THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 2:1-21 Key Verse 2:4

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

In the previous passage, we learned that 120 believers all joined together constantly in prayer. In today’s passage, Jesus’ promise was fulfilled as the Holy Spirit came from heaven at Pentecost. Immediately, an extraordinary event took place as Galileans speaking in other languages declaring the wonders of God. The coming of the Holy Spirit embarked a new beginning, the age of the Holy Spirit. Let us ponder upon the meaning of this event and find out what God’s desire for his believers is.

1.The coming of the Holy Spirit (1-12)

Look at verse 1. **“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.”** The day of Pentecost refers to the Feast of Weeks when the Jews offer the first fruits of the new grain. The Pentecost was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Passover. It was not by coincidence that God poured out His Spirit on the disciples on that day. Jesus was crucified as the Lamb of God on the Passover. Jesus said in John 12:24, **“Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”** Jesus’ life, death and resurrection reveal that he was the dying kernel who would later draw many people to salvation. Now the day of Pentecost signifies the firstfruits of the spiritual harvest through the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2 says, **“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”** Rushing mighty wind like Tornado can pull out trees from its root and move them away to another place. Wooden fence in our house was knocked down by the strong wind last fall and remained as ruined wall for a year until we repaired it with our neighbor’ help. The word for “spirit” in both Hebrew(ruach) and Greek(pneuma) is the same word for “wind” or “breath.” After God formed a man from the dust of the ground, He breathed into the nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living being.

Verse 2 begins with the word, “suddenly.” The Holy Spirit is sovereign God. If He comes into anyone’s life, it will be mostly like sudden. Jesus told Nicodemus, “The wind blows wherever it pleases.” The Holy Spirit works in his own timing and for his own purpose. We just need to submit ourselves to Him waiting for His sudden coming through constant prayer.

Verse 3 says, **“they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”** Fire consumes everything in its reach as we watch the news of the deadly wildfire in California for 2 weeks, a wind-driven blaze that scorched 310 square kilometers, evacuating 200,000 residents. The fire spread quickly over other mountain ranges because it jumps gap easily such as roads and even rivers. Fire in the Old Testament represented God’s presence, holiness, glory and purity. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, He burns away our impurities. Then can you imagine the power of fire with a violent wind? No one can withstand against the power of the Holy Spirit because he consumes everything on His way. The fire accompanied by a violent wind represents the mighty life changing power of God.

The divided tongues of fire sat upon each believer. The Holy Spirit is not just power or force, but God himself who can come and resides in man’s heart personally. 1Corinthians 3:16-17 say, **“you yourselves ae God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”** Jesus who is the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus came down from heaven to make Him known to sinners closely. Now, Pentecost is the day that God, the Holy Spirit came to dwell right in each individual’s heart.

Look at verse 4. **“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”** Although the Holy Spirit came with immense power, He didn’t shake the upper room building or burn it down, instead stirred people’s heart. There were Jews and the Gentile converts to Judaism from all over the world who came to celebrate the Pentecost. They are diaspora, the scattered Jews over the world. When they heard the believers speaking in fluent languages of their own, they were marveled. Bewildered and perplexed, they asked, **“Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?”**

Verses 9-11a say, **“Parthians, Medes and Elamites: residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs”** The author, Luke put the long list of 15 nations mentioning “every nation under heaven.” These 15 different places encompassed Jerusalem. In other words, they represented the entire world of their time.

Here, speaking other tongues is different from the gift of tongue which needed interpretation in 1 Corinthians. These Galilean’s native language was Aramaic. Learning a foreign language requires years of intensive study until their jaw bones and tongue hurt. Even our children have difficulty to learn French in their class. But here the Holy Spirit immediately empowered these ordinary men to speak in other languages. How good will it be for us to speak foreign language fluently without study! This was a special event happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers.

This incident is unique in church history. When God created men in Genesis, there was only one language. Since the man’s fall, mankind began to rebel against God by building the Tower of Babel. So God confused their language and scattered them over the face of the whole earth. But the Holy Spirit enabled the upper room believers to overcome language barriers and let every nation hear God’s messages in their own language. Language barrier was a big obstacle for the disciple to obey Jesus’ world mission command. But this miracle shows that the Holy Spirit helps his disciples to carry out world mission command. God equipped His church with the power of His Spirit to witness to all the nations. Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit descending on Him like a dove at His baptism in Jordan river, Jesus’ disciples received the Holy Spirit to serve God’s work by relying on His power.

