

# What Satan Saw at Pentecost

By Phillip G. Kayser · Acts 2:1-4 · 2005-6-12

In verse 33 of this chapter, Peter says that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was a proof that Jesus was on His throne. The Spirit that was lost by the first Adam has been regained by the Second Adam (Christ) and given to the church. So a legitimate question might be: "Well then, why didn't Jesus pour out the Spirit the *moment* He ascended to His throne?" Why did He wait for ten days? Obviously part of the answer is given in the first phrase of verse 1, that the giving of the Spirit had to be in fulfillment of the festival of Pentecost. But that still begs the question of why God made Pentecost to be ten days after Christ's ascension. There is obviously something important that was going on in the last ten days before Pentecost. And many commentators point out that the disciples needed to pray for Pentecost. And indeed, chapter 1 does talk about them praying through those ten days of Pentecost. But in order to give you an insight into the spiritual warfare that occurs throughout the book of Acts, and in order to show how their prayers were linked with the spiritual warfare in the heavenlies, I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 12.

This chapter gives us a behind the scenes glimpse of what has been happening not only over the last ten days, but also starting from the birth of Christ. The Gospels tell us that Satan was quite present during Christ's life. But Revelation 12 fills in a few details that we might not otherwise have had. Let's begin at verse 1. Revelation 12:1.

Revelation 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Revelation 12:2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

And this describes the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, that the bride of God has been anticipating for centuries and has been longing for. Verse 3:

Revelation 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon

(that is a symbol of Satan)

having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.

That gives us a hint at the number of angels that rebelled with Satan. Angels are elsewhere in Scripture symbols of angels. So one third of those angels became demons, and two thirds are fighting on our side. I like those odds

And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

So this is telling us who motivated Herod to try to kill the baby Jesus. It was Satan. To human eyes it looked like they were wrestling with flesh and blood, but God shows John

that ultimately this was a spiritual warfare. It wasn't just Herod. It was Satan behind Herod. Verse 5:

Revelation 12:5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

So that is the ascension of Jesus.

Revelation 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Revelation 12:7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, Revelation 12:8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

What an encouraging note. With the ascension of Jesus to His throne, there is no longer any right for Satan to accuse the brethren before God in heaven. He was the great accuser in the book of Job, and he had access to heaven in that book. But Christ's ascension begins the kingdom of Christ. And He cleanses heaven of this vile serpent and his angels. God could have won this battle with one word, but instead, God chose to use angels. And Michael and his angels had a hard battle to fight. It wasn't automatic anymore than our battles are automatic. But over a period of time, verse 9 shows that Michael wins. And I believe there was a connection between the prayers of the saints in the book of Acts and this battle in the heavenlies, just like there was a connection between the three weeks of battle that Michael the archangel engages in in Daniel 10, and the three weeks of prayer and fasting that Daniel engages in in the same chapter. Verse 9:

Revelation 12:9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Revelation 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

The kingdom of heaven is the base *from which all our operations flow*. And Christ's throne room now is a place of sinless perfection. From here on in, that kingdom of heaven is invading the earth through the Spirit. And we pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are ambassadors of the kingdom. Our job on earth will not be done until God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven. And in Acts 2:33 Peter says that the Spirit was sent down as the sign that Jesus *is* now ruling from His throne. He has dislodged Satan, and now the battlefield is not in heaven, but with man on earth. And angels fight on earth only as believers fight on earth. They are sent as our ministering angels. But they won't do the work for us. So verse 11 speaks of the role that we must play in this battle.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." Revelation 12:13 Now

when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*

And the rest of the chapter shows this persecution of the church in the book of Acts. But it is persecuted, not because Satan is *winning*, but rather because Satan knows that he only has a short time (verse 12), and that he has a restricted domain (verse 13), and because that restricted domain will become increasingly more restricted as various regions of the earth become Christianized. He's enraged because he is defeated and because the church has been given authority over him. And so I think Revelation 12 forms a marvelous, behind-the-scenes-background to both the persecution in Acts and to the confidence of the church in the book of Acts. It's not all hunky dory for the church. Verse 14 goes on to say:

Revelation 12:14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. Revelation 12:15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. Revelation 12:16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

