

Written Copy: Your Part in His Last Days Fulfillment-Acts 2:14-21

Day of Pentecost

Sunday, May 31st, 2020

Text: Acts 2:14-21

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Exegetical Statement

The 120 believers were gathered together in one place in Jerusalem in accordance with Jesus command before ascending to remain until the promised gift had come. Unexpectedly there came first the sound of a strong blowing wind from the sky that came to fill the place they were gathered. Then, what appeared to be like tongues of fire, split off from one whole one and distributed out to rest above the head of each one present. They were filled up with the presence of the Holy Spirit who gave them the ability to speak in another language they did not previously know. The sound of the wind gathered Jews who had taken up residence in Jerusalem and brought them pouring in to where the 120 were gathered. They were a confused and bewildered mob, flabbergasted, amazed beyond belief, and at a loss to explain how these uneducated men could be speaking in their own native dialect the magnificent things of God. But some, mocking what they couldn't understand, came up with the explanation that these men were drunk on new sweet wine. Then Peter and the 11 who had been commissioned to be Apostles stepped forward. Peter got the attention of the crowd and called on them to hear him out. He explained that it was too early for them to have been drinking wine since that was done at the evening meal. Instead they were witnessing the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel: that in the last days (when God's plan of salvation had been accomplished) He would pour out His Spirit on all people: men and women alike from all different walks of life. They would be empowered to set forth His divine teachings and given visions and dreams. Then before the great and glorious day of the LORD came there would also be wonderous supernatural events in the heavens above including the sun changed to darkness and the moon to blood, and miraculous signs on earth below including blood and fire, vapor and smoke. This would all serve so that everyone who may turn and call upon the name of the LORD might be saved before it is too late.

Focus Statement:

Pentecost marked the beginning of the Last Days in the fulfilling of God's plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit comes with power from the Father and the Son to change our lives, make us those who call upon Jesus name for salvation and be His mouthpiece in granting that salvation to others

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

We forget, fail to see that we are living out the end time prophetic fulfillment of God's salvation plan. We take for granted His gift of the Holy Spirit given to each of us to be a part of the concluding part of His saving work

What the hearer should do as a result:

Just as those 120 gathered on Pentecost, I have been called and given a part in the final chapter of God's plan of salvation. The Spirit has been poured out on me so that I might declare the mighty works of God in my life to those He gives me the "tongue"-the connection to speak with.

Subject Sentence: Part of God's Final Chapter of Salvation

Introduction: The Twilight Zone-Misuse of Wonderous Gifts

I've been doing some binge watching of The Twilight Zone lately. I've noticed there's a reoccurring theme: people who were given special chances or special gifts and failed to realize how special they were and so threw a golden opportunity away.

A great example of this is the episode "Mr. Dingle, The Strong". It's about a vacuum cleaner salesman, played by Burgess Meredith. He's a failure at his job. He's a failure with almost everything he attempts in life. Enter two aliens from the planet Mars. They are here to conduct experiments on unwitting earthlings. They find Mr. Dingle definitely a subnormal specimen and therefore a worthy guinea pig. They give him superhuman strength to see how he might use this gift for the good of himself and society. As you can imagine he fails to do anything valiant with this gift. He does any number of sideshow feats of strength to impress people in the corner bar. He uses it to get even with one gentleman who had a habit of taking his frustrations out on Dingle with his fists. The aliens return just as he is about to demonstrate his strength on national TV. They decide he is a failure for their experiment. Just as he is about to perform a feat of great strength before the nation, they take his superhuman strength from him. Mr. Dingle, on national TV shows himself to be a fraud. As the Martians are leaving, they encounter two visitors from the planet Venus, also doing experiments on humans: sudden introduction of super-human intelligence. As you can imagine, the show ends, with Mr. Dingle poised for failure once again.

Of course there are no aliens from Mars and Venus. You do know that; right? But Mr. Dingle's actions are a sad commentary on who we are as sinful men and women. God has given each of us great gifts. Occasionally we do use them not just for our own good but also for the good of others. But how many times do we selfishly horde them for our own personal advantage? How many times do we fail to use them for their full potential?

Now I don't believe any of us have received the gifts of super-human strength or intelligence from any supernatural visitors. But I do believe that each of you has been given a gift that far exceeds any other gift imaginable. And it has come from someone far greater than any alien visitor. It has come from the One who created all the stars and planets. Who created you and me. The giver is God Almighty, and the gift is what Jesus promised to send before He ascended to the right hand of the Father.

