

Episode #1113 Acts 2 Part 2-Speaking in Tongues

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. We were discussing the miraculous events at Pentecost in Acts 2. Most people imagine that what happened here was the beginning of God's work today. Yet how could it be, when it is so very, very different from God's work today? They were all together in one place, and we showed the evidence that that place was the temple. They heard a sound from heaven, whereas God is silent today. They saw tongues of fire, when God does not show visible, manifest signs today. However God's work today began, we can rest assured it did not begin like this!

III. Fire at Pentecost.

A. Verse 3. The Tongues of Fire.

1. John the Baptizer's words in Luke 3:16 came to pass. They were "baptized," IDENTIFIED, with fire. Notice that they were neither dipped nor immersed in fire, just identified with it.
2. Fire is connected with judgment, and thus these men were marked out as judges. Matthew 19:28. We need a Biblical idea of judgment, though. It does not mean "punishment." Judgment means determining what is right, and then setting things right. These men would do these things in the kingdom of God. I Corinthians 6:2-3. The saints of the Acts period are destined to be judges. Now, these 120 men were marked out as judges in the sight of all Israel at Jerusalem.
3. Notice again that we have no visible signs today, and God does not choose leaders or judges for us. However God's work today began, it could not have been like this!

B. Verse 4. Speaking in Tongues.

1. Tongues is the Greek *glossais*, and means *tongues* beyond any doubt. Yet tongue in Greek and in English means a language. Dictionary.com's eighth definition of a tongue, "the language of a particular people, region, or nation: *the Hebrew tongue.*"
2. The Greek for "other" is *heterais*, and means tongues that were new to the speaker, but not new as a language. The Greek word *neos*, for "new," should have been used if a completely new language was meant.
3. We know that at one time all men spoke the same language. Yet when this led to wickedness and rebellion against the LORD, He disrupted their languages and made them all speak in different tongues. Genesis 11:1-9. When God's great government comes in the future, God will remove the language barrier that He once erected, and all will be able to understand each other once again. This miracle foreshadows that time.
4. In verse 3 they were baptized with fire; now they are baptized with the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit" in Greek is *pneumati hagio*, or "spirit holy," without the article "the." This is referring to the power of the Spirit, and not His Person. They were identified with power by speaking with other tongues.

5. The very words they spoke were “as the Spirit gave them utterance.” “Spirit” here has “the” in front of it, and so it is speaking of the Person of the Spirit. Thus once again the Giver is connected with the gift.
6. This was an empowerment, not a temporary sign, and it gave these men the ability to speak a language that they could not have spoken were it not for the Spirit of God. Numbers 22:28-30. A donkey cannot speak at all, and these men could not speak all these exotic languages, yet the Spirit could empower them to do so. When He did this, they were baptized, meaning identified, with holy power. Many today claim to be baptized with the Spirit, and yet show forth no power. We can deny their claims because they are clearly untrue.
7. These men became masters of language, and Jesus Christ was the Author of language. This showed their connection with Him. Numbers 11:16-30. Moses was identified with the seventy. Now Jesus Christ is identified with these one hundred and twenty.
8. We do not see gifts of languages people have never learned today. How then could this be the start of God’s present work? However His work today began, it was not like this.

IV. Speaking in Tongues. Acts 2:5-13.

- A. Acts 2:5. Luke draws our attention to a new group of people. These are not the only ones in attendance, but have a special reaction to what they see happening.
 1. They had lived outside the land, but had maintained their adherence to God and the Israelite culture. Now, they were living in Jerusalem.
 2. The Jews outside the land would have a very difficult time moving back, since the economy was bad, and there were no jobs for them. Some of them became well-off enough to retire and move back to the land, where they could worship God correctly. Those who did this were probably very devout.
 3. They would have known Greek, the common language of the Roman empire, and the native language of their homelands. Few of them would have been fluent in the local Aramaic.
 4. Nation is *ethnos*, which is often translated Gentile, but see how silly that would be here! This word should ALWAYS be translated nation.
 5. Heaven probably does not refer to the place. Heaven means that which is over and above, or that which is lifted up and exalted. God is called Heaven in Daniel 4:25-26, since He is the Exalted One. Luke was using “heaven” here to mean every nation under the exalted ruler, Caesar. In other words, they were from every nation in the Roman Empire.
- B. Verse 6. They rushed together to the place where the sound originated, which was the place in the temple where all the disciples were gathered together. They are thrown into confusion because they all hear the disciples speak in their own languages.
 1. This is a separate miracle from verse 4, where they were speaking in other tongues they never learned before. Here, these men hear them speaking in their own tongue, whatever language they were actually speaking.

V. Conclusion: Tongues of fire marked out God’s leaders at Pentecost. A great miracle took place, first of all in the language they spoke, then in the language the audience heard. This was accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. God is simply not working this way today. This was the start of something important, but not the start of God’s current work.