon feed me anymore? Why doesn't someone take me by the hand and lead me everywhere? Why doesn't someone just strap me in the back seat and drive me where I need to go? And thinking back to the days of being a toddler.

I mean, that's necessary, and it's a happy time, and your parents are happy to do that for you, but you want to grow. You want to mature and become self-sustaining and self-starting and so on. Well, this is the contrast that we're going to see.

Look at chapter 2 of Acts. When the day of Pentecost had fully come, we talked about what that fully means. There was things that needed to take place, a sequence of events, that occurred in those 50 days between Passover and Pentecost.

We talked about the fact that this was a traditional association. We have these kind of traditions. It's not the actual date.

Who decided that December 25th is the day that Christ was born? Well, Christmas is Jesus' birthday. That's the way it's treated, but He wasn't born on December 25th or anywhere near it. But that's our traditional time of celebrating.

In the same way, the day of Pentecost was the traditional time where they celebrated the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. They were all with one accord in one place. This is not said by accident.

One accord, one place. Because when you get to verse 3, there appeared to them divided tongues as a fire that sat upon each one of them. You have starting out being one in one place, and you end up with a division in an individual ministry.

That illustrates and shadows what is taking place here. You start out with everyone together, and you end up seeing a transition to God dealing with people on an individual basis. We're going to see more of that as we go forward.

Suddenly there came the sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind. Why the sound? Why the association with wind? We talked about that. They 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. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Notice, they are not all chanting in unison in Ethiopian, or in Syrian, or in Spanish, or in whatever Proto-Indo-European languages might have existed at that time.

They're not speaking in an African tongue, all chanting the same language. They're each individually speaking. When's the last time we started out with everybody in one

language, and then a few minutes later they weren't? Tower of Babel, right? What was the purpose of the Tower of Babel? Why did God divide up the languages? They had all decided they built this monument, this astrological observatory, and they said, They didn't say, we're trying to build it high enough so that we can survive a flood.

They said, we will use astronomy and the study of the stars. We'll stay together. We'll all be in one place.

So God confounded the languages because it was time for man to fulfill the command to fill the earth, to scatter and separate. And they were trying to defy God's will and all stay together. This is another foreshadowing.

God bestowing the ability to speak these languages so that each one hears in his own tongue. Right now, all of the visitors have come from far places to Jerusalem, haven't they? And these are largely, almost entirely, Jewish people, or with a Jewish heritage, but they continue to come back to Jerusalem for the feast. Remember, in the early days, in this early transition period for the church, it's all Jewish.

It's all Israel. Gentiles are not yet in view. So when Peter stands up and gives his sermon in this chapter, when he talks about everyone, these are all Jews.

There's not a Luke or a Titus or a Timothy in here anywhere. Well, Timothy was Jewish, but there's not a Gentile in view. So why would these many tongues come in? Well, in the first place, there has already started to be a diaspora, a scattering of the Jews.

They have already begun to spread out from the original boundaries of Israel into Asia Minor and throughout the Greco-Roman world. And they have adopted and begun to speak the language of the place that they have adopted as their new home. And so when their children grow up, it's much like the melting pot situation we have here in Richardson and Garland, where people have come from many countries and they can barely speak English, but their kids speak like natives because they're going to public school.

Well, the same thing would take place, and it would only take one generation until you would have 100% Jewish children to whom Aramaic is nearly a foreign language. Other than the little bit they pick up at home of their parents speaking, they're speaking the language of their milieu, their culture in which they grew up. So when those people come back to celebrate the feast, they're struggling.

The family I married into has some languages from the old country, Croatian and German and that, but you get down to the second or third generation and there's just a smattering, a few phrases that you understand and the rest of it's lost because we're all speaking American now. Well, in the same way, this is what's happening here. So when the Spirit gives them utterance in their own tongues, what is this a harbinger of? What

does it portend? What does it foretell? There's soon going to be a time when this preaching and this ministry is not going to be centered in Jerusalem.

It's going to come out where you are. In the same way that the fire begins as a unity and divides and descends individually, the message that has been unified and has always been given to Israel as the steward and custodian of the oracles of God is now going to be dispersed and you don't have to come to the mountain to get the word. The mountain is going to come to you as it were.

So there is significance in every bit of this. What do you know about a wind? Why wasn't it the sound of a trumpet or the sound of a drum or the sound of a tree splitting and falling over? I mean, there could have been any kind of a sound effect. Why did God choose a rushing mighty wind? What did Jesus say about the wind in John chapter 3 talking to Nicodemus? The wind, you hear the sound of it, but you don't know where it came from and you don't know where it's going.

