

Sermon Title: The Promise Arrives
Scripture Text: Acts 2:1-13 (Acts #4)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-29-23

We began our adventure into the Book of Acts the Sunday after New Year's Day, and that takes us to a unique time in history, a time of a major transition in history—and a transition, if you will, in the unfolding of the redemptive plan of God. It is the transition from the era of the Old Covenant—the Old Testament—to the era of the New Covenant.

That transition period was about 40 years—or, it was a millisecond. In the moment that Jesus said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30) and He bowed His head and He gave His life (Matt. 20:28), and "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51)—symbolizing that everyone now has "access" to God (Eph. 2:18; cf. Heb. 10:19-20)—that was the *end* of the Old; that was the inauguration of the New.

But it takes a while for things to change; it takes a while for things to "play out," humanly speaking (cf. Lk. 5:39); and it took time for the continuing revelation of God to explain all of this (cf. Jn. 16:12).

The Book of Acts records the history of about 30 years. The reason I say the transition was about 40 years—well, it was almost 40 years from the time Jesus died until the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, which was the exclamation point on the end of the Old Covenant (Matt. 21:43; 23:37-38; 24:1-2). Well, the Book of Acts records the history of about 30 of those years, from the ascension of Jesus—which we have already seen in Chapter 1—up to a few years before the Apostle Paul died.

The Book of Hebrews kind of parallels the Book of Acts—not in any way of recording history, but Hebrews describes the *theological* transition, and was written between the close of the events recorded in Acts and that destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. The Book of Hebrews, you might guess from the title, was written to primarily Jewish followers of Christ. The Book of Acts is addressed to this man Theophilus, who was apparently a Roman regional governor; it is focusing on explaining to the Gentile world what was going on with this "Savior of the world" who came from among "the Jews" (Jn. 4:22; 42).

Luke, the author of this book, scrupulously makes the connections between the Old Testament—the Old Covenant—and the New Testament—the New Covenant. He wrote a two-volume set: Volume 1 is the Gospel of Luke; Volume 2 is the Book of Acts.

What we come to today was predicted *centuries* earlier. This isn't just out of the blue! This is *exactly* as God planned it to be revealed (cf. Lk. 24:44; Acts 26:22).

The most detailed Old Testament announcements of a coming New Covenant are in Jeremiah Chapter 31, Verses 31 to 34; and then Jeremiah refers to it again in Chapter 32 (vs. 40); and it is mentioned several times in Ezekiel—most notably, Ezekiel 37, Verses 26 through 28.

This was a promised "New Covenant" between God and "Israel" (Heb. 8:8). It will be fully in effect when Israel embraces her Messiah. *That* will be when Jesus returns, and He sets up the Kingdom of God on Earth for "a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6; cf. Zech. 12:10; Matt. 23:39).

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So as I say: It's a covenant between God and Israel; we are not God, and we are not Israel, but here is a *marvelous* caveat: that we who believe in Jesus Christ, Jew or Gentile, during this era—between now and the Second Coming—we receive *all* of the *spiritual* benefits of the New Covenant (e.g., Ezek. 36:25-27; cf. Is. 49:6); *not* the Kingdom on Earth, but we are "blessed" with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3).

Before Jesus went to the Cross, He famously gave us those words that we recite every time we celebrate Communion; He held up that chalice and He said: "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood" (1 Cor. 11:25; cf. Lk. 22:20). "My blood" is a Hebrew euphemism for "My death" (cf. Col. 1:20, 22). And so, when He died, the New Covenant was instituted (Heb. 9:16). And now, we are New Covenant believers; we are citizens of a Kingdom not of this Earth (Jn. 18:36; Phil. 3:20).

Here before we dive into our text, I want to kind of give you a little bit of an avalanche of Scripture, but I think it will help you see where we are going.

Here is what we are now. Paul wrote this in Second Corinthians Chapter 3, Verses 5 and 6—"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also"—catch this—"made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted) "The letter" is a reference to the Old Testament Mosaic Law (Rom. 2:27; 7:6). Hebrews 8:9-10 goes into much greater depth into the New Covenant status of believers in Jesus Christ, but we are talking about Acts now.

I mentioned in our introduction to the Book of Acts that there is a *huge* emphasis in this book on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This is a *new* era of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is mentioned more than fifty times in the Book of Acts. And Jesus quite rigorously connected the dots for His disciples by repeatedly speaking of the promises, and speaking of the time when the Father would send the Holy Spirit to dwell in His people.

