

# THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

## Acts 2

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If you're trying to keep sense of where we're going in the Book of Acts, Luke is a very outlinable writer. I wouldn't want to infer, by meandering along as we are, a chapter at a time, a verse at a time, that there is no sense of direction to the author. His sense of direction flows really out of Acts 1:8, which locates the three geographical zones that the book will cover—the gospel in Jerusalem; Judea, which will take us through the first eight chapters; then the gospel in Samaria and its environs (9–12); then the gospel to the world (12–16). There are other ways of outlining Acts beyond that, but I find that each of the Gospel writers has a very distinct purpose in writing and a very distinct outlinable quality. None of the Gospel writers simply open their pens, open their mouth and the Lord fills it. That's true, as well, of the writers of the Epistles and, of course, of the writer of an Acts history like Luke.

When we look at chapter 1, if you want to give it a heading—if you weren't here on the previous Sunday nights, that is— there is a series of events we might simply call “From Resurrection to Pentecost.” It covers the post-resurrection teaching of Jesus for forty days, where He re-emphasizes the teaching of His earthly ministry. Not a time of introduction of new doctrine or secret mystical truths about the kingdom of God. Then along with that, a description of the ten days of waiting which the disciples have, during which time they are at work, trying to both obey the Lord and remain in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father is poured out. As well, beyond that, attempting to select the leadership to replace Judas, who has fallen.

I may have mentioned, in chapter 1, that there have sometimes been people who have assumed that the Early Church made mistake in selecting someone to take Judas' place, that the Lord had

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

reserved that position for the apostle Paul. I think, however, that to say this would be to say, “It’s the first major decision following the resurrection of the Lord, the church made a mistake, even though it was using Scripture as a means of guidance for solving its problems.” If Christians can’t turn to Scripture and get guidance for present-day solutions, then we’re all in trouble. I find it very difficult to assume that this particular passage of Scripture reflects a mistake on the early church’s part. It was an order of the Lord to complete the complement of the Twelve that He had selected.

When we looked at chapter 2 and took the first four verses, we sought to examine some of the main features, the precise phrase of 2:1 was, “In the filling up of the day of Pentecost.” Pentecost has a meaning, which began to be fulfilled on that particular twenty-four-hour day. But to read the Day of Pentecost as a twenty-four-hour day would be an inaccuracy, because that day is meant to be an era. Pentecost is an era of time. Its meaning and definition is directly related to the schedule of seven feasts, which were recorded in Leviticus 23, which are meant to cover the calendar year of the life of Israel. Pentecost, being the middle of the seven feasts, the last feast of the spring. It is the feast which predominates in its mood until the next feast, which is the Feast of Trumpets, which we hold, prophetically, to represent the coming of the Lord. Therefore, Pentecost is a spirit which is meant to prevail in the church following the Passover, the suffering of Christ, the firstfruits, the resurrection of the dead, the life of sanctification, the cleansing of the unleavened bread. It’s therefore going on today.

As we look at the Day of Pentecost, we also distinguish between what are called unique and normative events. Unique events are those aspects of that day that are nonrepeatable in nature, such as the fact that they were all together in one place. Never again can the church be gathered in one place. There was a sound like the mighty rushing wind. That is not repeated in Scripture.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

There were tongues of fire resting and distributing upon them. That is also not repeated in Scripture. Therefore, we would take all three of those instances as unique events.

However, there are some things that are repeatable. Namely, it is the filling of the Spirit and the speaking with other tongues. They were all filled with the Spirit. This being filled with the Spirit, we have indicated, is distinct from that which is mentioned in John 20:22, when on the day following the resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and breathed into them the breath of the resurrection order of life, which He Himself at that moment possessed. That is tantamount or equal to the conversion experience. Every believer who comes to faith in Jesus Christ experiences this same living Lord breathing the eternal Spirit of God into them, which, of course, is that quickening power of God imparting His divine life to us.

This filling of the Spirit in Acts 2:4 is directly related to the promise that Jesus makes in Acts 1:5, "John baptized with water but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Spirit." The experienced promised in Acts 1:5, reiterated in Acts 1:8, is now fulfilled in Acts 2:4. They were all filled.

