

2 - A NEW BIRTH

Acts 2:1-41

(Play Video)

EPISODE II: A NEW BIRTH

Jesus has returned to Heaven after instructing His disciples to wait in Jerusalem. The disciples enter Jerusalem and gather in a secluded room. They constantly pray and eagerly wait for the promised Holy Spirit of God.

Meanwhile, Judas Iscariot has committed suicide. The regret of betraying Jesus was too much for him to handle.

The disciples meet to appoint a replacement for him while they continue to wait in Jerusalem...

Amanda and I celebrated our daughter Lilly's birthday on Friday. It's incredible to think she is 2 years old! Amazing how fast time flies.

I will never forget being in the delivery room and seeing her for the first time. She was born by C-section, and the cord had wrapped around her to the point she was blue when Dr. Hopf brought her out. It was a thrilling yet terrifying moment. I didn't want Amanda to be alarmed, so I didn't tell her what was happening. The doctor and nurses very quickly took Lilly and worked with her and it wasn't too long until I heard her cry for the first time.

It was a moment of fear.
It was a moment of joy.
They brought Lilly over and let me hold her for the very first time.
It is a moment I still love to share with people.

Why?

Because it was a new birth. We love to celebrate new birth, and rightfully so.

Today we move into Acts chapter 2 and witness the new birth of the church. Last week, you may remember, we were in Acts chapter 1 and learned about the mission Jesus gave to His disciples. The disciples were to go and be Jesus' witnesses all over the world. But first, He told them to wait in Jerusalem.

While waiting, they select Matthias to replace Judas as one of the 12 apostles.

And then they wait... for 10 days.

I wonder what they were feeling during this time? They've shared incredible moments with Jesus, but He's also told them there's a lot more to come! What do you imagine it was like for these disciples to have to wait in that secluded room in Jerusalem?

How exciting! How scary! How anxious I would feel to see what was going to happen!

So they wait... for 10 days.

Acts chapter 2 verse 1, "[When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.](#)"

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Pentecost was a Jewish holiday that takes place 50 days after the Passover holiday. Passover was the occasion Jesus had the last supper with His disciples. Then Jesus was put to death on the cross. Jesus would spend 40 days with His disciples proving He really was alive, then ascend back into Heaven. The disciples wait 10 days in Jerusalem until they receive the gift and promise from God.

Pentecost was a feast of harvest. The people would have just completed bringing in the first wheat harvest of the year, so they were coming together in Jerusalem to celebrate and give thanks to God.

Isn't this an incredible picture? God uses a celebration of harvest to launch His church!

God wants to show there is a harvest coming in which His Spirit is going to be poured out and followers of Jesus are going to be empowered to go and make more followers of Jesus... who go and make more disciples!

God pours out His Spirit to empower disciples to go and make disciples.

Check out what happens in verse 2: "[2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.](#)"

The Holy Spirit comes on the apostles and they are enabled to speak in tongues. The Greek word in this verse literally means "languages."

Look at why this happens:

[5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from](#)

Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

It's a shame the term "Pentecostal power" has become more associated with speaking in tongues than with the harvest of making disciples for Jesus. What is clear from the text is these tongues are languages people from all over the world who are gathered in Jerusalem can hear the disciples speak and understand.

I don't know your background this morning, but when the Bible speaks of tongues in Acts chapter 2, this isn't a spiritual prayer language, it's not the Holy Spirit groaning, it is a known language people could understand.

It would be the equivalent of the Holy Spirit falling on me this morning and I speak flawless Spanish to you. You would be like, “Wow, he doesn't even have his hick accent with this!”

But in this instance in Acts chapter 2, the apostles are speaking languages people in Jerusalem that day understood. We know this because the SPECIFIC, historical languages are listed in verses 9-11. If they had just been “spiritual” or “angelic” languages, the author of Acts could not have listed them by their specific names. These were languages the people understood.

Which brings me to a very important point...

GOD MEETS US WHERE WE ARE.

The first Christian sermon preached at the original church launch was preached at a festival built around the harvest. I'm not sure how devout Jews partied, but they aren't expecting this. You don't go to Mardi Gras and expect to meet Jesus!

