

The Gentile Pentecost

Text: Acts 10:44-48

Introduction:

Throughout our study of the Book of Acts, I have come back to chapter 1:8, as that essential proclamation from the risen, and about to ascend, Lord Jesus Christ, which is the profound summary of the entire Book of Acts, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And we have been following this course, indeed, the work of the risen Christ, by His Spirit, and through His chosen Apostles, while working through the Book thus far.

1) We have viewed the glorious descending of the Holy Spirit, with power, upon the Apostles, at Jerusalem, and by this means, the first "watershed moment" of God's plan had been reached. The Gospel spread throughout all Jerusalem, and a church of thousands had been formed.

2) Following the death of Stephen, a great persecution had arisen, pushing many of the people of God out of Jerusalem, and into all of Judea and Samaria. And we reached that second "watershed moment," when we followed Philip into Samaria, where many were saved and converted through the proclamation of the Gospel, which was accompanied by signs and wonders. When the Apostle's Peter and John had gone up to Samaria, they laid hands on the people there, and the Holy Spirit fell upon the Samaritans.

3) And now, we have been traveling with Peter from Lydda, into Joppa, and finally up to Caesarea, where he was called by vision, and by the direct command of the Holy Spirit, to go and preach to gentiles, welcoming them into the fellowship of Christ's church. Indeed, the foundation of Christ's church was being laid in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria (amongst the "half-breeds"), and it was now beginning to penetrate the gentile regions of the world. Peter has finally come to understand that no ethnic or ceremonial partiality should distinguish the people of God anymore. But rather, the evidence of conversion is a "fear of God," manifested in true "works of righteousness," coming out of a sincere profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. This was to distinguish the people of God in the New Covenant. And so, the door

had been swung open wide for gentiles to join the fellowship of converted Jews, in the Most Holy Place of God's heavenly tabernacle. Christ's death and resurrection have secured this incomprehensible blessing for all who truly put their faith in Him.

And as Peter proclaims this glorious Gospel to the gentile centurion Cornelius (and those who are with him), we will come to see this morning, that third and final "watershed" moment, in the unfolding of God's plan, as the Holy Spirit falls upon these gentiles. And from here, we will especially follow the Apostle Paul, whom God will use, to expand this reach into all parts of the gentile world. Indeed, this morning then, we come upon that glorious event, which might best be described as a "Gentile Pentecost!"

I. The Holy Spirit Falls Upon the Gentiles

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word" (vs. 44).

It was while "Peter was still speaking these words" that the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard. What words? The Gospel, given in Peter's sermon! That this Jesus of Nazareth "was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead," and "to Him all the prophets witnessed that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission (forgiveness) of sins" (vs. 42b-43).

This was the message, which the Holy Spirit used to bring life into these gentile souls! And this is the message, which God still uses to breathe life into the dead today. Here, we have a real life illustration of that doctrine, which the Apostle Paul had penned to the Romans: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17). And again, to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:18), "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

We see here, very clearly, that the Holy Spirit uses the particular message of the Gospel to convert and save dead souls. The Holy Spirit is the true power in conversion, but He will only convert, by way of the Gospel, which glorifies the risen Christ! And so, we note two critical elements involved in salvation and conversion, the Holy Spirit and His tool of conversion, namely, the Gospel. And this is why we must be a people of fervent prayer, brethren. The tool,

itself; the Gospel itself, will convert no one (not a single soul), if the Holy Spirit does not empower lifeless sinners to believe [see John 3:1ff].

"And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." (vs. 45-46a).

And so, when the Holy Spirit had fallen upon these Gentiles, that critical outward sign (especially for the Jews) was manifested as a confirmation of their fellowship in Christ's church. The Gentiles began to speak in legible foreign languages, even as the Apostles had done at Pentecost. The gift of "tongues" (of speaking legitimate foreign languages not previously learned), was exhibited by these Gentiles...again, as a sign, especially to the Jews, confirming the ingathering of the Gentiles into Christ's church and kingdom. Since they now manifested an outward evidence of the Holy Spirit's equipping; since they evidenced the miraculous inner working of the Holy Spirit residing in them, who could deny them baptism and church membership? Again, this was a "unique to that time" sign, which was necessary during that stage of the building of Christ's church. We had already seen how difficult it was for Peter to embrace gentiles (three identical visions, the Holy Spirit's direct command, Cornelius's vision...etc), and so, this miraculous sign served to pave the way for the Jew/Gentile merger, into one body, and one church! That was the purpose of the sign! And once that purpose was fulfilled, the sign was no longer needed.

And notice as well, that the Gentiles did not speak mere gibberish when this happened. Rather, we are told that, like the Apostles at Pentecost, they "magnified God" in these foreign languages. In other words, prophesying; revelatory prophesying was taking place, in accordance with Joel's prophecy, quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17ff. These Gentiles were speaking Holy Spirit guided revelation...magnifying God! And God used this to convince Peter's companions (witnesses, as it were) of God's accepting and receiving of the Gentiles into Christ's church! Notice, Peter's Jewish companions (circumcised companions) were amazed that the Holy Spirit had been poured out on Gentiles (the uncircumcised). And Peter picks up on this reality, compelling his companions toward the necessity of granting these Gentiles the rite of baptism, that New Covenant sign, which indicated membership in Christ's church!

"Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' (vs. 46b-47).

Do you see the tension here, brethren? Clearly, this was a tremendous sore spot among the Jews. Clearly, this was no small matter to them. And so, Peter, like a lawyer standing before the jury, with indisputable evidence, says, "Look, which one of you will deny these gentiles the rite of baptism, seeing with your own eyes, that the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon them? Will you still, "call unclean, that which God has cleansed, and deemed clean? Is circumcision yet a barrier for us, when the Holy Spirit has obviously crossed that barrier, right here in our presence?" "Indeed, they have received exactly what we ourselves have received, at Pentecost! See here, a Gentile rendition of our own experience! There is no partiality with God, but all who believe in Christ in truth, are now welcome!"

"And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord" (vs. 48a).

Standing firmly upon the solid rock of evidence now present, Peter lays aside the Mosaic Law; he casts his very natural Jewishness aside, and *commands* that these gentiles receive the blessed rite of *water* baptism; signifying their union with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and their entry into the fellowship of Christ's church! They are baptized in the singular "Name" of the Lord; that is the Triune Name of YHWH...of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (One Name, three Persons!).

"Then they asked him to stay a few days" (vs. 48b). Not merely content with baptism, they desire further fellowship with their brother in Christ (the Jew and the Gentile fellowship as one man in Christ!), and no doubt, they pick his brain, and receive much more Kingdom teaching from Peter!

And yet, the controversy is not over. Peter will have much explaining to do, back at Jerusalem, but when he does, God will have accomplished his task, not only in Cornelius and the gentiles, but also in Peter and the Jews!

AMEN!!!