

Amos 9 (11-12) – Missing the Point of Pentecost

Look at Acts 1:6-8 – Would they receive power to restore the kingdom to Israel? No, they would receive power to spread the kingdom of God. They were missing the point, but they would get the point after they got the power. The power wasn't the tongues; the power was the witness, the power to fulfill the great commission. The tongues were a mark, a manifestation of the truth that the Gospel was for all people. Acts 2:12 – what does this mean? Acts 2:21 – everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). The point has been made, that is what the book of Acts gives us an account of. The proof of the promise of Pentecost, which is that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, that point doesn't need to be made again with tongues, we know that it is true, and we know that we must continue to spread the good news of God's saving grace.

The narratives in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 are the fulfillment of what Jesus had promised in Acts 1:8, the thesis statement for the whole book. Jews (Acts 2), the hated, half-breed Samaritans (Acts 8), the Gentiles (Acts 10), and the disciples of John the Baptist, people in transitional period between the OT and the NT Church (Acts 19), all were included in the manifestation of unity and spread of the Gospel. Tongues were a sign; a visible manifestation that the Spirit was being given to all, salvation was for all nations, tribes, and "tongues" (cf. Revelation 7:9).

It was also a sign of judgment. The tongues were saying that God is going to build His church through the whole world, not just Israel. Look at 1 Corinthians 14:21-25. Paul was applying an Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 28:11-12 / cf. Deuteronomy 28:49). The prophet Isaiah was announcing judgment to the people of Israel. They did not receive the word of the prophets who spoke to them in Hebrew, so now they will hear the voice of *men with other tongues and other lips*. They would be invaded by a people whose language they couldn't understand. Isaiah was addressing the unbelief and apostasy of the northern kingdom of Israel (vs.1-6) and the southern kingdom of Judah (vs.7-13). In 722 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel was taken by the Assyrians, and in 586 B.C. Judah fell to the Babylonians.

One thing we shouldn't miss is that this is relating tongues to real human languages. Some modern day proponents of personal prayer tongues point to Isaiah 28:11-12 and say that this passage shows that tongues are a means of spiritual rest for the believer. This view fails to fit the context. Looking at this text carefully, it is clear that tongues were not the rest itself; tongues (foreign languages of foreign invaders) happened because they didn't hear the message of rest. They would get the message the hard way, by being conquered by foreigners. What they rejected was the rest, the peace they would have received had they listened to the message Isaiah and the true prophets were delivering. They had turned away from God, so God turned them over to their enemies, so that some might turn back to God.

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers... The purpose of tongues is for a sign to unbelievers. What unbelievers? "This people" is referring to Israel, so tongues are specifically a sign to unbelieving Israel. In Acts 2, many unbelieving Jews were present. And this same phenomenon of tongues in the rest of the book of Acts reinforces the reality. The judgment of God would fall on the nation that turned its back on its own Messiah. The sign of impending doom was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The tongues were saying that God is not going to work through just one nation any longer. God is going to build His church through the whole world. So tongues are a sign of God's judgment on Israel. But they are also a sign of God's blessing on the Gentiles. Acts 2 marked the beginning of the transition. Jews could still come, we know, because 3,000 Jews were saved on the Day of Pentecost. But the good news was going to go around the world, to all people. The sign was a message of transition from Jew to Gentile, a sign of blessing to those who would receive the Word of God, and a sign of judgment to those who had rejected it.

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. The plain sense fits the immediate and biblical context of the purpose of tongues. 1 Corinthians 14:3 speaks directly to prophecy being for believers. Of course, prophecy can have a positive impact on unbelievers as well, as Paul explains.

If tongues were a sign to unbelievers, why would an unbeliever coming into the assembly think that they were mad? It was because the tongues wouldn't make any sense with the chaotic way in which it was exercised, everyone all at once and no interpretation. Prophecy, however, had the ability to be understood, and could convict the unbeliever of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The point has been made; salvation has gone from being a Jewish possession and has come to all who call on the name of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 12:13 – This “baptized into one body” and “all were made to drink of one Spirit” is not about some post conversion experience. Every person who has Christ shares in the promise of Pentecost, they are saved, and they have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). To suggest that some believers have received and others have not goes against the very point of Pentecost. It isn't simply about people receiving power; it is about souls being saved. The disciples received power, yes, but in order that 3000 people would come to Christ. If you say that you have received power, let me see the evidence of an outward focus.