And so in this symbolism, God is making even the very creation to side with the church. He is causing all things to work together for the church's good and for the victory of His kingdom. But this angers Satan all the more. When you see the persecution of the church around the world, don't look at the glass as half empty. The world-wide church has more persecution today than at any time in previous history because the church is more successful in China, in Africa and elsewhere than any time in history before. In fact, there has never been a time in history when there have been more believers than now. And if Satan was enraged back then, you can be sure he is even more enraged today. Verse 17 ends the chapter by saying:

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

What a great chapter!! And this morning, I want to encourage you by looking at Acts 2:1-4 *from the perspective of what Satan would have seen*. Sometimes when you know your enemy's thinking, it can be encouraging. General E. Lee seemed to know what the Generals of the Northern armies were planning to do in various battles to a degree that one northern leader felt like Lee was part of the northern strategy councils. He *had to be* in order to anticipate their every move. But Lee said that eventually they were going to pick a leader that he didn't know, and it would put him at a disadvantage. We are not at a disadvantage, because General Jesus Christ knows the enemy inside out and has revealed to us everything we need to know about him. Amen? And so today's sermon is titled, "What Satan saw at Pentecost."

## **A predestined plan that Satan hated (v. 1a)**

First of all, Satan saw a predestined plan that he hated. Verse 1: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come." What a sense of dread those festivals must have put into

Satan every time they were celebrated. And on this year especially, he knew it spelled his defeat. Fifty-three days before was the feast of Passover, where point by point it had for 1500 years prophesied every detail of Christ's death. And every detail was fulfilled to Satan's dismay. The feast of unleavened bread prophesied the days in the grave, and the feast of Firstfruits had prophesied many details of Christ's resurrection. Satan tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross, and while on the cross Satan tried to do everything he could to make the cross a failure. But he could not. And while the death and resurrection of Jesus made Satan realize that he had lost the war, he was not going to go down without a fight, and without trying to do all the damage that he could do.

And the feast that came 50 days later – Pentecost was fulfilled on this day. Ever since Genesis 3, when Adam lost the Spirit, God prophesied a time when the Messiah would by His perfect life and death gain back the Spirit for His people. There was nothing Satan could do to stop this plan. What encouraging words these are to me! The Spirit came right on schedule. Not one day early or one day late. And God's plan continues to be a predestined plan which frustrates Satan and gives joy to God's people.

I'm not going to cover all the details of Pentecost today since I did that several sermons ago. But very briefly, it is helpful to remember (first of all) that the first Pentecost to be celebrated was celebrated at Mount Sinai at the giving of the law. In fact, according to the Jews, that law was spoken on Sinai in the 70 languages of the world. And so there is a parallel even to the tongues that we see in this chapter. But unlike the giving of the law at Mount Sinai where there was no covering of the blood, no sacrifice, no temple, this giving of the law by the Spirit was prophesied in Jeremiah to be given in the temple mount and written by the Spirit on the tablets of the heart. What's the difference between the law at Mount Sinai and at Jerusalem; None other than one is under the mercy seat and the other is not. One is under blood of sprinkling, the other isn't. God doesn't do away with the law. Instead, God gives a new empowering of the law. In fact, in Galatians where Paul contrasts the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, he uses two women and two mountains so symbolize them. The Old Covenant corresponds to Hagar who produced Ishmael in the flesh and speaks of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. The New Covenant corresponds to Sarah who produced Isaac by the power of the Spirit and speaks of the ten commandments hidden in the mercy seat, under the sprinkling of the blood in mount Zion. And to this day, anybody who tries to keep the law apart from the sacrifice of Christ and the empowerment of the Spirit is set up for failure. And so, all of these years Pentecost was anticipating a time when the Spirit would make law-keeping a delight.

The second feature of Pentecost that we looked at was marriage. It is the marriage ceremony of Christ to His bride. In fact, in Sephardic Jewish circles they still read a marriage covenant on Pentecost. And the concept of marriage gives an added dimension of significance to the glory of Pentecost. Pentecost speaks of intimacy, fellowship, closeness. God promised to dwell in our midst. No longer is there a barrier around the mountain preventing anyone but Moses from approaching, but we are all invited to enter into God's glory. And by the way, just as the marriage ceremony is a once only event, Pentecost is a once only event. But we live in the glory of Pentecost just as joyfully as married couples live in the glory of marriage without having to have a

new marriage ceremony every day. Just as the giving of the law at Sinai in all the languages of the world with all of its thunderings and its glory cloud was a once only event, the presence of the glory cloud and the tongues at Pentecost does not need to be repeated over and over for us to be able to live in the glorious results. Just like a marriage.

