

Week 3

THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

The second chapter of Acts is perhaps the most beloved and well-known chapters in all the Bible. In this chapter, the Christian church not only finds its origins as a living breathing entity, but it also finds the standard for which each subsequent age of the church has longed to experience once again.

Such power, as we see in this chapter, is truly a phenomenon which can't be completely explained. We don't really know what it was like on that Day of Pentecost, just 10 days after Jesus' ascension. However, Luke, inspired by the Spirit of God, gives a description of events that are unparalleled in all of history, before or since.

Like any true moving of God in our world, Pentecost had its skeptics. Some people are not and may never be ready to receive such a manifestation of God. To receive such a moving of God, for what it is, a person must admit that God is, and that He desires to be active in our world and directly in our lives.

When we study Acts chapter 2, we clearly see the authority God gave to the church as His "arm of the Lord" (Isa. 52:10), His arm of salvation, if you will. It must be noted that the Pentecostal experience didn't just happen to people randomly or even individually; it happened corporately as well. This shows the purpose and power of the church that is led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. This great Pentecostal power does not however, extend to all churches who lay claim to the fellowship of Christ. Many are the church organizations throughout history that have lived below the power. The Holy Spirit must be invited into the life of the believer, and into the life of the church, as we will see in this book.

A careful study of this chapter will reveal the presence and purpose of the symbols of the Holy Spirit, which are often used in describing a Spirit-filled life and church. There are three specific symbols we will look at.

1. Wind – the idea that God is in the wind is as old as the scripture itself. In Genesis 1 we see that the Spirit is "hovering" over the waters, much as we would see wind or breeze as hovering over the lands. In Genesis 2:7 we see that life comes from the very breath, or wind of God, which in Hebrew is called 'Ruach', when it is breathed into the first human being.

Acts 2 opens with the presence of God coming to fill the place of the ecclesia, the '*gathered*', in a "mighty rushing wind". The symbolism here can't be missed. God who is spirit, makes his presence known in a physical way that is consistent with the story of

God, from the beginning. The purpose of the wind is to show that God is breathing life into His new creation – the Church of Jesus Christ.

2. Fire – the appearance of fire in the shape of a tongue also shows us the physical presence of God in the moment. From the burning bush that Moses encountered on the holy mountain, to the pillar of fire that led the Israelites through the dessert, by night, God’s people have understood His present, refining work to be seen in and through fire.
3. Tongues of other languages – the fact that for the most part, a bunch of uneducated Galileans, began to speak the truths of God in languages which were not their own, and that could be heard and understood by those listening, is indeed a mighty sign of God’s presence. This amazing act, which so many throughout the history of the Church have prayed to replicate, shows us the very plan of God for His Church.

The Church is to be one throughout the world, to encompass every tongue and tribe. This was the very reversal of God’s action in the Tower of Babel, when he confused the languages of humanity to keep them from their sinful pride in believing they could reach Heaven, and thereby rule the world through their own intellect and might.

II. THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM (2-8:3)

A. THE CHURCH IS BORN IN POWER & AUTHORITY (2:1-11)

1. The Day of Pentecost
 - a. The Coming of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4a)
 - The significance of ‘Ruach’
 - b. The Tongues of Fire (2:4b-11)
 - The purifying work of fire
 - c. The People React (2:12-13)
 - The power of proclamation
 - The power of faith
2. The First Christian Sermon (2:14-36)
 - a. Pentecost: Joel 2 Fulfilled (2:14-21)
 - b. Pentecost: Christ's Work/The Plan of God (2:22-36)
3. The First Evangelistic Harvest (2:37-41)
 - a. Hearts Pierced (2:37-40)
 - b. 3000 Saved and Baptized (2:41)