Acts 15:7-18 – this council held at Jerusalem was nearly 20 years after the events of Acts 2. In vs.7-11, Peter gave confirmation of his Acts 10 experience, which was about 10 years earlier, and 10 years after Acts 2. In vs.16-18, James (the one who wrote the epistle, the brother of Jesus), the leader of the church in Jerusalem, applies the prophecy of Amos 9:11-12 to the situation. We must not miss the point of Pentecost. Pentecost was about an outward focus not an inward focus. Pentecost is cause for celebration, not because of tongues, but because it was the day the Gospel exploded, and it is the reason for the missionary work that continues today.

The great cloud of witnesses is still going strong and getting bigger every day. The confirmation of the truth that the Gospel is for all people is done as far as tongues are concerned. However, the spread of the Gospel to every nation, tribe and tongue, the truth that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, the glorious promise of Pentecost continues! The question was about these other people groups, were they being saved, and the answer was yes. Now we know the answer and we see the answer, not through tongues, but through lives.

Peter, in Acts 2:14-18, refers back to Joel 2:28-32, and shows us that not only are all people groups potentially included, but all gender, age, and social status are as well. *And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh* (not every single person, obviously, but all gender, age, and social status are included), *and your sons and your daughters*

shall prophesy (talk about Jesus), *and your young men shall see visions* (do things for Jesus), *and your old men shall dream dreams* (think about Jesus); *even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy* – (preach the truth of Jesus, tell forth the mighty works of God, if God saved me, anyone can be saved).

This what we see in Titus 2:2-11 – the different genders, ages, classes, roles, and this is what we see in this local church...children coming to Jesus (like those at the summer camp), young men planning a work for Jesus (like our friend in seminary preparing to be a chaplain, or the young family desiring to be sent to the mission field), old men hanging on to their hope in Jesus (like those at the nursing home), people in bondage being set free by Jesus (like those from the homeless shelter). That's the power of Pentecost.

You might say that I am dismissing the supernatural, but not so. I know that God still does supernatural things because salvation is supernatural, and changed lives are supernatural. It takes the supernatural power of God to deliver people in this day of darkness. I've seen unexplainable healings that had to be God. I've seen people be delivered from demons. I've seen impossible things, but nothing is greater than a person being born again, transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. That's the promise of Pentecost.

I've seen the power of God. It is the power of God that takes a lazy, lying, loser of a man and turns him into a soldier for Christ. It is the power of God that takes a beaten down and abused woman that is cast out and ignored by people and makes her a precious jewel that shines with love for and from Jesus. The power of God is the reason that a young family wants to spend their lives in service to the Lord. It is the power of God when an old person, who can't walk and can hardly talk, still wants to hear the Word preached and to hear people sing. It is the power of God that makes a man leave his sin and selfishness and lay down his life for the sake of the Gospel.

Pentecost was about an outward focus not an inward focus, and the proof of the promise of Pentecost remains as an outward focus not an inward focus. You see, the evidence for the truth of the promise of Pentecost is all around us. There was evidence & there is evidence. You are the evidence of Pentecost. The evidence is not that you speak in tongues; the evidence is that your tongue speaks about Jesus, and you want to serve and tell people about Jesus.

Why do we do these ministries, for the children, for the elderly, for the homeless, for the mission field, and for all of the other kinds of ministry? It is because the promise of Pentecost continues, not that we would speak in tongues, but that God will gather people from every nation tribe and tongue. The ministry, the missions, the meaning of Pentecost means we all have a part.

The only real wall between God and men is sin, but in Christ the final wall is broken down. Salvation is for anyone; God in Christ has broken down all racial, gender, age, and social barriers (Colossians 3:11 – *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all*). What started at Pentecost hasn't stopped, the spread of the Gospel to every nation, tribe and tongue, to every gender, age, and social status, the power to give you something money can't buy, poverty can't lose, no one can steal, and death can't stop. The glorious promise of Pentecost continues, the truth that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Don't miss the point of Pentecost, spread the Word.