The third feature of Pentecost was that the book of Ruth was read as a part of this harvest ceremony. Every Jewish home that celebrates Shavuot or Pentecost explicitly mentions Gentiles coming into the faith. And so Pentecost symbolizes the great ingathering of God's people from every nation, tribe and language. And next week, Lord willing, we will look at verses 5-13 and show how every nation and language was represented at that Pentecost. This spells the defeat of Satan. His kingdom is being torn away from him. And he hated this predestined plan of God.

### A unity that Satan feared (v. 1b)

The second thing that Satan saw – and this too must have grieved him, was a unity. It was a unity that he feared. Verse 1 goes on to say, "they were all with one accord in one place." It's easy to all be in one place. Anybody can do that. But to all be *in one accord* in one place is a work of God's grace. The Majority Text has oJmoqumadon, which is made up of two words meaning together of one heart. The dictionary defines it this way: "*Homothymadon* expresses in a unique way the brotherly communion of believers." Another dictionary says, "unanimously agreed." If Satan can divide, he can conquer. If he can sow discord and gossip and rancor into that brotherly communion, he can conquer. But Satan fears a church that is "all with one accord in one place."

What is phenomenal about this is that it is quite different from what had been happening at the last supper and before. They were arguing as to who would be the greatest. The mother of James and John asked Jesus if her sons could be on his left and right hand. They argued with each other. And Satan no doubt delighted. But Christ had breathed the Spirit upon them 10 days before and had talked with them about the kingdom for the past forty days. God had opened up their understandings according to Luke so that they understood what Christ had taught. *They finally got it.* And this kingdom theology gave them a passion and a unity that was distressing in the highest to Satan. It does not bother Satan to have believers all in one place, so long as they are not united in mind. It does not bother him that much to have them reading the Scripture. But to have them united around that Scripture with a common heart and passion to advance His kingdom is a unity that Satan feared.

When Ahithophel was counseling Absalom to take a small army against his father David, he knew that this unity and passion was far more important than the massive numbers that Absalom decided he needed to raise up against David. In fact, Ahithophel was so convinced that this massive army was no match for David's tiny, but united troop, that when Absalom did not follow Ahithophel's advice, he went home, put his house in order and committed suicide. He knew that it was hopeless to defeat David with numbers if they were not of one accord. Brothers and sisters, if we can be united in the cause of capturing this city for king Jesus, it really doesn't matter how small our

numbers may be, it will make Satan fear and tremble. If we are of one accord and empowered by His Spirit, there is really nothing that our Gideon's army cannot accomplish if we are pursuing His will.

## **A power which Satan couldn't handle (v. 2)**

The third thing that Satan saw was a power that he could not handle. Verse 2 says, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting." That wind was one of three symbols of the presence of the Holy Spirit. And it says it sounded like a "rushing mighty wind" (perhaps sounding like a tornado or a storm) was a manifestation of the Spirit to the ears. The fire on the heads was a visible manifestation to the eye. And the new languages being spoken was an oral manifestation that could also be heard.

But just as no one can stop the wind, so too, no one can stop the advance of the Spirit. You might as well spit into the wind as try to stop what God's Spirit is doing. And so this sound of a wind filled the house. Satan cannot stop the Spirit, so his strategy was to keep us from being filled with the Spirit. He wants us to grieve the Spirit and keep away from that unstoppable power.

## **A fire which he couldn't extinguish (v. 3)**

### **There was one fire in the Old Temple**

Fire fell once in a visible fashion from heaven for the first tabernacle and once again when Solomon set up the temple

Next, there was a fire which Satan couldn't extinguish. Verse 3 says, "Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them." I think this fire deserves a little bit of explanation. We have already seen two weeks ago that God was establishing a new Israel and a new temple not made with stones. And this fire is such a powerful symbol of what God was doing at Pentecost.

First, the fire demonstrates that God has started a new temple. Let's just think about the old temples. Nothing was able to be done in the first, second and third temples until God's fire fell from heaven and started the fire burning on the altar. And so in Leviticus 9:24 it shows how the fabric tabernacle got started on its dedication day. It says:

fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw *it*, they shouted and fell on their faces.

