

PROMISE FULFILLED**Acts 2:1-13****(Read Acts 2:1-13)**

Intro: Passover was a huge celebration with thousands of people coming from around Palestine, but it was tiny when compared to Pentecost. Pentecost was a Jewish Spring festival, and it was huge because the weather was 50 days better than what it would have been for Passover. The seas were calmer, the roads weren't as muddy, and the weather simply wasn't as volatile, so people were able to come to Jerusalem. Getting to the holy city was the focal point of a Jewish person's life, and they would come from all over the Mediterranean. Whereas the normal population of Jerusalem was about 50,000 people, and with Passover it would swell to a few thousand more, some have estimated that as many as a million people came for Pentecost – it was like a holy Spring Break. It was also the festival of the First Fruits. The first barley harvest had happened and now the first wheat harvest was underway and fresh bread that was baked from that first harvest was offered up by the priests as an offering to God.

It was a festive place. I can only imagine that it would be shoulder to shoulder with people from all over the world. No doubt lodging was almost non-existent because everybody was there. It was 2,000 years before Airbnb, so I suppose all people could be to stay in homes of people they knew or maybe even simply knock on doors until you could find someone who would allow you to stay for room and board.

In that million people, there were about 120 Christ Followers. Now, it doesn't say anything in this passage about how many people there, but it's been accepted that it was about 120 people because Acts 1:15 says *In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120)* Acts 1:15 ESV

And as you recall, from our text last week, the disciples had been told by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem, and so they were obediently waiting for the promised arrival of the Holy Spirit. By this point they were ready to be filled, whatever that meant. They knew Jesus had said wait for the arrival of the Holy Spirit, so they did and they did it expectantly, because they knew they needed to be filled. David Guzik says "*Before we can be filled, we must recognize our emptiness.*" These people recognized their need and they were ready. It says here they were in a house – fortunately they knew the owner or one of them was the owner – and probably in the upper room that is mentioned in Acts 1:13. Fortunately somebody owned it, so they didn't have to worry about finding an Airbnb, and it was a place that could hold 120 people, which is pretty amazing. It was a house, which makes me think that the theory that it was somewhere in the temple courts probably is not correct, but it might be.

Regardless, they were in one place and . . .

There was unity

- They were all together in one place. Notice all the unity and oneness that is here. They were **all together**, the Spirit filled the entire house where they were sitting. The divided tongues of fire which helped them to visualize the Holy Spirit rested on **each one** of them, then, **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit**.
- When the Holy Spirit is present, unity is wonderfully obvious. The other day a couple pastor friends and I were reveling in the powerful experience we had with Promise Keepers. With tears, we recalled the incredible unity we had at those mass meetings where tens of thousands of men gathered together worshiping our one God. At one conference, actually it was a pastor's conference in Atlanta, there were 52,000 pastors there of every race and every denomination, and there was such unity. It makes the disunity of the church that we've been experiencing as politics have torn us apart, especially painful. The Holy Spirit brings unity and it was evident in that upper room in that house on the day of Pentecost as . . .

The Spirit came like wind

- Albert Winn in his commentary on Acts says this, "*So we find the coming of the Spirit compared to the sound of a mighty wind into the sight of tongues of flame. Who can offer a better description? The Spirit is like wind: uncontrollable, mysterious, powerful, seen only in his effects. In Hebrew and in Greek, the same word means both "wind" and "spirit". The Spirit is also like the flame: cleansing and consuming, awesome and dangerous.*" Isn't that powerful?
- The Holy Spirit is not hocus pocus! The Holy Spirit is God's power unleashed on and in his people. He came like a mighty rushing wind and the world outside heard it. They must have heard it! For certain they heard people speaking in other languages . . .

As the spirit gave them utterance (which is how verse 4 puts it)

- That got the attention of the city. They didn't expect this! These were Galileans, who were considered backward and rough. There may even have been YOU MIGHT BE A GALILEAN jokes like, *If your dad walks you to school because you're in the same grade. . . You might be a Galilean. or If you've ever made change in the offering plate . . . You might be a Galilean.* But the people in Jerusalem that day were immediately set straight, because what they heard did not fit their impression. These people were speaking in languages that they couldn't speak before. They could certainly speak Aramaic which was the language of the region, and Greek which was the language of the Empire, but they couldn't speak Cappadocian or the language of Cyrene, or Parthian, or Egyptian, or ANY OF THEM!
- But with the Holy Spirit freeing the tongues of these Christ Followers, and all the while opening the ears of godly people, they heard about the *mighty works of God*. Because . . .

The message was for devout people.

- Our text says that *there were dwelling in Jerusalem at that time, devout men from every nation under heaven.* Acts 1:5 Devout means that they were open to the word of God. And here they were, hearing their own language, and yes, just like the people of Galilee and all of Palestine they probably knew Aramaic, and they certainly knew Greek because they were from all over the Mediterranean. But here they were hearing the mighty works of God **IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE**,
- They were asking “*What does this mean?*” Well, this is what it meant, it was a whole new day. The Holy Spirit fell, and the church was beginning. It says here that others were mocking and saying that they were filled with new wine. Peter had a reply to that and we'll hear about that next week. The truth is that this is the response of somebody who doesn't understand something or are afraid of what it means. These people weren't drunk; they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- And . . .

It was the undoing of the confusion that began at the Tower of Babel

- In Genesis 11:1-9 you will find the account following Noah's flood that tells how all humanity spoke the same language. It tells us that they gathered together to build a tower and *make a name for themselves*. What they wanted to do was try to be on equal footing with God. It's a picture of a rebellious people filled with themselves and thinking that they could have equality with the Almighty – which is an impossibility. It was at that point that God confused language, and they were dispersed. They began babbling and that is literally where the word comes from. They didn't understand one another anymore. It was the curse of Babel, and it brought great confusion. The truth is, confusion rules humanity because that's what happens without God.
- But, at Pentecost, as I pointed out a little while ago . . .

Unity was restored as the Holy Spirit swept in

- It sometimes happens when I go to Cleveland or to Columbus, and certainly if I go to Washington DC. Where there is a larger population and it includes people from every corner of the world. I hear languages from everywhere and I don't understand any of them. It also happens at Niagara Falls, where people come to witness the power of the Falls, or Grand Canyon, or as Kathy and experienced last summer, Glacier National Park where all around us are people of all nationalities enjoying the magnificence of nature and they're speaking different languages. I often wonder what they're saying, I wonder if they're saying, “Stand there so I can take a picture.” or maybe they're saying “I wish that fat guy with the Fin Feather Fur hat would get out of my way so I could take a picture.” Regardless, I don't understand them.
- And then there have been times when I have been in worship services somewhere in another part of the world, where I have no idea what is being said or sung, but the worship has been sweet because I know that they are worshiping the same God that I do. There was a unity even though I couldn't understand. Forty years ago, Sandy Patty sang four unintelligible lines as she began the first verse of LOVE IN ANY LANGUAGE. The fifth and final line was “**I love you.**” which was what the previous lines had also said, but in four other languages. Then Sandy continued with,

*The sounds are all as different
As the lands from which they came
And though the words are all unique
Our hearts are still the same*

*Love in any language
Straight from the heart
Pulls us all together
Never apart
And once we learn to speak it
All the world will hear
Love in any language
Fluently spoken here*

There are several more verses, equally true and powerful, but my point is the Holy Spirit unifies us. At Pentecost, unity was restored as the Holy Spirit arrived as a mighty rushing wind and fulfilled the promise Jesus made on that mountain top before he rose into heaven when he told his disciples, *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* Acts 1:8. There it is, a promise fulfilled. Amen.