The Wonderous Gift the Disciples Received as Promised

It's what those 120 or so followers of Jesus gathered together on Pentecost have been waiting for. But they certainly didn't start that day thinking anything special would happen. They were just sitting together in a room. Who were these 120 people? They weren't what those who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Festival known as The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, would have considered remarkable or special. They were mostly from Galilee, a northern uneducated hick town. Nothing special ever comes from there. In their

past they showed themselves to be flawed, selfish, sinful human beings. AD 31 versions of Mr. Dingle if you will. But they had obediently followed Jesus parting instructions to wait in Jerusalem. They were waiting for what He promised to send them to arrive.

Then suddenly and without warning there came the sound of a mighty and powerful wind blowing. It began above their heads in the sky. But soon it came down and filled the place where they were gathered. Just the sound. Not the actual blowing of wind. A wind that sounded like that would've done a lot of damage. Then there appeared a vision that looked like a tongue of fire above their heads. It was divided into individual tongues which came to rest above the head of each person assembled, both men and women. That's what they saw with their eyes. But what was happening within them, what could not be seen with the eye, that was even more amazing. They were being filled with the Holy Spirit in a way they had never been before! And the Spirit made His presence known through His enabling each of them to do something miraculous and amazing: speak in a language that they had never known before.

Soon this group was no longer alone. A large crowd of Jews that had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Festival heard the sound of this great wind and came running. They came running from all directions. They poured onto the scene drawn by the sound. But they couldn't see or feel any mighty wind blowing. But that's not the most amazing thing. They stood there flabbergasted and utterly amazed at what they saw happening with these followers of Jesus. Here were uneducated men and women, from Galilee of all places by the sound of their drawl. Yet they are speaking in languages that they should not have known. Not these uneducated and untrained Galileans. And they are not just speaking in other languages, they are declaring in those languages the miraculous works of God! Just as if they'd been trained and learned like Scribes or religious experts!

How on earth did they receive such miraculous abilities? These Jews from all over the Roman Empire and beyond just stood there, jaws hanging open, looking for any plausible explanation for this wonderous event. But they were unable to find any. Now, in any crowd, there are always those who seek to extinguish the wonder of an unexplained event by belittling it. The belittlers in this crowd said, "What has happened is that they've gotten a hold of new sweet wine and had too much of it to drink. Nothing miraculous here. Just the babbling of drunken men. Nothing to be amazed about."

But this wasn't the work of drunken men. This was the work of Jesus Christ. This was Jesus fulfilling the promise He had made to the 11 before He went to the cross. What He had promised to send them right before He ascended. This is the day they'd been waiting for. It was the arrival of the Comforter/Counselor, The Advocate, The Helper. The arrival of the One who would always be with them and never leave them. And Jesus was not about to let anyone belittle His miraculous work on this day. Nor was He about to let any of them fail to take advantage of this moment that had been planned from days of old.

The Spirit moved Peter and the 11 to step forward. Men who had been eyewitnesses to Jesus ministry on earth from His Baptism, to His Crucifixion, to His Resurrection, and His Ascension. Those to whom He had set aside to receive this special gift first. Not to use for their own personal advantage, but to fulfill the work He had left for them to do. Work they would do through the empowerment and presence of The Holy Spirit, who would make them into Jesus' ambassadors. Who would empower them to share His Gospel of salvation. Make them to be His Apostles. Men who had been hiding out for fear of those who had called for Jesus death, these men now step forward. These are men who have been changed forever. And Peter, the one who denied Jesus and ran off in fear now raises his voice. He calls out to this bewildered crowd telling them pay attention and hear him well. And then, without any preparation, delivers an impromptu sermon that would be the envy of any preacher

He begins by refuting the story that his associates are drunk. As these Jews should know its only 9:00 AM. Jews didn't even eat breakfast until after the 10:00 AM sacrifice, at which the main course is bread. It's only at the evening meal, when the main course was meat, that one would partake of wine. What was happening here was the hand of God at work. It's the fulfillment of the prophecy given by the prophet Joel, a prophecy they would have known. It involved the culmination of God's promised plan of salvation that would happen in the Last Days. As Joel prophesied through the same Holy Spirit filling Peter, God promised He would pour that Spirit out. And not just on a few chosen prophetic voices as He had in the past. But now upon all people, of all walks of life. Men and women. They would be empowered to speak and set forth His divine teachings, proclaiming His wonderous works. And that was just what Peter and associates had been doing.

The prophet Joel had said there would be supernatural events in the heavens, and they had heard the sound of that mighty rushing wind that couldn't be seen or felt. And Joel said there would be miraculous events on earth, things that were beyond the power of man. Things like uneducated men and women speaking other languages and extolling the magnificent and divine teachings of God, just as Peter and these other followers of Jesus had been doing.

