

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#35 Joel's Prophecy

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, his birth was attended by shepherds, angels and a star. This was a unique, sovereign event of God that never happened again.

When the Church was born in Jerusalem at Pentecost with the descent of the Holy Spirit, the birth was attended by wind, fire and tongues. These things occurred together only once in Scripture. These signs are connected only with the beginning of the Body of Christ. The only other place in Scripture, other than Acts 2, where we find the phrase, "baptized with the Spirit," is I Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. Since that time, everyone who places their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior is immediately baptized into that same Spirit. Each new believer is one with Christ and His body. The Baptism of the Spirit occurred with visible signs at Pentecost. The strange phenomena present at Pentecost are the key to the functioning of the body of Christ - His Church.

1. The wind represents an invisible power. When the church operates according to the power of the Spirit, it accomplishes great things. Individuals are transformed.
2. The tongues as of fire represent the purification process in the lives of believers. They also represent the zeal, passion and an intense purpose.

A church or believer that is on fire has been seized by a holy and purifying passion. Someone told Evangelist Dwight L. Moody: "The world has yet to see what God can do with a man who is wholly yielded unto him. As Moody walked the streets and pondered this statement, he cried out to God: "Oh God, make me that man." He then spent an hour praising God with his entire being swept up into a purifying love for his Lord.

3. The ability to speak in a foreign tongue or language was the 3rd phenomena. Acts 2:6b,8 because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Acts 2:11 we do hear them speak in our tongues the WONDERFUL WORKS OF GOD.

- They made powerful, edifying proclamations in these languages.
- Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they spoke of the wonders of God.

Conclusion: These 3 symbolic phenomena show that God intended for His Church to be filled with Passion, Power and Proclamation.

Response of the Crowd:

Acts 2:7, 12 And they were all amazed and marveled. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt,

Amazed: In Greek = existemi = "to push out of their senses." It blew their minds!

Marveled: "hit hard, stunned"

Consider: Heard these peasants from Galilee speaking these languages and it "blew their minds." Something very new and different to the crowd. They reacted in one of two ways.

Acts 2:12 "What does this mean?"

These are the open minds who are ready to investigate further before coming to a conclusion.

- Others in the crowd mocked and accused the believers of being drunk.

They dismissed the event with ridicule.

It was to this Jewish crowd in Jerusalem where Jesus had been crucified just over 7 weeks earlier, that Peter delivered the sermon that launched the Church.

Acts 2:14a But PETER, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice,

Consider: Just a few weeks prior, Peter had impulsively cut off the man's ear in the garden and denied Jesus Christ three times before His crucifixion.

Before Pentecost:

1. Peter was self-confident and depended more on himself than the Lord.

2. Last supper: Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. [Matt. 26:35]

Peter did not know his own weakness. A few hours later, he forsook and denied his Lord.

Consider: Often the very sin for which we condemn others and boast will never overtake us, causes our downfall.

Key Point #1: The believer who is empowered for service must lose confidence in self and depend wholly upon the Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Mark 14:38 The flesh is weak.
- Rom. 6:19 The flesh is infirmed.
- Phil. 3:3 Put no confidence in the flesh
- Rom. 13:14 Make no provision for the flesh
- Ps. 118:8 "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man."

Key Point #2: The confident expectation of every servant of Christ is in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Truth: God uses the man that God makes.

Empowering is the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. The empowering is a necessary spiritual qualification for bearing witness to Christ.
2. Peter is an example of the Holy Spirit's power in a servant who is fully yielded to Him.
3. All results in Acts and the Epistles were accomplished by the Holy Spirit's power.

Key Point: God sent the Holy Spirit to equip the disciples for the work of the Great Commission.

Acts 1:8 "You shall receive POWER after the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

- Without Holy Spirit's power, they were inefficient to execute God's task.

Key Point: God's most important instruction before He ascended:

Luke 24:49 "Tarry in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high."

No doubt to "tarry and wait" was hard for the impulsive, enthusiastic Peter, but he did it.

Acts records how our Lord fulfills the Great Commission by using weak and fallible men.

The religious leaders were quick to take note of the limitations of the apostles.

Yet, they had to reluctantly acknowledge something powerful about their ministry.

Acts 4:13-14 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

- It is God's Holy Spirit working through weak men that reveals the power of God and brings glory to Him.

The Holy Spirit's descent introduced a new dispensation and the strange Power was felt by the believers. The Spirit-filled followers of Jesus Christ were under His control. The world would see a mighty demonstration which no man had ever witnessed. It began when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. It was first evidenced when they "began to speak with other tongues" and declare the "wonderful works of God." This captured the attention of the great multitude who were pressing into the Temple courts.

Now the stage is set for Peter's explanation of the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

- Peter, the chosen vessel to deliver the sermon at Pentecost, has been filled with the Holy Spirit and is under His control and influence.
- His message consists of three parts: An explanation concerning the event, the phenomenon of tongues; a declaration concerning Jesus of Nazareth; and an application concerning the crowd.