During the last year of His life, at the Feast of Booths—or, the Feast of Tabernacles—in Jerusalem, Jesus said this; we have it recorded in John Chapter 7, Verses 37 through 39—"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me'—note this—"as the Scripture said"—I'm not giving you something new; this is fulfillment of what was promised—"as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." ' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

"Okay, we're real close, guys—but not yet; and the Spirit is going to come upon you." That says that this special relationship of believers with the Holy Spirit was going to come *after* "Jesus" was "glorified." We saw Him ascend to the Father in Acts Chapter 1, so the days are *really close* by the time we get to the Book of Acts.

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Well, as I said, Jesus scrupulously connected the dots for them. The night before Jesus went to the Cross, the disciples were very grieved that He said He was going away; so we see this in John 14:16-17—all of John 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 all happened on that night before Jesus went to the Cross, and in John 14:16-17, Jesus says: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper"—and the Greek word there means "another of exactly the same kind"; in other words: "another" Person of the Trinity (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17)—"that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because"—catch this—"He abides *with you* and will be *in you*."

The Spirit is always *with* God's people—always *has* been; but, "He will be *in you*"? Those are some *highly theological* prepositionisms! "With you" versus "in you"—*big* transition coming; a glorious new dimension: "He will be *in you*."

A little later in that same Chapter, Verses 25 and 26—"These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you"—promising the disciples that they would have all the understanding that they, as yet, had not put together.

And then later, Jesus gave a preview of what we saw in Acts Chapter 1, Verse 8—which I will quote to you in a little while—about His people being His "witnesses"; in John 15, Verses 26 and 27, Jesus said: "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and *you will testify also*, because you have been with Me from the beginning." "You are going to be the ones who bear witness to Me, and to what I am doing."

Keep going: John Chapter 16, Verses 7 and 8—"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." The whole Old Covenant—all that "Law"—was to be your "tutor" to "lead" you "to Christ" (Gal. 3:24; cf. Rom. 3:20); and when the Holy Spirit comes, the Holy Spirit will use the Law to expose your sin, to drive you to the Savior.

There was no doubt that that was on the minds of that "hundred and twenty" people who gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1:15). We met them last week: the eleven Apostles; and then the whole group added Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot to fill out the full complement of twelve Apostles (vss. 20-26). This was on their minds. Surely, they were praying for this.

In Verses 4 and 5 of Chapter 1 we saw this: "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" Remember: "forty days" had elapsed (vs. 3). Jesus said, "I'm going to meet you up in Galilee." They did. Now they are in Jerusalem, and He says: "Not many days from now." You'll see the connection.

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Chapter 1, Verse 8, that I mentioned we would say: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall *be My witnesses*"—just like I said to you that night before the Cross, guys—"both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Well, now we are ready for the big day: The Promise Arrives. This is a major part of this turning-point era in human history and the unfolding of God's kingdom program. The promise was reiterated in Acts 1 (vs. 8). The disciples were to "wait" for the coming of the Holy Spirit (vs. 4), which is in Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, He comes. In Chapter 1 they were held back—"Wait here until it happens." In Chapter 2, they are empowered. In Chapter 1, Jesus ascends (vs. 9). In Chapter 2, the Holy Spirit descends, and *everything is on* in the plan of God.

Now, this miraculous arrival of the Holy Spirit. We are going to look at 13 verses:

The Miracle Scheduled (vs. 1).
The Miracle Announced (vss. 2-4)
The Miracle Explained (vss. 5-11)
and The Miracle Questioned (vss. 12-13)

This is exactly on God's schedule, so look at The Miracle Scheduled. Acts Chapter 2, Verse 1—"When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." Alright, let's just make sure we understand that. "They"—the antecedent is that same "hundred and twenty" that we met in Chapter 1 (vs. 15): the Apostles and the other faithful believers and those precious "women" that are named there (vs. 14).

"They" were "in one place"—well, it doesn't say it, but logically, almost certainly, it was that same "upper room" somewhere in Jerusalem (vs. 13), where they had me when they chose Matthias. And that might well have been the same "upper room" in which Jesus had the final Passover with His men (Mk. 14:15; Lk. 22:12).

