

## Scripture Reading:

Acts 2: “1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." 12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.'”

# "The Comforter Is Come"

Luke begins the second chapter of Acts by saying, “when the Day of Pentecost had fully come” This is the second time that we have Luke giving us an important time marker in his orderly account for his friend Theophilus. The same Greek phrase was used by Luke in chapter nine of his Gospel account where we read, “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that [Jesus] steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”

-- Jesus had come to save His people from their sins and the time had arrived for Him to present Himself as the great sacrifice for sin.

-- Now the time has come to establish the Church, the Body of Christ whose members will carry the Kingdom of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

➤ That is accomplished by the coming of the promised comforter, the Holy Spirit!

Now if I were going to find any place to criticize the Apostle’s Creed that we confess each week, I suppose the brief mention of the Spirit might be what I could point to... The Apostle’s Creed simply states the we ‘believe in the Holy Spirit’ while the Nicene expands on this by saying, “And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father & the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets.”

➤ Here the Spirit of God is rightly acknowledged as a person of the God-head who is worthy of our worship and the author of the Old Testament as we saw last week.

**This is certainly the Spirit who we will learn about in the Book of Acts!**

While we were enjoying family camp, I managed to sneak a peak at Mr. Denna's spirit-filled Bible. Isaiah had borrowed mine and Mike had just left his on the coffee table...

- While getting ready to go to our morning Psalm I noticed the portion in the back that referenced the Holy Spirit

Now while there may be many errors and excesses that we can point to in the Charismatic movement, I found it interesting that they had the right analysis of where the Church in America had gone astray.

- They argued that the Charismatic renewal and the speaking of tongues had restored the power of the Spirit's mission: Renewed power was certainly something the Church needed!
- They argued that the gift of tongues had spread across many denominational lines reinforcing the need for and practice of church unity: Renewed unity was certainly something the Church needs, as we studied last week
- Finally they argued that the gift of tongues had brought new life and vitality to the worship service: We certainly agree that renewed worship is needed in American churches today.

Power, unity and right worship are certainly what the Spirit can and should bring to the Church...

However, as we saw with the various commands for wives & husbands, parents & children, slaves and masters that we considered last week, being baptized in the Spirit soon became just another form of our good old American rugged individualism with the experience I am having with God being paramount

- This is not what we will see here at Pentecost and it is certainly not what we will see in the remainder of the Book of Acts...
- We will see the Holy Spirit bring power, unity and right worship, but He will do so on His terms and in His own way...

**His mission, which is of necessity our mission, is to glorify the Son and to prepare His bride as she fills the earth with His Kingdom**

- AND we must remember that this is not done at some far distant time and place in the future, but here and now as the Kingdom of Jesus fills the earth!

We must come to understand that the Holy Spirit, the great Comforter who was promised to God's people and has now come...

- Yes, the Spirit has come to bringing power, unity and right worship to the Church!

This is the same power, unity & worship which the Charismatics rightly pointed out were lacking in the Church of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

- However, He does not come as a handy power tool to have in our spiritual tool box or to give us great personal experiences that we can show off.
- He has come to glorify Jesus!

From the opening verses of Genesis; where the Spirit is seen as the mother hen "hovering over the face of the waters,"...

To the final verses of Revelation; where the "Spirit and the bride say 'Come,'" we see the Spirit of God as the great comforter who cares for God's people.

With the ascension of Jesus to the Father's right hand of power we saw Him declared to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It was rightly pointed out in our time of questions and answers that Jesus has always been the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but that now the resurrected Jesus as a man is seated in heaven at the Father's right hand of power, the forerunner of us all!

We see a similar picture with the coming of the Spirit...

- The Spirit has always been with God's people but now He is coming as the Comforter sent by Jesus to empower and care for His Church, those He came to redeem.
- Jesus sits enthroned in Heaven and the Comforter who He has sent will now prepare His bride and conquer the nations...

The question that we must honestly ask before we consider the details of what happened at Pentecost is this: DO we really believe this is the mission of the Holy Spirit?

If we don't understand and believe where the story of God's great salvation is going, then we will get many of the details wrong and learn some poor lessons along the way, just as the Charismatics often have.

- So to encourage us and point us in the right direction, I must first depress us ☹

As we often say about the Gospel, we have to see how really bad the bad news is so we can understand how really good the good news is!

- Actually, getting us depressed is pretty easy, we do it to ourselves all the time:

We had discussions at family camp about how worldly much of the church has become and how we are losing our children. Then we can turn to the world, where life has become cheap, money worthless and despair runs deep as the hopelessness of evolutionary thinking sinks in more & more.

We all know how easy the "one-down-man-ship" game is to play:

- You tell one story about how bad something is and I can quickly come up with something worse:
- It works whether we consider government programs, families or even churches

Normally I would want to discourage such talk, but this morning I want to us to let things go a bit so we can get a better picture of what God showed the Prophet Ezekiel about what was happening here at Pentecost. God wants us to understand that from a human perspective, our situation is REALLY impossible:

- How can we protect our children from all the bad influences of the world
- How can we possibly prepare to survive the coming economic collapse that is going to be devastating because we have blatantly ignored or violated God's Laws for so long?
- How can the Church ever be prepared as the Bride of Christ when she is so hopelessly divided and filled with so many errors.