The crowd asked: "What meaneth this?"

Acts 2:14-15 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

The Scripture Was Expounded Acts 2:16-21

Terms To Understand:

1. Last Days = The phrase "last days" is used 5 times in the New Testament and covers everything from the entire Church Age (2X) to the Great Tribulation. (3X)

In Acts 2:17-21 Peter used the term in its broadest sense.

2. Day Of The Lord: a title reserved for a time on Earth characterized by great judgment.

The Day of the Lord includes a series of cataclysmic events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ and His forceful suppression of humanity's rebellion against God.

Here's an excerpt of the Lord's own description of the Day of the Lord.

Amos 5:18-20 Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light- pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

- ❖ Joel 2:1-2 Day of darkness and gloominess
- ❖ Zeph. 1:15 That day is a day of wrath

3. Many prophecies have a near, or partial fulfillment and a far or complete fulfillment at the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ and the setting up of His Kingdom.

Acts 2:16-21 But THIS IS THAT which was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"There is nothing that can dissolve questions and doubt except testimony taken out of the Prophets: for men's reasonings may be overturned, but God's voice cannot be overturned."

¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon 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 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: ¹⁹ And I will shew 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 great and notable Day Of The Lord come:

²¹ And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-32 which declared many centuries before Pentecost, that God would one day pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

And it shall come to pass Afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon ALL FLESH; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹ And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. ³⁰ And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible Day Of The LORD come. ³² And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:

It contains a 3-part promise.

1. It is a promise that God will send His Spirit upon His people as the time of Israel's restoration and blessing draws near.
2. It is a promise that judgments of the "day of the Lord" will be preceded by miraculous cosmic phenomena.
3. It is the assurance that all those who call upon the name of the Lord for salvation will be saved.

Context: Afterward in Joel 2:28 refers to the events Joel has just described in 2:18-27 when the Lord heals the nation after the Assyrian invasion.

- a. Joel had predicted the LORD would visit His people and live in their midst.
- b. Afterward: "I will pour out my Spirit upon ALL flesh."

Note: Afterward doesn't necessarily mean immediately afterward, for many centuries passed before the Spirit was poured out on Pentecost.

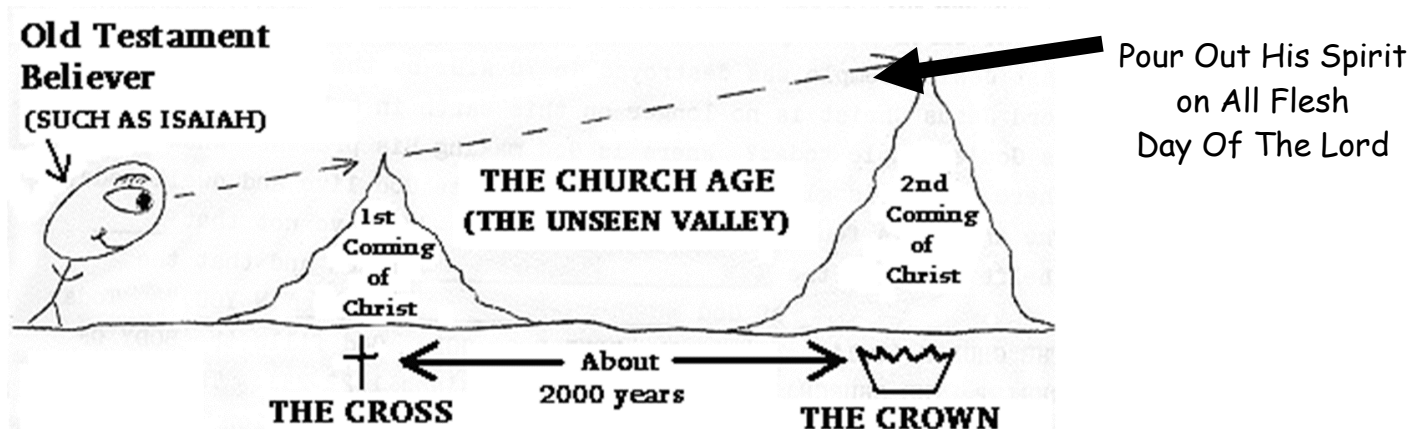
Note: Joel promised that before the "Day of the Lord" begins, there will be a remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit accompanied by signs in the heavens and on the earth.

These signs were not fulfilled at Pentecost. They will be fulfilled completely at the 2nd Coming.

- The promise God gave through Joel declared the Spirit will come upon "all flesh," which includes men & women, young and old, Jew and Gentile.