God scheduled this event for "the day of Pentecost." The word "Pentecost" means "fiftieth." It is the New Testament name for what is called in the Old Testament "the Feast of Weeks" (Ex. 34:22), or "the Feast of the Harvest" (Ex. 23:16). It was celebrated "fifty days" after Passover (Lev. 23:16)—hence, we know this took place fifty days after Jesus died. Pentecost was one of those annual feasts in Israel where people were to come, if they could, to the Temple (Ex. 23:14-17); so there were *crowds and crowds* of people there, just as at the Passover.

The Hebrew calendar is not our calendar; but in the calendar of Israel, the first annual feast—described and set forth in Leviticus 23—is Passover. It's a great picture of the Messiah who was going to come. It was to commemorate how God, through lambs that were sacrificed and their blood applied to the doorposts of the homes and the angel of death "passed over" those homes when God killed all of the firstborn among the Egyptians (Ex. 12:23, 29). What a beautiful picture of Jesus—"the Lamb"—the *singular* Lamb—"of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29; cf. Is. 53:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18). First Corinthians 5:7 says: "Christ *our* Passover also has been sacrificed."

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Immediately on the heels of the Passover came the Feast of Unleavened Bread—"seven days" following Passover (Ex. 12:15). And during that feast, it was "unleavened bread": They were to remember that God said, "Don't even wait for your bread to rise; you are going to leave Egypt in a hurry." "Leaven" is always a symbol of corruption or sin; "Unleavened" is a symbol of purity; so this is an idea of having been made holy after the sacrifice of the lamb (cf. 1 Cor. 5:8). And God set apart His people from their slavery in Egypt, as we are set apart from "the world" in Christ (Jn. 15:19).

Then, fifty days after Passover is the Feast of Pentecost. Another offering of "first fruits" was required then (Ex. 23:16), as was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It is not a surprise that God chose to send the Holy Spirit at the time of Pentecost, when an offering of first fruits was made, because the Holy Spirit is the "first fruits" of our inheritance in Christ (Rom. 8:12). Remember, He is called our *arrabōn*—our "guarantee" (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; NKJV).

The analogy most people make is: our "engagement ring." This is the down payment. We have this *incredible* inheritance—"imperishable...undefiled...will not fade away... reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:4-5). And what is the "guarantee" of the promise? The "Holy Spirit" that "you have" (1 Cor. 6:19).

Another picture fulfilled on that day is that this is the day when those first 3,000 people were brought to salvation in Christ—an *incredible* outpouring; we will see it later in this very same chapter (vs. 41). Well, those are the "first fruits" of the harvest of souls that is *still going on* (cf. 1 Cor. 16:15); we are part of that harvest, if we are in Christ.

Do you see again: God *always* keeps His promises (Num. 23:19); He fulfills *every* prophecy *specifically* (cf. Lk. 21:22; 24:44); and all of the illustrations in the Old Testament, all of the formal types of Christ—they are all brought to reality in Him. This happened *exactly* on the right day, just as Jesus was crucified *exactly* on the right day, according to the plan of God.

Number 2—The Miracle Announced.

This is *spectacular*! Chapter 2, Verse 2—"And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."

"Suddenly" is a unique word; it's a Greek word that only Luke uses in the New Testament. It emphasizes surprise, something that is startling, something that makes your heart race—that kind of a thing.

Now, they knew the promise; they had surely been *praying* for it to come. They knew it was imminent. But the phenomena that God used to announce this event was *still so spectacular*, it caught everybody by surprise. It even drew a crowd from the city. If that makes you think of the descriptions of the Second Coming—it will be a surprise, on a day you're not thinking about it (Matt. 24:42, 50)—well, you're on the right track.

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This was something spectacular: "There came from heaven a noise..." The word order puts the emphasis on "from heaven." We want to make sure that you don't think this was a meteorological phenomenon. This was an unprecedented noise—but it didn't blow anyone's hair. What sounds like "a *mighty* rushing wind" (ESV)? It has to be something like a tornado or a hurricane. I'm not sad that I've never been through a tornado or a hurricane, and they are *not* on my bucket list, either; but I have seen the pictures; I have heard people that *have* been in and around tornadoes say, "It sounded like a train coming full speed down our street!" "A sound...from heaven...like a mighty rushing wind" (ESV).

Supernatural activity is utterly beyond our grasp, so the Bible writers were often guided by the Holy Spirit to use similes to describe things like this: "It was *like*..." "A sound *like* a tornado or a hurricane..." But there was no wind blowing.