But you feel its effect. And He says, so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. This is the manifestation of the Spirit.

And what's the point there? It travels. If the air is not moving, you don't have wind. Wind implies movement.

Wind implies travel. Wind covers a distance and moves from place to place. And wind carries things with it as it blows.

And this rushing mighty wind is another shadow, another foretelling that the message, the people who are under the sound of this wind are going to be scattered like leaves before this wind and are going to be dispersed and are going to go forth beyond the borders of Israel and even beyond the people of Israel. But this is still symbolic. It's still incipient.

It hasn't really come out in plain language yet, but that's what it portends. So there is a lot going on here. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

This is not normal. Where do we get the word normal? It means it reflects a norm, something that is a standard. And in Israel, it was not the norm for everyone to get the Spirit.

Who got the Spirit in Israel in the Old Testament? People designated for a specific task. A prophet, a tabernacle workman, a leader, a king, a judge. The Spirit would come upon them for a short-term enablement, empowerment, swing the jawbone of the ass, slay the Philistines, then the Spirit departs.

The Spirit comes upon the king, stays with him during the time that he's faithful to God and ministering to the people. If he becomes unfaithful, the Spirit departs. Temporary,

restricted to a very few.

Now, it is permanent and universal. We find all of this out in the first four verses of chapter 2. There were dwelling, it says in verse 5, in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. Now, when it says they were dwelling in Jerusalem, there in verse 5, this is from *kat oikeo*.

Oikos is the Greek word that means house. And *kata* means according to or to be beside something. You compare something side by side, it's *kata*, according to.

And so, this came to mean to live in a locality for any length of time. It doesn't mean that you are a permanent resident, but you're staying there. You're residing.

When we say dwell or live, I live in Garland or I dwell in Texas, that implies a long-term thing. But *kata oikeo* doesn't really reference how long you've been there. It just means you're there for some indeterminate period of time.

So, these may have been individuals who went abroad and lived away for many years and had grown up in some other culture and then they have moved back to Jerusalem permanently. They may just be here visiting family. They might just be here for the feast.

It covers all of them, regardless of their time of residence. And it says there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men. Notice, devout men.

God uses prepared people. God ministers to prepared people. He didn't say reprobates, Pharisees, whitewashed tombstones.

The devout men from every nation under heaven. When this sound occurred, the multitude came together and were confused. And the implication here in verse 6 is this multitude, this crowd, is of devout men, not naysayers and so on.

These are ones who, of course, the idea in letting them hear in their own language is not to confuse them but to clarify for them because they understand better in their own language than they do in Aramaic, which is no longer their native tongue. But initially it confuses them. And the very thing that's designed to clarify it confuses them.

Why? Because everyone heard them speak in his own language, so they were amazed and they marveled. And these are strong words in Greek for being amazed and marveling. And they say to one another, what is this? Are not these who speak Galileans, the farm boys, the fishermen, the country bumpkins from way up north? How is it that we hear each in our own language in which we were born? And then to ensure that you understand that these were cognizant, understandable, organized languages and not gibbers, look at how many of these the Bible names.

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, whether they dwelt in Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya that adjoin Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs. You know where this list came from? Luke talked to eyewitnesses of the day of Pentecost. Remember what he said? The former treatise by written Ophiophilus.

I have set in order all of these accounts. I have interviewed, I have talked, I have first-hand. Why does it say the part of Libya adjoining Cyrene? Because there was a man from this part of Libya that is on the Cyrenian border that Luke had interviewed.

And the man said, oh, you can't believe it. Nobody knows my language. I'm way down there in the hot and taut land.

I came up to Jerusalem. Nobody but me speaks this language. And here I hear the good news of Jesus Christ in the language that's hundreds of miles south of here that nobody here understands and speaks.

And Luke says, well, I better write that down. I believe I'll include that in Volume 2 when I get around to writing it. And God includes it for our benefit because it doesn't matter where you're from.

God didn't skip people. Everyone heard. He says, how is it that we hear each in our own language? God didn't just pick the six most popular languages and the rest of them had to listen to a second or third language.

Each individual heard it in his own language. This would be fascinating to find out from God what the physics of it was. Was Peter just preaching away in his native Aramaic and God changed the sound waves by the time they reached their ear? Did the sound waves of Aramaic hit their ear and God changed it in their brain? Which is what I think.

I think that God, through the presence of the Spirit, caused each one to hear. You know how you can talk to yourself without a sound. You can call up.

I can still hear Walter Cronkite. I used to hear Walter Cronkite all the time when I was a boy giving the news. I haven't heard him in months and probably years.