Just a comment on that word "filled." There are numerous occasions throughout the Book of Acts where a reference is made to Peter and the other apostles, and indeed to individuals in that company of one hundred and twenty. Later, it will be said of them, also, that they are filled with the Spirit. Which is the New Testament's way of saying that there are a number of fillings in the Spirit. This is a crisis filling, a filling that is the baptism in the Spirit. But this does not mean that once you've got it, then you don't ever need to get anything the rest of your life or have subsequent earnest times of your heart being poured out to God for a new energizing of the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

I grew up in an atmosphere where getting the baptism of the Holy Spirit was akin to getting a trophy on a Boy Scout uniform. If you got it and spoke in tongues, then you were qualified to hold church office, including office in the youth group, which we had in those days. You didn't need to worry about anything anymore because, when the visiting evangelists asked how many were saved, you could slip up your hand; how many were baptized in the Holy Spirit, you could slip up your hand and you could coast the rest of your life. That was it.

But being filled with the Spirit... Since the Spirit is referred to as "breath" or "wind," both in the Hebrew and Greek, if you think of wind in a balloon, you know that you cannot keep a balloon indefinitely up with last year's supply of helium air. There must be a fresh supply in order to sustain it. The life of the Spirit is much that way. If a person simply receives a one-time experience and that is it in terms of their inner relationship with God, that filling is going to diminish in their life and they will cease to be filled.

It might also be added, as an additional factor, that as we go along in life, life stretches us. I'm a different person today than I was at twenty-one. There is more of me that needs to be filled at my particular moment of life than there was when I was twenty-one. Therefore, filling is a somewhat relative term that is dependent upon our capacity to receive more of the Spirit. And a tremendous thing about receiving the Spirit and being filled is that, since the Spirit is infinite and we are expandable, He is capable of giving more and we are capable of receiving more. So instead of saying to a person, "Did you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit?" and taking the yes/no as an indication that the person is spiritually alive and in tune, the more accurate biblical question would be, "Are you continually filled with the Spirit?"

Somewhere, there is that initiatory experience and it is here. It's a subsequent experience to conversion, as we see by comparing it to John 20:22. In addition, there was with this baptism of

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

the Holy Spirit, this filling of the Spirit in Acts 2:4, a mention that they all spoke in other tongues that the Spirit caused them to utter (or gave them utterance or, as the NIV puts it, “As the Spirit enabled them.”) We went through that and suggested that here we see a distinction in Acts 2:4 and the spiritual gifts noted in 1 Corinthians 12–14, where Paul says to the 1 Corinthians “Do all speak in tongues... do all prophesy?” It is referring to those gifts as they occur within a congregational setting; where one person gives an utterance in tongues and another gives an interpretation. One gives a word of prophecy or one exercises a gift of healing or whatever. He says—within the context of those gifts—when they’re being used to edify others in the Body, not all have the same gifts.

But obviously, if you apply Paul’s language to the Day of Pentecost, it doesn’t fit. Because if you say, “Do all speak in tongues?” you look at Acts 2:4 and say, “Of course, all did. All spoke with other tongues.” Why were they doing that? Because, in the particular manifestation of tongues on that occasion, tongues were not being used by one person to edify another or to edify a group.

They were being used to praise the Lord and they were being used to edify oneself.

There are really in the New Testament three ways in which speaking with other tongues are used.

First, alongside of and in association with this baptism in the Spirit, this filling, where all spoke with other tongues simultaneously to one another. Secondly, when the whole congregation is gathered together and one person out of the group stands up and gives an utterance in tongues.

And then thirdly, in a person’s own private and personal prayer life, where Paul says, “I pray in tongues more than you all.” He found this to be very helpful in the edification of his spirit.

We also talked about the fact that speaking in tongues is a non-verbal way of getting to God. I won’t cover all that ground again.

“They were all...” This was an experience which all of them shared in.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

I mentioned last week being in Jerusalem among orthodox Jews and hearing them all pray aloud together, suggesting that one of the sounds of a Pentecostal prayer meeting is that it picks up the sounds of a good orthodox Jewish worship service. When we're in a group together, especially American evangelical Christians, we tend to feel that doing things decently and in order is to all be silent together. Sometimes, when the Spirit is sweeping across a people, He is motivating everyone to begin to participate and share. We get worried about whether that will be disorderly or not. We must make a distinction between an act of personal worship that is done alongside other people personally worshipping, where it is agreed upon that in that particular space there are a hundred of us or two hundred of us together and we're all at that moment individually worshipping the Lord. We're just taking time in the service to allow that to happen, as in a synagogue service. Then, most of the time, when we are sitting, listening and we are being alive and sensitive to the ministry of the Word or a spiritual gift, when it would be inappropriate for us all to pray at the same time.