In both Hebrew and Greek, it is interesting that the same word is used in both languages for "breath," "wind," and "spirit"; you have to know the context to know which is being emphasized. Remember, Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to "the wind" when He spoke to Nicodemus: "The wind blows where it wishes" and you can't see "where it comes from," you can't see "where it is going"; you can see its work (Jn. 3:8). Well, that is what he is picturing here. Remember, Jesus one time "breathed on" the disciples, one of the last times that He predicted this coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22).

We will see in a few minutes that that sound was part of what attracted a crowd; but would you notice: it "filled" only "the entire house where they were sitting." I wouldn't press this necessarily too far, but some people like to make the point that, being Jews, had they been praying at that moment, they would not have been sitting; they would have been kneeling or standing.

So this really was a *shocking* surprise—even though it was not unanticipated. It was *spine-tingling* to hear this.

Oh, but that wasn't all. First, this unprecedented sound; then, an unprecedented visual phenomenon: Verse 3—"And there appeared to them"—"them" in this verse is "they" from the verse before: the "hundred and twenty" who were in the house—"there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them."

Now again, these were "as of fire"—there were no flames involved; this was not some kind of a divine torch; it is not the "fire" of judgment that John the Baptist refers to in Matthew 3:11, where the context there is judgment. But just like there was no air moving when the "mighty rushing wind" sound came, there was no fire burning with these "tongues as of fire."

"Tongues as of fire"—that's interesting. It says they "distributed themselves, and they rested on each one of them." The word translated "distributed"—that's a pretty good translation. If you remember, the King James Version mentions "cloven tongues like as of fire," like they were cut out and they would cleave—like each person gets two parts of a flame standing over their head. But the idea is that this "fire" came, and "distributed" itself, and "rested on each one of them."

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The Bible doesn't say this, but I picture one *giant*, as it were, ball of fire that then splits up into a hundred and twenty individual manifestations for those people who were there. So everyone present in that room received the same thing at that same moment—*all* received the same gift; *all* saw the same phenomenon; *all* heard the same sound.

This was *not* something that, individually, each one sought. There were no instructions: "Form a line, and we will hand you the gift as you get to the front of the line." It was sovereignly done by God.

This was the first instance in history of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. That is now the norm for every individual at the moment of initial faith in Christ (Rom. 8:9).

Now, these people had never read First Corinthians; it had not been written yet. We know *now* that we are *past* that transition era; *here* is standard procedure when a person comes to Christ: First Corinthians 12:13—"For by one Spirit we were *all* baptized into one body"—"baptized" means "immersed" (cf. Rom. 6:3)—"whether Jews or Greeks"—so he is saying, "No distinction between Jews and Greeks; Jews and Greeks come exactly the same way, they receive the same salvation, they receive the same gift, they receive the same Holy Spirit" (cf. Acts 15:11)—"we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."

They did not yet realize that at that moment, they were "baptized"—immersed—into "one" new spiritual "body" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12; Eph. 2:16; 4:4; Col. 3:15); "the body of Christ" began that day in that room (Eph. 4:12; cf. 1 Cor. 12:27), *even though* nobody there had all of the revelation about it. The "sound" and the "tongues as of fire" for this first time was all to call attention to the sovereign work of God fulfilling His promise (cf. Acts 10:45-46).

You have probably heard that this was the beginning of "the church," the "body" of Christ (Eph. 5:23; Col., 1:18, 24; cf. Matt. 16:18)—that new entity that is *not* "Israel" (Rom. 11:25); this is Jew and Gentile together in Christ (Eph. 2:11-18; 3:6).

Now it is true: This *was* the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ; but don't forget that *this* is in the time of *transition*, and this is very *early* in the time of the transition. The Temple was still standing. Jews who had not embraced Christ continued under the Old Covenant. I can imagine that the maintenance staff of the Temple repaired that torn curtain really quick (cf. Matt. 27:51), and they went *right back* to what they were doing (e.g., Heb. 10:11).

But the new era has begun, *even though* the practices of the old one were not snuffed out until A.D. 70, when God arranged for the Romans to destroy the Temple (cf. Matt. 23:38). The promise has arrived; the new era has begun.

There was going to be much more revelation about the work of the Holy Spirit in believers, and about the Church, and about the Body of Christ; but that would unfold in stages. But this is the beginning.