But I can sit real still and in my mind I can replay Walter Cronkite. I can hear him saying the news. He was narrating the moon landing.

I can still see him. I remember the day back in 1963. He was on our TV set when President Kennedy died.

He announced it and turned aside and wiped his eye. It's a voice that I can hear in my head. I think that these men, on an amplified scale, heard what God wanted them to hear.

But we won't know until we ask. At any rate, each of these, all these different languages heard it in their own language. Is there an observation, an interpretation, an application in that for us? We each have an individual ministry of the Spirit, don't we? We can go to church and hear the teaching of the Word of God.

We can turn on our radio and hear the teaching of the Word of God. We can open our Bible and read the Word of God. We can get a book in which someone has put some effort into explaining and expositing the Word of God.

And as many of us as hear or read that exposition will get something different out of it. Have you ever finished up and you go to talk to someone after a session of church or after a Bible class and something just really struck you and illuminated you and 15 pieces all fell into place and you're just practically glowing in the dark and you talk to someone else and they enjoyed it but they didn't get all of that out of it. Why is that? Because God the Holy Spirit ministers the Word of God to each one of us.

And we hear what we need to hear. Now I'm not saying that there are different messages or different principles. It's all one truth and it's God's truth.

And it doesn't mean different things to different people. But it's application. It's healing power.

It's encouraging and comforting power gets applied to each one of us individually by the Spirit. There's a great song called, There is a balm in Gilead that heals the sin sick soul. And that balm is something that has extraordinary properties.

Whatever the wound is, whatever the place where it is applied, it becomes the healing salve for that thing. We might each hear the same sermon or look at the same passage or read the same book but God the Holy Spirit will take the truth of God's Word and apply it individually. We hear it in our own native language.

It speaks to us. It ministers to us. It encourages and strengthens and builds us up.

And it's important to be aware of that because don't be discouraged or think that you must be off. If God the Holy Spirit applies it in an amazing way and you get a huge... You know how it is when you have some nagging thing and it's suddenly relieved? I know how it is. I have my favorite illustration of that.

You can go in and a fellow who knows what he's doing can take a sore tooth and fix it and make it all better. And you have this incredible relief. And it's exciting and it's powerful and it's moving and stirring.

And you immediately want to share that. Don't be discouraged if everybody else didn't have the same sore tooth you had and didn't get the same sense of relief. Just recognize the truth that you have here in this second chapter of Acts.

God the Holy Spirit will take God's Word and apply it. And we will hear what we need to hear if we have ears to hear. If we have eyes to see.

If we have hearts. You read Proverbs chapter 2. If you seek for it. If you search for it.

If you lift up your voice. If you apply your heart to it. Then you will understand the fear of the Lord.

Why is it important for each one to hear in his own language? To understand. You understand so much better in the language that you speak best. And the purpose here in giving the languages is not only a sign.

But it's for clarity. It's for perfect communication. It's for maximum effect.

Maximum impact of the message on each individual hearer. That's what the presence of the Holy Spirit does for us. We talk about the formal ministries of the Spirit in regeneration and sealing and gifting and indwelling and filling and so forth.

But this is one of those unlabeled ministries of the Spirit. Is to apply the word of God to each individual soul. Exactly where and how it needs to be applied.

And exactly when it needs to be applied. Sometimes the light dawns. The sun rises above the horizon.

We come to a whole complete new realization of what's going on in God's plan. And we're just so excited we're fit to bust. And we can't find anybody else who has had that same particular day dawn at that time.

And we want to try to tell them. And we say, oh let me explain it to you. And we start off and we're trying to bring them.

It probably took God a period of months or years to grow us to the point where he could reveal that insight to us and have us get it. And then we immediately want to find everybody else and say, now you've got to get it the same time I did. The individual application of God the Holy Spirit not only clarifies and ministers to each individual heart.

But he knows the timing. And we have to be patient with one another. Sometimes I'm going to be slow.

And I'm going to be the last one to see something that everybody else says, oh you just. Just raving about, oh this is just the greatest thing. Well yeah, I mean sure.

I remember when I was excited about that like five years ago. This is what's called in the Bible where it says quench not the spirit. There's been a lot of strange things said about that.

But it says do not put out the spirit's fire. That's literally what that verse means. Do not put out the spirit's fire.

When God the Holy Spirit comes to rest on each one of us in an individual ministry of God's word. And the light dawns and we are excited about it. Be excited with someone and be encouraging.

Even if you're not there yet or you don't totally understand it. We ought to be an encouragement to one another. And not a wet blanket and not put out the spirit's fire.

