

As we study the work of God's Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we want to celebrate this great day in the church's history, focusing not only on the salvation which flows to us through this great work of God, but also on Pentecost as *the fulfillment of God's covenant promises from of old*.

**Mon/Tues: Read Acts 2:1-21****Pentecost Fulfilled**

God draws near on the day of Pentecost in a way that fulfills the meaning of this special day on the Old Testament calendar. In Leviticus 23:15ff, Pentecost is laid out by God as one of the great feast days to be celebrated in Jerusalem each year. Occurring 50 days after Passover, this day symbolized a new beginning as the first fruits of the harvest, along with burnt offerings, were offered to the Lord as part of the festivities

There were high hopes around Pentecost; Israel of old hoped that God was going to provide in a special way for His people by sending the Messiah and ushering in a new period of fruitfulness through His Spirit. And how greatly God provided when He sent His Spirit on this special day – beyond the highest of expectations of holy Jews in Jerusalem at that time! They gather together in amazement (Acts 2:12), asking each other, “What does this mean?” This is indeed the right question to ask, and it should be answered as follows:

- 1) These tongues were multiple, intelligible tongues from every nation under heaven. Though unknown to the speakers, they were understood by the crowds of pilgrims from more than 15 nationalities listed in Acts 2:5-12.
- 2) These tongues were for the days of the Apostles, when prophecy, miraculous signs, and wonders were done to attest to the Gospel message which the Twelve preached in Jesus' name. When the witness and teaching of the Apostles ceased, and the Scriptures they wrote were added to the Old Testament, the canon was closed, and tongues, along with prophecy, ceased being God's mode of revelation.
- 3) These tongues were a sign to unbelievers showing the power of God – while at the same time rebuking unbelieving Israel – even as Isaiah 28:11-12 predicted: “Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they (Israel) will not listen to me.”
- 4) These tongues brought a unified understanding of Jesus Christ to the nations, even as missions today bring the Gospel in many tongues. This represents God's reversing the curse of confused languages at the tower of Babel ... just as the Cross reversed the curse of sin's guilt and bondage. Beginning on the day of Pentecost, the old order of a *fractured creation, suffering from an unreconciled relationship with the Creator*, would be reversed! See Romans 8:19-22.

**Meditate and Pray:** The disciples asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?” Thank you that at Pentecost you began to restore to your Father what was lost in the betrayal and desolation of the Fall. May we grow in greater freedom today from the curse confusion, and slavery of sin.

**Weds/Thurs: Read Acts 2:22-24****Just the Facts**

The tongues and the many miraculous wonders which the Apostles performed are indeed powerful testimonies to the power of God working through the early church. But miracles in the Bible are never wonders designed to awaken mere amazement. Nor are they meant to accommodate man's selfish lust for the bread of this world. For example, remember how the crowds (John 6:26-31) wanted Jesus to serve them by giving them more bread to feed their bellies. They did not really want a "sign" of Christ's true deity. They were worldlings who wanted a false Messiah after their own image, rather than bowing the knee to the Lordship of Christ.

The "signs" we should treasure are the ones in Scripture that declare the Divine origin of Christ and confirm us in our faith. "Wonders" or carnal "miracles" on the other hand, like those which the magicians of Pharaoh sought to perform, are meant to dazzle, so that real faith is not smothered by carnal excitement. This is why Jesus' mighty works are never referred to as merely "wonders" or "miracles." Always the word "signs" is used to redirect our attention away from the miraculous to the Gospel Word of God itself.

No wonder, then, when we turn to the sermon of Peter on Pentecost, the climax of the sermon is not the wonder of tongues-speaking, but rather the sober recitation of the Gospel facts of who Jesus is and what He did to save sinners (Acts 2:22-24). Everything rests on the narration of the life of Jesus Christ as revealed in history:

The Gospels are not first about miracles for miracles' sake or about exhorting us to be better people. Rather, they are a sober recitation of historical events. (James Boice)

Although the ideals of the Cynic and Stoic preachers were high, these preachers never succeeded in transforming society. The strange thing about Christianity was that it adopted an entirely different method. It transformed the lives of men not by appealing to the human will, but by telling a story; not by exhortation, but by the narration of an event. It is no wonder that such a method seemed strange. Could anything be more impractical than the attempt to influence conduct by rehearsing events concerning the death of a religious teacher? That is what Paul called the "foolishness of the message" in 1 Corinthians 1:18 & 22-23. It seemed foolish to the ancient world, and it seems foolish to liberal preachers to-day. But the strange thing is that it works. The effects of it appear even in this world. Where the most eloquent exhortation fails, the simple story of the Cross event succeeds: the lives of men are transformed by this piece of news. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, pg. 47-48

**Meditate and Pray:** Lord, keep our eyes fixed on the solid facts of your coming, crucifixion, and resurrection. May we always base our faith on what is already accomplished by Christ and not the small successes or failures of our own experience.

**Friday: Read Acts 2:40-47****New Spectacles**

The Christ-centered preaching of the Apostle Peter, led to the conversion of 3,000 souls on Pentecost (Acts 2:41). These words describe the same impact of God's Word in our day:

God speaks today through His Word, both preached and written. Through this Word the Spirit brings conviction of sin, faith in Christ, and instruction in everything necessary for faith and life. Even baptism and the Lord's supper receive their effectiveness from the Spirit through the Word. As signs and seals of His promises, the sacraments assure us of God's favor. Shaped by regular exposure to God's Word, we are able to view God, ourselves, each other, and our world with the proper "spectacles." Even in matters not directly addressed by God's Word, the Scripture-saturated mind and heart are able to exercise godly discernment. (Michael Horton)

**Meditate and Pray:** Peter said, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). Please pray for the ministry of the Word in your church, asking that the Gospel recitation of Christ's person and saving work would have a real impact on our spiritually jaded age! How many of our neighbors and loved ones need to be convicted of their sin in order to find the saving glory of God in Jesus Christ! Sing about the power of the Gospel to save such, using *Trinity Hymnal* # 141:

1 God, in the gospel of his Son,  
makes his eternal counsels known;  
where love in all its glory shines,  
and truth is drawn in fairest lines.

2 Here sinners of a humble frame  
may taste his grace, and learn his name;  
may read, in characters of blood,  
the wisdom, pow'r, and grace of God.

3 The pris'ner here may break his chains;  
the weary rest from all his pains;  
the captive feel his bondage cease;  
the mourner find the way of peace.