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Just for my own curiosity today, I did a little looking to see: The Church is first mentioned in Matthew 16: "I will build My church" (vs. 18). It is mentioned again in Matthew 18, in the context of what we call "Church Discipline." But it is interesting that the first mention of the Church in the Book of Acts—*it's not here in Chapter 2, or 3, or 4*. There is no announcement to the effect that, "We have to call up the sign company; we have to get some signs made that say, 'The Church Meets Here.'" The first mention of the Church in the Book of Acts is Chapter 5, Verse 11, where, after the Holy Spirit struck Ananias and his wife dead for lying to the Holy Spirit, and He did that in front of the church, it says: "And great fear came over the whole church." So, by Chapter 5, the people *there* were familiar with the term "church," even though it is not used here in the first chapters of Acts.

The word "church" then *will* show up 18 more times in the Book of Acts; it appears once in the Book of Hebrews, once in the Book of James, three times in Third John, ten times in the Book of Revelation—which is the last letter addressed to the churches; it is addressed to seven specific First-Century churches in seven specific places (Rev. 1:4, 11). But here is the interesting thing: That word "church" is used in the writings of the Apostle Paul *75 times!* You see, we are at the *beginning* of the transition. The final touches on God's revelation about the Church—which is the Body of Christ, of which we are part—that revelation came, not surprisingly, through Paul; it was *his* ministry that God used to bring Jews and Gentiles together in one new entity, and he always emphasized that (e.g., Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Remember, any place he went—always, in a new city: Find the synagogue, use your credentials as a rabbi, go in, and tell them about the Messiah. Preach as much as you can; stay as long as you can, until they throw you out; take those who believed, and go to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; cf. Rom. 1:16). It was such a *glorious* celebration that the "wall of partition" has been torn down in Christ (Eph. 2:14, KJV).

Now, in a sense, you could say that the Old Covenant and the New Covenant overlapped by about 40 years—I say it *only* in a sense—because it was 40 years after Christ was crucified that the Temple was destroyed; but the New Covenant began when Christ said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30; cf. Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25)—or, if you want to say, when He ascended; or, if you want to say, when the Holy Spirit came: *right now*, Acts Chapters 1 and 2, we know that.

But we also know it took a while for all of these promises to be worked out for the recognition of what it was for the Gospel to begin to spread. And remember, after the leaders of the Jews had said definitively, "Jesus is of the Devil"—remember that? Matthew Chapter 12 (Verse 24)—and later on in Matthew 21, Verse 43, Jesus said to them: "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it." That "people producing the fruit" of the Kingdom is, starting with that "hundred and twenty," the Body of Christ—still that entity through which God is working (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9).

Up in Romans 9 through 11, we get the *full* explanation about what has happened since this transition: that Israel has been *temporarily* set aside "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25).

So we are at the moment of the promise arriving.

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Now, here is the third miracle of that day: "And they"—"they" is the "they" of Verse 3, which is the "them" of Verse 2; it's the "hundred and twenty"—"they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is the work of Christ placing believers into the Body of Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; cf. Rom. 16:11). It is a sovereign, one-time, unrepeatable act. It "seals" us in Christ (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). It is concurrent with new birth (Jn. 3:3, 5; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), with "adoption" (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), with "regeneration" (Titus 3:5; cf. Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25-27), with a whole bunch of other things—you receive your spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7, 13).

But, to be "*filled* with the Holy Spirit" is different from the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Nobody is ever commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit—that's a sovereign work of God. But you *are* commanded to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). To "be filled," as we learned in depth in Ephesians 5 and 6 a while back—that is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. So, no one is commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit because we have nothing to do with that; it is the sovereign work of God. But the baptism of the Holy Spirit enables you to be *filled* with the Holy Spirit when you let Him take control of you (cf. Gal. 5:16).

And so, when these first "hundred and twenty" had now received the Spirit, and they were "filled with the Holy Spirit," God granted another miraculous manifestation: they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance" (vs. 4). They began speaking in languages that were *not* their "languages" (1 Cor. 14:10; 21-22a; cf. Is. 28:11)!