Because it is exciting to see what God reveals to us. To hear the word of God in our souls in our own language. And that's what's happening here.

Initially everyone is confused. We hear them speaking in our own tongues. And what is being spoken? Verse 11.

The wonderful works of God. It does no good to speak and do political analysis. It does no good to speak and do cultural analysis.

Or psychological analysis. Or mathematical analysis. Or any other kind of analysis.

The things that we speak. The things that God the Holy Spirit can use and minister to our hearts. Is the wonderful works of God.

That's the content of the word of God. And that's why the focus of our worship in our church is centered around the word of God. That's where you find the wonderful works of God.

Whether it's reflected in music or in the study of the word of God. Or in our fellowship and our conversation and our questions that are asked and answered. But they say they were all amazed and perplexed saying to one another.

Whatever could this mean? Others, verse 13, are throwing water on the spirit's fire. Mocking. Saying they are full of new wine.

Is there any recent example of this remark that you can think of? It just stands out and strikes me. What did Eli think about Hannah when she was praying to the Lord? Woman, do you have to come down here to get drunk? And she says, do not think that I am a worthless woman. That I am a daughter of Belial as it were.

I am not drunk. I am communing with the Lord. And any time there is intense communication.

You tend to see this overwhelming of the senses effect. That people misconstrue as drunkenness. And of course you have your verse.

Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess. But be filled with the spirit. They are often associated in the word of God.

As the positive and negative sides of the same sort of external visible behavior. I want to mention one other point here before we pause for our break. And that is we talked about the wind.

And the sound of the wind. And the significance of that for what is taking place. And what is going to take place.

But also the symbol of fire. We talked about it dividing. We talked about fire as often the symbol of God's judgment.

But this is not a judgment context is it? And there are other places in the Bible where you see fire. And it is not a judgment context. The fire that is associated with animal sacrifice.

That is a judgment context. The fire that is found in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation chapter 1. Eyes like a flaming fire. That is a judgment context.

But I will tell you how I came to this thought this week. I was working on something completely different. I was looking to help someone who was preparing a Sunday school lesson.

With the place where Jesus says. He is talking about when you have a light you don't hide it under a bushel. But you put it up on a stand so that it can be seen by all.

And I was looking at the Greek word that is used in that passage in Luke chapter 8. Which is Luchnos. L-U-C-H-N-O-S And it is the word for lamp. And there was a little note in one of the language references that said.

This is not to be confused with a candle. Which has its own word in Greek. And the thing that is significant about that is.

That the Bible always talks about lamps. And not candles. And the reason is.

A lamp hosts the fire. But it is not consumed. Candles host a fire.

But they are consumed in the process of being lit and burning. This is a fire that does not consume. There are two different kinds of fire.

Remember the verse. Our God is a consuming fire. And yet God dwelt in the bush.

And the fire did not consume it. That is what caused Moses to turn aside. In the real world.

If the ceiling in this room suddenly caught fire. And little pieces of burning sheet rock

rained down on our heads. This would not be a good thing.

Because that is a consuming type of fire. Here fire split up and lit individually on heads. And it is not a consuming fire is it? It is a beneficial fire.

It is a fire that symbolizes the presence of God. That is there and yet does not consume. We are to be vessels.

Where the spirit of God can dwell. And can burn like a fire. And yet we are not consumed.

And so our lives boil down to a choice between types of fire. We can either burn with God's fire in a positive sense. Or we can burn with God's fire in a judgmental sense.

The fire of God is coming. Remember John the Baptist? The one coming after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The fire is going to come.

And whether or not we are consumed. Demonstrates the kind of person we are. Or the kind of person we have become.

There is going to be fire. It is a matter of what we do in that fire. Are we going to be like Daniel's three friends? The fire does not consume us.

Or are we going to be like the wood, hay and stubble. And the man who is saved yet so as by fire. Isn't it significant that the very first day of the church age.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is symbolized by this fire. And Jesus was prophesied by John the Baptist that he would baptize them with fire. Is the fire going to consume the chaff? Or is it going to illuminate a dark place? Is it going to be the lamp on a lamp stand that is not consumed itself.

But shines the light. And moves away the darkness. That is the choice that we make every day.

What kind of fire is going to characterize us? Are we stoking the wood, hay and stubble fire? Or are we burning brightly like the stars that differ from star in glory. Even so will it be in the resurrection. Well this is a good stopping point for us.

Let's pause and take our break. When we come back we are going to move forward and take a look at this interesting sermon. An interesting Old Testament allusion to Joel.

That Peter makes in the light of these events. That is where we will pick up when we come back.