God had now constituted the tabernacle, and it was ready for service. You see the same thing at the start of Solomon's temple. 2 Chronicles 7:1 says about that dedication day, "When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple." And on Pentecost, God causes His fire to come down to symbolize the fact that He has just constituted a new temple.

Second, this fire represented the fact that nothing is acceptable in God's temple except that which flows from His throne. God doesn't want our carnal efforts. He doesn't want self-reformation and self-sufficiency and doing things our own way. It's not these disciples who create the fire. The fire comes from above. And the same was true in the Old Testament. The very next verses after God sent the fire in Leviticus 9 show God judging Nadab and Abihu for failing to take God's fire to light their incense. Instead, they light their own fires. It says, "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire" [or literally, "strange fire" or "foreign fire."] \*before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured *them*, and they died before the LORD." That's how seriously God took self-reformation. Well, Aaron gets very angry with God for killing his two sons, and thinks that this is such a minor issue. But Moses responds, "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified." Four times God reminds them that He doesn't want strange fire. It must be fire lit from heaven. In other words, true revival and true reformation flows from God and cannot be manufactured through our techniques and efforts. And down through history men have constantly tried to manufacture their own revivals with disastrous results. We think God can be manipulated with the strange fire of our emotionalism, or the strange fire of false unity; or the strange fire of programs. I was shocked at statements made by Ralph Wilkerson, a leading charismatic, but I was even more shocked at how many people have been getting on board for his program for converting the world. He said that the world can be won to Christ without any preaching or evangelism if only the Protestants and Roman Catholics would unite and speak tongues and show a united front with all other churches. Let me quote him. "The morning before we left to come home, du Plessis spoke to us from John 17:21. Later in the meeting, a Roman Catholic priest from Guatemala City spoke in an unknown tongue, and the interpretation was given by an American pilot... The interpretation was that Catholics and Protestants will march together around Latin America, demonstrating unity, and once they do this, the world will believe." Wilkerson went on to say, "My job is to get people together, not to evangelize Latin America. I believe if we get people together, God will reach Latin America." Many charismatic leaders are getting on board. But this is strange fire. The world is not won through compromise. It is won only from that which comes from heaven.

In fact, the third thing that this fire symbolizes is the holiness of God. After the fire fell on the altar in Leviticus 9 and after Nadab and Abihu were killed in the next two verses for their strange fire, Moses interprets the fire and says this: "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified." Hebrews 12:28-29 says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." God is holy and He consumes away sin and dross in the believer even as fire consumes things away.

The fourth thing to notice about this fire is that it only comes once. In the *old* temple it only came once, and after that the priests were responsible to keep the fires stoked with fuel and to never let God's fire go out. Look at Acts 2:43. Notice that this doesn't say that they continued steadfastly in expecting wind in every meeting, and fire in every

assembly, and tongues to be a continual phenomena. No, the fire falls once, and God's people must keep that fire burning. How do they do it? Verse 42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." There's the fuel that keeps the fire going. And any efforts at revival that avoid those four things introduce strange fire. DO you want to be filled with the Spirit? Immerse yourself in the Spirit-given scripture. That's how Ephesians and Colossians say we are filled with the Spirit.

From that time forward, the fire was kept burning

We are not to expect miraculous fire to fall from heaven. God is free to do that again.

Nadab and Abihu sought to bring strange fire

We can bring strange fire into our meetings.

But this was not just a single fire in the church, but each member individually is a temple and the fire keeps spreading.

But there are two interesting contrasts with the old temple. The first contrast is that there is now no central altar. Instead, God pours out His flame upon the people. The *people* are the church. The *people* are the temple.

The second contrast is that in the Old Testament temple there was only one fire, whereas now there was a flame over each head. The temple can now be found wherever God's people are located. And I think what is neat about that is that when these people walk out into the world, both temple and fire spreads. Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them, said Jesus. Eventually this will be a worldwide temple with sacrifices being offered up among the Gentiles, as Malachi prophesied.

What a cool passage. What cool symbolism. So there is a heaven sent fire that Satan could not extinguish. Or at least we can say, the only way he can extinguish that fire is if we do not continue steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers.

There are multiple fires in the New Temple.