It would have been as if, suppose we had guests from Africa here today, and we said, "Stand up and greet each other," and one of you starts thinking about the wonderful things that God has done in your life, and you open your mouth, and out comes fluent Swahili for the Swahili-speaker. And somebody else hears Urdu, and somebody else hears Pashtu, and somebody else hears Spanish, and somebody else hears French, and somebody else hears German—because they are all speaking in languages *they don't know!* Trust me—*that would be a miracle!* I speak in the *one* language I don't know very well, and I screw it up all the time! But these were people *perfectly* declaring "the mighty deeds of God" (Acts 2:11).

There is a *tremendous* amount of unnecessary confusion about this, *since* the birth of "Pentecostalism" in the early 20th Century; and then, the practices of "Pentecostalism" burst at the seams and spread widely through the "Charismatic Movement" starting in the 1970s. And there are now a lot of people today who *claim* they have this gift—but *they don't!* (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8)

There *is* a manifestation—linguists are familiar with it and can describe it; it has been recorded, tested, evaluated. It is *not* human language; it is called "ecstatic speech." It is practiced by some people in very mystical places; it is practiced within cults and within other world religions.

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But there are some Christians who say, "I have that gift! *That* is the gift of 'tongues!'" Or, "That is *my own* 'prayer language!'" *It's not!* It doesn't fit the descriptions of this gift here, or when it's described in First Corinthians Chapters 12, 13, and 14.

And as a matter of fact, there is a really interesting phenomenon; test this one out when you look through First Corinthians 12, 13, and 14—*especially* Chapter 14; it started with the translators of the King James Version, and I think it is absolutely valid: When they are describing the real gift, they call it "tongues"—another word for "languages," plural, because there are "many...languages" (1 Cor. 14:10, ESV). When they describe the *pseudo*-gift—the "ecstatic speech"—they call it "an unknown *tongue*," singular, because there are no *dialects* of gibberish! And I don't mean "gibberish" in a pejorative sense, but I mean things that do not make any sense at all, that are not linguistically distinct.

This was people *miraculously* enabled to speak in languages they don't know! Oh, wouldn't it be nice for this gift to be in practice today? I have done a lot in the twenty-plus trips I have taken to Russia, and I have taught for countless hours there. I could have done *twice* as much, if I didn't have to have somebody interpret for me all the time! She's *good*. A lot of people over there think I'm a good preacher, and they have no evidence for that. I know *she* is a good preacher, but I *think* she says what I say. It's *totally different* to be able to speak in a different language.

Now, on this occasion, those who understood the Old Testament would have realized that *this is a great big deal!* *This* is part of the transition we were told about! *This* is God *turning away from Israel* to a new entity!

And again, it would come later; and it came through the Apostle Paul, to whom God gave the explanation: Centuries before this, God had promised, through Isaiah, that there was judgment coming from God on unbelieving Israel, and it was going to come through foreigners speaking other languages—and that would be a sign to unbelieving Israel that God was judging them. He was referring to the foreigners who came in and whisked them off into captivity (2 Ki. 17:6). Paul quoted from Isaiah—specifically from Isaiah 28, Verses 11 and 12—and he said this, in First Corinthians 14:21-22—"In the Law it is written"—another connection to the Old Testament; none of this is surprising, it's the next step of development—"In the Law it is written, 'By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me,' says the Lord. So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy"—speaking forth God's Word (Jer. 23:22)—"is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe." And we will be circling back to some of this in later times in the Book of Acts. But if you think I'm making it up, I'm not.

Let's look at the next point: The Miracle Explained. Verses 5 through 11. That "noise like a violent rushing wind" began to gather a crowd. And those outside the house apparently did not see the "tongues as of fire"—we don't know that they did, anyway; but when the crowd arrived, they witnessed an unprecedented phenomenon we've never seen before. This is what sets the stage for Peter's great sermon that I can't wait to talk about when we come back to Acts after today.

Sermon Title: The Promise Arrives
Scripture Text: Acts 2:1-13 (Acts #4)

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But look at this Miracle Explained: Verses 5 through 11—"Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem"—well, *a lot of them* from all over, because the Feast of Pentecost was one of the pilgrim feasts when people were to come, if they could, to the Temple, to Jerusalem; so Jerusalem would swell with multiples of its normal population, with people *all over* the known world, on Passover, on Pentecost, and other particular feasts. "Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven." Yes, that is hyperbolic, but you get the point. "And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them"—antecedent: the ones gathered—"was hearing them"—the "hundred and twenty"—"speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished"—I would be, too!—"saying, 'Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' " Well, yeah, they were predominantly from Galilee; and remember, to their perception, Galilee is "the other side of the tracks"; Galilee is *Hicksville!* There was no linguistic institute centered *anywhere* in Galilee. Galileans were regarded as unlearned, and "These are all Galileans, and they're speaking my language better than I do! What's going on here?"