But this is what happens. In the middle of this celebration, the Holy Spirit comes and the Apostles stand up and preach.

Sure, some people make fun of them, saying they've had too much to drink, but that just leads Peter to have a great introduction for his sermon.

Verse 14: “**14** 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. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!”

It's only 9... there's no way we could be drunk yet!

Isn't that funny... the birth of the church takes place during a festival. But that's how God works. He always meets us where we are.

Think about it. Where were you when the Lord came and found you?

God can go to incredible lengths, even making a way for uneducated fisherman speak fluent foreign languages.

Now, what are the odds, the week when I'm working on a sermon from Acts 2 showing how God uses people to communicate His Word to others in a language they can understand, that I would meet someone who is working to translate God's Word into languages people around the world can understand?

The longer I know God, the more "coincidences" like this take place.

And you know where I met this man? Here in French Lick, Indiana of all places. Allow me to introduce my new friend, Chris Lovelace, to you this morning. Chris and his family are currently living in West Baden. Welcome Chris!

CHRIS LOVELACE

Throughout the Bible, we see that God wishes to communicate His Word in language that we can understand.

This has always been God's plan: Even though most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets in Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah to write in Aramaic for special sections in Scripture that were directed at the nations surrounding Israel.

When the Exiles returned from Persia to Israel in the 6th century BC, Nehemiah 8 tells us that there were interpreters to help people understand God's Word.

The Holy Spirit directed the New Testament authors to write in Greek, which was the Language of Wider Communication throughout the Roman Empire.

Acts 2 tells us that God used the heart languages of the people that the Apostles were addressing.

Pentecost shows us that God wishes to communicate the gospel in language that we understand.

When the Apostle John looked into the future, this is the vision that he saw:

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Rev 7:9-10)

These verses tell us at least three things about God's eternal plan:

- 1 God's eternal plan is to redeem people from EVERY LANGUAGE.
- 2 God's eternal plan to reach every language with the gospel did not end at Pentecost.
- 3 God's eternal plan to reach people from every language with the gospel WILL SUCCEED. God has already shown us a glimpse of the future, where that plan has succeeded! Right now, we are still traveling toward that future. But Pentecost has NOT ENDED. The gospel still needs to go out into every language.

ILLUS: GWENDOLYN STORY

There are still 500 million people – half a BILLION people – just like Gwendolyn today. Will you partner with us to reach them by getting the Word of God into their heart language? (We need your prayers. We need your financial help to crowd-fund our ministry to get God's Word into every language where it is still needed. We believe that God has already decreed that His Word WILL go out to every language. Today, we need your help to do that. Will you be part of continuing the work with that the Holy Spirit started at Pentecost?)

Thank you Chris. And to our Restoration church family... perhaps God has put this ministry on your heart today and you would be able to bless them. It may not be a "coincidence" for you to be here this morning. Chris will be out in the lobby after the service and I would encourage you to take a moment and talk with him.

But I just love how "coincidences" take place when we follow God. God always meets us where we are.

And while God loves us, and He meets us where we are, He doesn't simply leave us that way...

GOD TELLS US THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES.

Look with me at Acts 2 again and see Peter addressing the crowd. For the sake of time, I won't read every verse, but look at verse 14, the beginning of his sermon again:

"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people."

Peter says what you are witnessing today is a fulfillment of prophecy! The prophet Joel talked about these days, and now you get to experience them!

Peter goes on to share the truth of Jesus, how He was sent from God and did many miracles and signs among them, proving Who He is. But look at how bold Peter is with the crowd in verse 23:

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Peter stands up and tells this crowd of thousands that they killed the Messiah! They have killed Jesus! They are guilty!

This wasn't something that was hidden, everyone knew about this. It had only happened 50 days ago. Less than 2 months!

But Peter told them the truth about themselves, they were guilty.

You are guilty. I am guilty.

The Bible says everyone has sinned. We are all guilty of Jesus' death.

That's the bad news. Now, the good news...

GOD PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE!