Key Thoughts:

1. It seems Joel had in mind the Kingdom and the coming of the Messiah to reign.
2. The signs in verses 19-20 are associated with the end of the tribulation period when Jesus returns at His 2nd Coming to set up His Kingdom.
3. The Day Of The Lord is the time when Jesus comes in judgment to set up His Kingdom.
4. "Last days" referred to the time when Messiah would come and set up His Kingdom.
 - Must Consider: OT prophets did not see the "great pause" of the Church age.



Isa. 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, [1st coming] and the government shall be upon His shoulders... [2nd coming in Kingdom]

1. They saw a child born and becoming a reigning king.
2. The last days of Israel began with the coming of Messiah. The kingdom was not brought at that time because Israel rejected Jesus and the kingdom was postponed.
3. Paul says: The church was a mystery. He disclosed it in Eph. 3 as the Holy Spirit revealed it to him. We are living in the ~2000 year parenthesis between His 1st & 2nd Coming.
4. Once Israel is Regathered And In Belief, the kingdom will come and the last days will come to an end.

Acts 2:16-17a THIS IS THAT which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon ALL FLESH:

Note: Peter said this is what Joel said, but he did not use the phrase:

"Thus is FULFILLED what was said by the prophet Joel." Why?

God began fulfilling Joel's prophecy on the day of Pentecost. [near fulfillment]

1. We know from other Scriptures that Joel's prophecy has yet to be fulfilled in a greater way.
2. The army from the north has not yet attacked Israel.
3. The Jews as a nation are not praising the name of the Lord. Still in unbelief
4. Jesus Christ will come again and pour out His Spirit.
 - ❖ The remnant of Jews will confess their sins and recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah. This will be a great demonstration of God's grace.
 - ❖ The remnant of believing Jews will be ushered into Christ's Millennial Kingdom.

The promised Holy Spirit had come and they were under His influence. Pentecost was no accident. It marked the dawning of a new age in which God would bring to completion His plan of salvation for mankind. Jesus had finished the great work of redemption. Nothing more needed to be done except share the Gospel with the world, beginning with the nation of Israel. They must have the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel.

- The emphasis in Acts is that now the good news about Jesus Christ is to go out to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.
- Up to this point, it had been to the Jewish nation. Jesus had said more than once, "I have come only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." [Matt. 15:24].
- But He had also said, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold; these also I must bring that there may be one flock." [John 10:16]
- Peter announces: The time has come when God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh.
- The promised Spirit had come and that was the reason the believers were praising God.

Note: After mentioning wonders and signs associated with judgment, Peter in Acts 2:21 gives an invitation which if accepted allows one to escape the coming judgment.

Peter at this time thought these judgments could come at any moment.

1. When Peter referred to the last days, the Lord had not yet disclosed that Israel was being set aside for a period of time while He focused on the Church, the Body of Christ.
 - ❖ After the Body of Christ was complete, He would turn His attention again to Israel.

Acts 15:13-18 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: ¹⁴ Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. ¹⁵ And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

¹⁶ After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: ¹⁷ That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. ¹⁸ Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Note: This is a quote from Amos 9:11-12

Note: In Peter's quote of Joel, there is no mention of tongues. Strange? Peter says, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel," but Joel does not mention tongues.

1. Joel refers to another gift of the Spirit: the gift of Prophecy.
2. Prophecy is the ability, in power, to declare the Word of God, to tell forth the Word of God. It will be manifested by young men and old, servants and obscure people.
3. They will be equipped by the Spirit to tell forth the Word of God with power.

Acts 2:17b-18 and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

4. That is the mark of the age. The emphasis is not upon tongues or even gifts, but upon the Spirit who gives the gifts.

Key Point: Peter says this age will begin with the pouring out of the Spirit.

When men believe what God has said and call upon the name of the Lord, asking Jesus to be Lord of life, then they are filled with the Spirit. There is no need, no manifestation, for outward signs. It will be just as Jesus himself said.

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. ³⁸ He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. ³⁹ (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

From the day of Pentecost on, the Spirit is given to any who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reason for the manifestation of tongues on the day of Pentecost.

Each Person of the Godhead gave Himself in successive dispensations to win lost mankind back to God. The Old Testament is clearly seen to be the dispensation of the Father. By direct revelation, through prophets, patriarchs, priests, judges and kings, God sought to win man back to Himself, but man would not come.

After about 4000 years of human history, God the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. John 1:11: He came unto His own and His own received Him not.

Jesus Christ The Son: From the cradle in Bethlehem to the Cross at Jerusalem.

Then came Pentecost, 50 days after the Resurrection, when God the Father sent the Holy Spirit in a new way: not upon men but INTO men. He is in the world today enabling and empowering the servants of the Lord to open God's Word to mankind.

For more than 1900 years, men have defied suffering, sorrow and death in order that Christ's transforming Gospel might reach all men and fashion them into His likeness. When men believe, a work is wrought in them, not by man, but by the Holy Spirit whom God sent at Pentecost.