

Episode #1112 Acts 2 Part 1-Fire at Pentecost

I. Acts is unique in the New Testament. Rather than the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, it focuses on what came after, when the Lord had ascended back into heaven. The Lord left His disciples with many commands to carry out, and Acts tells us how they did them.

II. The Beginning of God's Current Work?

- A. This is the first of the places where many place the start of God's work today, calling this the start of the dispensation of grace, the birthplace of the church, and so forth. If this is true, then we would expect that the events recorded here would be very similar to what we see taking place around us on every hand today. Yet a real examination of the passage will reveal to us that this is not actually the case.
- B. This would be as if I had seen the end of the classic movie, "The Wizard of Oz," but never the beginning, and a friend tried to convince me that this film began with a violent war scene. Though I might admit that I had never seen the beginning of the Wizard of Oz, I would insist that I do know enough to know that it does not start like this. I also have never seen the beginning of the dispensation of grace. But all I see around me convinces me that however it began, it could not have begun like what we see happening in Acts 2.

III. Fire at Pentecost.

A. Verse 1. Pentecost.

- 1. This was not the first Pentecost ever. This was a feast of the LORD, ordained by Him since the giving of the law in the Old Testament. Leviticus 23:9-14, the Feast of Firstfruits. The feast of weeks follows in Leviticus 23:15-21. The Israelites were to start counting from the day of the Feast of Firstfruits. That day, the day after the Sabbath, was day one. Then, they were to count seven Sabbaths, or forty-nine days. Then the next day, also a Sunday, they were to have a second firstfruits offering. That day was seven weeks after Firstfruits, and so was called the Feast of Weeks. Since it was fifty days after Firstfruits, it also came to be called "the fiftieth," in Greek, "Pentecost." This was not some new event that God instituted to start "the church." Pentecost had "fully come" because the fifty days of waiting were over.
- 2. The "one place" mentioned here is not the "upper room" where they were lodging. Luke 24:52-53 assures us that they were "continually" in the temple. We read the same thing in Acts 2:46. If they were "continually" in the temple before this event, and continued there after it, then where could this have taken place but in the temple? There were only ten days in between Christ's ascension and Pentecost for them to have been "continually in the temple." The Spirit did not catch them somewhere else.
- 3. Remember, the temple was not a single building, but rather was a whole complex of buildings like a campus. The believers had been gathering in one place on this campus. Everything that happens in Acts 2 is connected with the temple. Certainly our calling could not have started like this!

B. Verse 2. The Sound.

- 1. The first great manifestation on that day was a sound. This sound started in "heaven," meaning the sky, proving it was from God. This is very different from today, when we hear no sound from heaven whatsoever.

2. It sounded like a rushing mighty wind, Greek *pnoe*, a blast of air. There was no wind, just the sound of it. Jeremiah 2:13. The Hebrews called this ‘*olam*, the Greeks called it *aion* (eon), which most basically meant a “flow.” God is a flow-er, and when His Kingdom comes, He will flow down and flow out to the world through His great power to bring light, truth, understanding, and judgment. That flow will reach to every corner of this earth, and that flow will be all-encompassing and triumphant. A wind is a flow of air. What they were hearing was a sound that represented the flow of God beginning. This was the start of the Kingdom.
3. The sound moves down from heaven to earth, and rests upon the very house where the faithful disciples were sitting. God’s flow moves out to His representatives, and then flows through them to others.
4. The word “house” does not disprove my claim that they were in the temple. This same word, *oikos*, is used of the temple of God in Matthew 12:4, 21:13, and 23:38; in Mark 2:26 and 11:17; in Luke 6:4, 11:51, 13:35, and 19:46; in John 2:16-17; and in Acts 7:47 and 7:49. The disciples used the word *oikodome* to describe the “buildings” of the temple in Matthew 24:1. According to Otis Q. Sellers, there were thirty halls in the temple that were called *oikoi* or houses. It was in one of these that the disciples had chosen to gather at this time.
5. The disciples were sitting. Many think they must have been praying for the Spirit when this happened, but Hebrew men stood when they prayed. Mark 11:25. The Spirit was not sent because of fervent prayer on their part. The Lord had promised this, and this is how He chose to send it.

C. Verse 3. The Tongues of Fire.

1. The next great manifestation was a visible sight of divided tongues like fire. Again, they weren’t fire, but were like it. They were all clustered together at first, but then broke apart and one rested on each of them.

IV. Conclusion: What happened at Pentecost was not the start of God’s work today. The place the apostles were meeting was in the temple of God. Everyone who was involved was a Jew. It involved visible and audible signs, something we do not experience today. However God’s work today began, it was not like this!