What was the contents of their speaking? Verse 11b says **“we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own languages!”** Here the wonders of God refer to the wonderful work of God. ESV versions says “mighty works of God.” We have also many barriers to overcome in order to serve Jesus’ world mission command, for instance, age gap, generation gap, cultural gap, language barrier, rearing little children and so on. But when the Holy Spirit comes on us, he enables us to overcome these gaps and barriers to advance the gospel ministry. As long as we have desire to obey Jesus’ commands, God opens the way for us to serve his purpose as bible teachers in our times. May we humbly depend on the Holy Spirit while building up our church together through constant prayer.

2. God pours out his Spirit on all people(13-21)

At the sound of international languages, all the people there scratched their heads first trying to understand what was happening. God fearing people wanted to know the spiritual meaning of the event. But some began to make fun of the disciples saying, **“They have had too much wine.”** In the midst of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, what did Peter do? Look at verses 14-16. **“Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”**

Peter said, “Let’s have a bible study. Let’s look at what the prophet Joel wrote.” In the past, Peter was silent when he was challenged to identify as Jesus’ disciple. But this time, Peter stood up together with the Eleven and began to explain the meaning of this event. First, he confirmed that this miraculous event was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel.

Peter quoted from Joel 2:28-32. Look at verses 17-18. **“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”** God says, **“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** ESV versions says, “on all flesh.” The word, “pouring” means to send fluid flowing or falling and abundant or continuous stream. In the old testament, God gave his Spirit to a limited people, only to prophets and priests, who in turn gave His words to man. But now the Holy Spirit was given to all people including sons and daughters, young men and old men, God’s servants both men and women.

What will happen as the Holy Spirit is poured out on all people? **“Your sons and daughters will prophesy.”** The gift of prophecy is spiritual power to understand God’s word and ability to teach the Bible. So prophecy is not merely foreseeing the future, but speaking God’s word. In the old testament, prophets delivered God’s messages to people. But at the pouring of the Holy Spirit, sons and daughters will become messengers of God who deliver God’s word to the people of their times.

**“Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.”** These days many young people are too worrisome about their future that they have petty dreams and console themselves in sinful pleasures and entertainment. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they would realize that God created them for a greater purpose. They will see visions that comes from God.Old men often dream about their past or the good old days and just live out the end of their lives. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they will see the world with the hope of God. Although their bodies get old, their mind are renewed and dream of the glorious kingdom of God.

The phrase “all people” gives us a great hope because it covers the scope of all ages from young to old regardless of their position or gender. We are never too late to dream and never to young to see visions and witness Jesus to someone else. Early UBF ancestors were full of vision for world mission when they received the Holy Spirit. Some went to Germany as nurse aids, some to America as chicken killing specialists and some to Africa as doctors, some to Canada as sewing machine operators in a dusty factory leaving stable life in their country. These days, some UBF senior missionaries after their retirement went to other countries as silver missionaries serving soul serving ministry. They were full of God’s vision. God used all of them preciously and their vision is now being realized every campus in the world.

Verse 19a says, **“I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below.”** The Holy Spirit renews everything. The work of the Holy Spirit continues until the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. When the Holy Spirit works, we see many wonders and miracles. However, the greatest miracle and wonder by the Holy Spirit is His work in our hearts. A life changed by the power of the Holy Spirit is the greatest miracle of all. Then what is the point of all changes? Look at verse 21. **“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** Salvation is for all people of the world, but each should respond personally. This is God’s wonderful promise at the last days that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Today, we learned God’s heart desire for his believers and for all the people of the world. The Holy Spirit is equipping his church to carry out Jesus’ world mission command. God wants His messages to be spread out to all nations. May we empty ourselves by confessing all our sins and making rooms for the Holy Spirit to come and fill our heart. As we receive the Holy Spirit, we may see visions, dream dreams, and prophesy in our times until Jesus’ coms again.