Such was the picture that God wanted to present to the Prophet Ezekiel before He explained what the Spirit of God was going to do...

When God gave him the prophecy about the coming of the Spirit of God that is fulfilled here at Pentecost...

Turn with me if you have your Bible to the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezekiel or make a note for further study...

- Here God gives our Prophet a real picture of DESPAIR... Ezekiel 37:1

“The hand of Jehovah came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.”

- Kids I want you to note that Hollywood is not original when it come to most of their images...
- The apocalyptic movies love to show massive destruction and often fields full of skeletons... Images borrowed from this chapter of Ezekiel.
- God wants the Prophet to get a real close look at how bad things are, so we read in verse 2:

“Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.”

- LOTS and LOTS of bones, LOTS and LOTS of very dead bones. A picture of despair or hopelessness

3 “And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Jehovah God, You know."

- The Prophet had been through quite a lot by this point, so he wisely defers to God for the answer, rightly understanding NOTHING is impossible with God
- How often do we fail this important lesson when we are discussing our favorite crisis?

4 “Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah!'”

- God takes the Prophet to a valley filled with dry bones: DEAD people, really dead people
- God walks him around so he can clearly see just how many really DEAD people there are
- THEN God tells the Prophet to SPEAK to the dry bones...

5 “Thus says Jehovah God to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 I will put muscles on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Jehovah." ' ' ”

- At this point, Ezekiel might have rightly doubted this command
- He might have looked around at the really DEAD bones & thought... “You want me to what?”
- Just as we often think, THAT person would never hear the Gospel
- But such was not the case with this Prophet: As we stress during this season of ordinary time, Ezekiel heard & obeyed the voice of God...

7 “So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise,”

[this is our first BIG hint that God is giving Ezekiel a picture of Pentecost... remember the noise in our text? We will see next week that this is what brings the people together]

“there was a noise and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.

8 Indeed, as I looked, the muscles and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.”

- Again we see a clear picture of man's real need: New life in Jesus
- Rearranging the bones and even adding a little flesh does not give them life
- Just as educating a lost soul does not make them wise, or giving healthcare to the wicked will not bring them eternal life!
- We need the life Jesus came to give, the abundant life Jesus wants us to have, the life the Spirit, the breath of God has come to bring...

9 "Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says Jehovah God: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'" ' 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."

- We will see and study in the coming weeks the power of the Spirit poured out at Pentecost, bringing life to the dry bones!
- BUT before we leave the prophet Ezekiel we need to see that God makes it perfectly clear what is being pictured here is what happened at Pentecost...

11 "Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'"

- Just as the Prophet Elijah cried out that he alone was left faithful, so God's people could see in that time that they had been forsaken by God because of their great sins
- AND just as God gave hope to Elijah with the 7,000 who had not bowed the knee, God gives His faithful people hope here as well...

12 "Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says Jehovah God: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13 Then you shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves."

- In studying Luke's Gospel we did not focus on the account from Matthew about the Saints coming out of their graves and going into Jerusalem after the resurrection of Jesus, but I think this is what is foretold in part here
- I believe that many who are about to hear and be convicted by Peter's sermon had already been witnessed to by those who had returned from the dead!
- They had been told that the Spirit was coming...

14 "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, Jehovah, have spoken it and performed it," says Jehovah.' "

- Just as Ezekiel saw the dry bones of that valley brought back to life by the Spirit of God, we are about to see thousands brought back to life here on the day of Pentecost...
- Participants in the first resurrection referenced by John in Revelation chapter 20

Paul teaches us in Ephesians chapter two that we had as much to do with our salvation as these dry bones had to do with their coming back to life!

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast."

God explained to the Prophet Ezekiel in chapter 36 the reason He was about to raise up those dry bones:

**“33:22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says Jehovah God:**

**"I do not do this for your sake,**

**O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. 23 And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah,"**

- **The Lord explains how the nations will understand this:**

**24 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 32 “Not for your sake do I do this," says Jehovah God, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!" 33 'Thus says Jehovah God: "On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.”**

- **Our salvation is all of grace, and as God’s redeemed people we then walk in the works that we were created in Christ Jesus to do**
- **This is pictured gloriously for us in Revelation 21 & 22 where we see the the New Jerusalem: The City of God**

God continues to show Ezekiel the results of His great plan:

**34 “The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. 35 So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified & inhabited.”**

- **Christians are to be salt & light bringing forth the new creation: Taking the garden to the city and the city to the wilderness!**

**36 “Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, Jehovah, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, Jehovah, have spoken it, and I will do it.””**

- **The Book of Acts is about the Kingdom of Jesus filling the whole earth: A kingdom spread through the power of the Spirit so that ALL glory belongs to God**
- **The promised Comforter, the Spirit of God has come**
- **He will bring the power that God’s people need to serve**
- **He will bring the unity that is both given and promised to the Church as we learned last week**
- **And, He will lead God’s people in right worship, which will demonstrate to all the nations of the earth, the glory of our God!**

**Communion Meditation: Ezekiel 36:**

**25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”**