Verse 8—" And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

Ah, *if only* they had a recording! Wouldn't that be *fascinating*? God enabled people among the "hundred and twenty" to speak in *every different native language of all* who had come on that day!

Interesting: If you take all the places in that list—get out the 68th book of your Bible, the Maps (the 67th is the Concordance) and find those places; the Gospel eventually went to all of those places! As a matter of fact, the best theory for how the Church got started in Rome—it wasn't an Apostle getting there; Paul was pretty late to the game, if he ever did get to Rome other than his imprisonment there, but he already knew a church was there when he *wrote* to Rome—it was people who were *here* who heard the Gospel, who repented, and who took the Gospel home with them. And that is how *a lot* of churches got started.

And interestingly: Before he died, Peter—the one who preached the sermon on this occasion—he wrote to believing Jews and Gentiles in *several* of the places that are on that list! Go check the addressees of First Peter, Chapter 1, and you'll find some of those places on this list.

Well, we are going to get to Peter's sermon, but not today. And understand: Of course, not everyone there believed. Verses 12 and 13—The Miracle is Questioned: "And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others were mocking and saying, 'They are full of sweet wine.'" In other words: "They're drunk. They're just babbling." You know, I didn't grow up in the church, and I went to a pretty interesting college. I have heard drunks talk...*it was not* foreign languages they don't know!

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Now, the question before us is: Do *you* have the Holy Spirit? The transition is over. There won't be a fireball over your head. There won't be your own personal tornado effects. You won't necessarily start speaking in a language you've never heard of. But, do you have the Holy Spirit? (Gal. 4:6; cf. Ezek. 36:27)

In other words: Do you belong to Jesus Christ? (Rom. 8:9) There is *only one way* you can! The way you get this gift is the sovereign work of God in placing you into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3b, 13), which *always* comes through the "hearing" of the Gospel (Rom. 10:17) and "repenting" (Lk. 5:32; 13:3, 5; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 20:21) and "turning" to Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 1:9; cf. Mk. 1:15; Acts 26:18).

Let's peek ahead in this chapter. Pretend you have heard Peter preach on that day. We have a summary of his sermon in Acts Chapter 2. I would *so* like to think I can preach the whole thing—preach about it in one day; it's *not* going to happen. But look ahead, if you will. Go ahead—read over Acts 2 every day this week, if you want to; read over it for weeks and weeks, until we finish it.

Skip ahead to Acts Chapter 2, starting at Verse 37. Peter has just concluded his sermon: "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart..." Remember: The Spirit, "when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (Jn. 16:8). I don't know about you, but when I heard the Gospel, "pierced to the heart" is the right way to describe it! "*I have to have a Savior, now that I know I need one!*" "When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' " There was no equivocation, no hesitation. "Peter said to them, 'Repent'—"repent" means "turn around" (cf. Is. 55:7; Jer. 23:22; 36:3; Ezek. 33:11; Acts 26:20). "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And remember: They baptized "three thousand" people that day (vs. 41).

Look at Verses 39 and 40—"For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'"

You can "be saved." You could have chosen to stay in Egypt, not put that blood over the "doorposts" (Ex. 12:7). I suppose you could put the blood over the doorposts, and then *still* stay; you would have still been a slave. But Christ came to "set" us "free" from our slavery to sin (Rom. 8:2; cf. Jn. 8:34-36).

Has the Gospel message about "sin and righteousness and judgment" (cf. Acts 17:30-31; 24:25), and the forgiveness that is only in Christ Jesus (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5)—has that "pierced" you "to the heart"? Have you repented? Have you turned to Him? Have you been "baptized" to declare to the world: "I belong to Jesus"?

That's where we are going. I hope you're along for the ride. I hope you belong to that Savior.

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And let's pray:

Our Father, how we thank You for Your glorious gift of salvation! Thank You for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that secured us; we are protected by Your power for the final step of our redemption—deliverance from "the body of this death." Thank You for all of this. Oh, please, don't let a soul leave this place without this knowledge, this gift, standing in Your grace. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.