We are to (metaphorically) keep the fire burning

## **A presence he could not fight (v. 4a)**

Verse 4 goes on to talk about a presence that Satan could not fight. Verse 4 says, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." Because I am spending a lot of time on filling later in the chapter, I won't focus on it now. But this would have been a frustrating thing for Satan. You can see why Satan does everything he can to keep us from staying full of the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit of God has filled us, there is nothing that can resist Him. "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."



## A reversal of Babel which spelled his doom (v. 4b)

And then finally, there was a reversal of Babel which spelled his doom. Verse 4 goes on to say, "and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." And because I will be speaking on tongues at length later, I won't develop this fully here. But I want you to notice that these are real languages, not the shoulda-boughta-hyundai-terra-boughta-bundai kind of sounds that you hear in so many charismatic services. No, he lists the languages that they were speaking in verses 5 and following. And I will spend some time in a later sermon demonstrating that the tongues of this chapter are identical to the tongues in 1 Corinthians 12-14. You cannot say that they are totally separate things as so many charismatics do.

Can God continue to give the ability to speak a new language today and to be able to understand what you are preaching or saying in that new language? I believe the answer is yes. *But* I think it is so different from what charismatic books pawn off as true tongues. And we'll have more to say about that later. But I would temper that by saying that even though God has the freedom to give this ability to speak in another language, what was going on in the first century had a very unique symbolism that is never to be repeated again.

Here in a nutshell is the symbolism. I think (based on the tongues that were spoken at the first Pentecost on Mount Sinai) that this was a sign to unbelieving Gentiles that they were welcomed into the kingdom. I think secondly, it was a sign to unbelieving Jews that they would be judged by Gentiles if they did not repent. And that's exactly what 1 Corinthians 14 says. Why don't you turn to 1 Corinthians 14. This is a verse that I have never seen any charismatic or Pentecostal able to deal with adequately and yet Paul makes it the foundation of his theology of tongues. Let's begin reading at verse 20.

Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. IN the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers...

Notice that he calls tongues a sign or a miraculous symbol. And notice second that they carried that symbolic character to unbelievers. The passage he quotes in Isaiah 28 describes the foreign language of the Assyrians that would be used by God to finally convince Israel that he was serious. The Assyrians would invade Israel and carry them off. And so for Paul, tongues was a sign of judgment to Israel and blessing to the pagans as they came in contact with the Gospel and got saved. And let me give you some hint of how this has always been true; Adam and Eve had instant ability to speak a language they had not learned. But I don't think that was a sign. The first time it became a sign was in Genesis 11. The miraculous tongues of Genesis 11 at the tower of Babel was a sign of blessing and judgment. The miraculous tongues on Mount Sinai would have been a similar sign of judgment to Israel and blessing to the world. And since Peter says that Joel was prophesyng tongues, Joel 2 fits that pattern of judgment

to Israel and blessing to the nations. And the miraculous tongues prophecied in Zephaniah 3 follows the same pattern. And that passage is explicit in that these tongues would be evangelistic. This is so different from what the charismatics usually teach, Zephaniah 3 says:

For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipperws, the daughter of My dispersed ones shall bring an offering.

And it goes on to talk about the evangelization of the world with these tongues, "...Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found."

So my tentative view is that tongues had a primary function as a witness against Israel in the first century, and that function has passed away. But it is also a sign to unbelieving Gentiles, and as such, it was used by Paul for evangelizing the nations. And I know of missionaries today who have been given the ability to instantly speak a language and to preach their sermons in that language, pray in that language with full understanding. That is much closer to what Acts talks about than to what charismatics practice. And so it truly is a symbol of the spiritual reversal of Babel. While the cultures and languages of the nations will be preserved, God will reach those nations, and on occasion encourage those nations with this miraculous sign of His grace toward every nation, language and tongue.

Like I say, I will have a lot more to say about this in a later sermon. But for now, let's just rejoice that despite the raging and fuming of Satan against the church, we have nothing to fear, and Satan has everything to fear. He sees a predestined plan that he hates, a unity that he is scared to death of (and which he tries to undermine), a power of God's Spirit in the church which he cannot handle, a fire of God's holiness and grace which he cannot extinguish and which is destined to purify the world, a presence which he cannot fight and a reversal of Bable which spells his doom. May God hasten the day when every nation, tribe and language will be singing praises to His name. Amen.