And why was it happening? Not for the entertainment of these guests from out of town. Not for the fame and fortune of these 120 who had been deemed unlearned and uneducated nobodies. Not even as a science experiment of some supernatural being. But instead so that the final part of Jesus work on earth, the final chapter of God's plan of salvation might begin in a grand and glorious way. Begin in a way that would make clear this was the work of the one and only LORD God. This was His Spirit at work in those who had followed and worshiped Jesus as God on earth. Jesus had come, and through His life, His suffering, His death and His resurrection earned salvation for all these gathered, as well for the whole world. What no one else could ever do in their entire lifetime had been accomplished by Jesus! And His gift of salvation was going to be given free of charge to any and all. Given through the Spirit who had come to dwell in all men beginning this very day.

The Spirit had come to prepare all mankind for that final day that Joel had spoken of. That great and glorious Last Day, that would be preceded by wonderous works that were beyond the imagination of those assembled there in Jerusalem, as well as us gathered here today. The sun will turn dark and the moon to blood. Blood, fire, vapor and smoke will come upon the earth. All this just before the return of Jesus, returning in the same manner as He had ascended 50 days earlier. God in His love and mercy had sent His Spirit to prepare mankind for this final day so that all might have the chance to call upon the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and be saved from eternal damnation. So that the Gospel might be proclaimed to all men, and those who believed would be saved.

The proclamation of that Gospel to all men began here but doesn't end here. The pouring out of the Spirit began on this day, but it has not ended. Neither has the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit. While the sound of a strong and mighty wind has ended, and the tongues of fire have disappeared. While the Spirit no longer blesses believers with the ability to speak in foreign languages never studied, He's not done working His mighty miracles. He continues to work the most supernatural of miracles in you and in me. The life changing miracle of creating faith in your heart and my heart. Moving you to stop trusting in yourself. To stop making life all about you. To stop failing to take advantage of the gifts you've been given, and instead make your life all about Jesus. To move you to confess that you stand in the wrong before God, that you stand as a sinner. And there is nothing you can do about it. But then make you see that Jesus has done everything necessary to make you as one right with God. He has saved you from eternal death and has given you the gift of life with Him now, lived with His Spirit abiding with you, leading you to eternal life to come. He has changed your life forever. And He continues to work those miraculous changes in you every day. Each day making your life less about you and more about Him.

Making the Most of Our Wonderous Gift

You have been changed forever. You are now a child of God and your future is with your Savior, who holds you in His precious hand as you live out your time here on earth. You've been filled with that same gift these 120 in our Epistle lesson were given. You've been filled with the same Spirit, who has given you faith and keeps you in faith toward Jesus in a world that refuses to recognize Him. You have been made a part of God's Last Chapter in His salvation story. You have been empowered to do the same thing the Spirit came to do in Peter and the 11, and in the 120 gathered together. To be ambassadors for Him, sharing His Gospel message, the same one that changed your life.

He may not give you the ability to speak a foreign language. But He directs people into your life with whom you speak the same language, have the same life interests, the same problems and fears and issues. He empowers you from the position of relationship to speak into their lives the message about how Jesus has changed your life, the message of the Gospel. And the same power that was behind Peter's message, is behind yours. Supernatural things happen when you share the Gospel, not because you give a flawless

presentation or lecture like Seminary Professor. But because even the most disjointed and halting presentation of the Gospel can work wonderous miracles in the hands of the ever-present Holy Spirit. You and I may be ordinary people, but the Holy Spirit has come to use us to change the lives of others forever through the Gospel.

Conclusion: Making the Most of This Gift

There are plenty of moments in my life that make me look like Mr. Dingle. There have been plenty of gifts that I've been given that I've squandered. Those which I could've used to bless others but didn't. There have been plenty of times He has given me the opportunity to share the Gospel and I've failed to take advantage of it. Times when I've seen my faith as my own personal property, given to bless me, but not anybody else. If Jesus had been like those alien visitors, He would've given up on me as a waste of time. But He has not given up on me. And He has not given up on you. He's not doing science experiments; He's using you and me to complete that final chapter of God's plan of salvation that has been in the works since the Fall. From His place at the right hand of the Father He is directing all things so that you and I have the opportunity to meet and come alongside those who don't yet have the gift of salvation we've been given. Those who live near us, speak the same language as us, share common interests with us. Go the same places and do the same things as us. From His place at the right hand of the Father Jesus arranges divine appointment with these people. So that you and I, through what we say and what we do, can share the Gospel. When we miss one, His indwelling Spirit which He has given to you and I tells us we are forgiven. And He works in us to make us ready for the next one. What miraculous lifechanging work might the Spirit have planned for you to be a part of this week? Amen.