Look at how Peter ends the sermon. It wasn't with a cute story or poem...

Verse 36, "36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah."

Boom.

Mic drop.

That's it.

You killed Jesus! And He's the MAN!!!!

Now look at the response of the crowd in verse 37.

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

How would you feel if you were listening that day and suddenly realized the One you've been waiting your whole life for, the answer to the prayers of your people, He had come and you missed Him? Not only that, you put Him to death.

You'd be cut to the heart. You'd want to know what you could do to change things.

The good news is God has provided an alternative. Look at Peter's response:

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

He says, "Repent (it's the very first step), you've got to have a change of heart that leads to a change of direction. You have to recognize the place in your life where you are doing wrong and you have to make a decision that I'm going to stop and I'm going to turn around and I'm going to do right.

Coming into faith in Christ is not a matter of just getting from Him all the blessings of salvation.

It is not just taking for yourself all of the good things that God wants to give you.

There is a demand if you're doing what is wrong, you have to STOP, TURN AROUND AND SET YOUR FACE to doing that which is right.

Then he says you need to be baptized.

Literally the word means to be immersed. To be dipped or plunged. Think of an Oreo... you want to baptize it in milk. You dunk it!

But water baptism is more than just a religious ritual we go through... it is a new birth.

When Nicodemus met with Jesus, Jesus told him, “[3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”](#) (John 3:3)

This totally blew Nicodemus’ mind!

[4 “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”](#)

[5 Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”](#)

What have we seen this morning in Acts 2? A new birth... with water and the Spirit.

New birth is a concept God always uses to show a change in location.

A new baby is surrounded by water before they are born. We also see this picture in the Bible.

When the people left Egypt, they were “baptized into Moses” as they crossed the Red Sea. They were surrounded by water.

When Joshua led them into the Promised Land, the people were “baptized” as they crossed the Jordan River on dry land. Why? Because you always have to be baptized, born again to enter the Promised Land.

To launch the new church on a day celebrating the harvest, Peter told the crowd to Repent and be Baptized! Be born again!

At my first ministry in West Virginia, I met a couple named Lewis and Janette. They had come in one Sunday morning and sat on the back row. I got to know them and really enjoyed talking with them. After a few weeks I set up an appointment to meet with them at their house. Lewis wanted to talk about being baptized.

I went to their home and visited with them. Lewis had questions he wanted to ask, but Janette made it very clear that she was already a Christian because she had watched Charles Stanley for years on Sunday morning. I could tell that she wasn’t too excited about me being there. That and the fact she didn’t want me to dunk her in water!

Now, I had a couple options at this point. I could have just rolled my eyes and said that’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard of. Peter didn’t tell the crowd just to sit at home and watch TV if you want to be a Christian. But I realized if I said that my visit would be cut short.

So I took the second option. I commented on how much I enjoy listening to Charles Stanley. He is an excellent communicator, although I don’t always agree with what he says.

We made some more small talk and then Lewis started asking why we baptize people at our church. He really wanted to know what difference it made.

So, gathering all the skill I had accumulated in my Evangelism 101 class at college, I took Lewis and Janette down the Roman road.

The Roman road is like this:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:9-10)

"Or don't you know that all of us who are baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4)

When we finished reading these verses together, Janette looked at me and said, "I've never heard it presented like that before." And this woman who had made it clear that she didn't want to ever be "dunked" came forward the next day and I "dunked" her, along with her husband.

I cannot describe adequately the look of joy and peace she had on her face knowing that she had done everything she could to respond to Jesus.

Friends, we have a God, a Heavenly Father, who meets us where we are. God has met you where you are because you are here this morning and you've been able to hear and understand this message. You've heard the truth from God that we are sinners. Your sin and my sin separate us from God. But God has also provided an alternative... Jesus paid the debt of our sin on the cross. And for those who repent and are baptized, we have the promise of eternal life with Him!

COMMUNION TRANSITION

Let's take time this morning to reflect on Christ's sacrifice, and dedicate ourselves to living a life of thanksgiving because of this new life we have been given.

Let's pray.

(Video after prayer)