Sometimes when we say, "Let's all praise the Lord," some of us are very shy and reticent and retiring by nature, and we don't know what in the world to do. All these people around us are talking. What am I supposed to do? If you don't know what to do, call out a psalm and take it from there. That's the language of praise.

What were they doing on the Day of Pentecost? Everyone at one time was all praising the Lord together. It seems to me that that is one of the treasured parts of worship that we are potentially losing within a Pentecostal climate and environment. We have become so courteous and so differential and so unwilling to offend anyone or anything that we have also lost that sound of prayer, which is meant to be part of God's people. I'd really like to begin a worship service by simply saying, when we're all together, just say, "Let's take some time to tune our hearts and

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

give praise to God. Let's, everybody, just stand and praise the Lord. It seems to me that one of the things that is so vital in this Pentecostal dimension of worship is that people enter in. There were no theater seats. Every one was a participant. They were all together. Someone had something on their heart to offer God. What should we praise God about? If we don't have any testimony that the Lord has recently done anything for us, sometimes, we come and we're really discouraged and downhearted and things have been going terribly wrong, I try, in those moments, to praise God for the things that are true, regardless of what I feel or am experiencing. That's what we ought to concentrate on. It's always appropriate that the Lord's people take time—lots of time—to praise Him. Praise Him inside the wonderful format of liturgy and structure, and praise Him just as freely as the Spirit gives us words in song or chant.

On the Day of Pentecost, the text of Acts says, "They all began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them to utter." The New International Version somewhat weakens the force of that word "utter" by using the term "enabled them." The speaking of tongues was also something they did. They were not in a state of ecstasy. That is the formal definition of the word "ecstasy"—when we describe a person who is "in ecstasy" as "out of his being." Like an ecstatic trance. In a heathen religion, a person who was in the spirit, so to speak, was a person who was disassociated with their rationality process. When you find the exercise of the charismata within the Christian practice, you will never find it disassociated with the rational process. That's why Paul says that in the case of he who prays in the Spirit, what he says is subject to his will. We never get into a kind of a thing where we're on such an automatic pilot, where we're disassociated from our rationality.

Almost never, in fact, never, can I recall in the New Testament the word "ecstasy" ever used to describe a Christian's spiritual experience. Because the rationality is always alongside of the

## THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

### Acts 2

experiential—what is being expressed. I myself do not trust my emotions to go where there is not a floor of Scripture in rationality underneath me. I think the Lord had a divine order in that.

So they began to speak, an activity in which they were rationally aware of what they were doing.

It wasn't as though suddenly they were sleepwalking and made subconscious or unconscious, which is the way I wanted it to happen to me when I first was baptized in the Holy Spirit. I kept looking for that magical moment when I would say "Jesus" enough times, in which I would go into an unconscious state of being and suddenly I would find myself waking up hours later and somebody saying to me, "You've been filled with the Spirit." I was looking for that kind of experience, yet it's not within the normative biblical pattern. They were speaking; the Spirit was giving them the language or the utterance.

The word "utterance," by the way, is a very strong word. It's repeated again later in verse 14, although it comes across as a different English word. It says, "Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and uttered." That word "utter," wherever it's used in the New Testament, is always associated—in its force—with the idea of strong speech. It is not a tentative kind of speech. It is not a whispering kind of speech. I'm not suggesting that when one always worships the Lord it must be in a bold kind of a way. Very clearly, here, the tongues that are being used by the a hundred and twenty are ones which are coming with great visceral force. In fact, it is such an overwhelming experience that we find that the crowd of God-fearing Jews that had gathered from every nation under heaven. "When they heard this sound," in verse 6. We're tempted, when we read the word "sound," to assume that the sound that is being referred to is the sound in verse 2, the sound like the blowing of violent wind. However, that's probably not an accurate reading of the text. The "sound" in verse 2 is not the same word as the "sound" in

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

verse 6 in the Greek language. The “sound” in verse 2 is the word from which we derive “echo.”

And the “sound” in verse 6 is the word from which we derive “phono” or “phonograph.”

The sound in verse 6, that gathers the crowd, is evidently the sound of these hundred and twenty, not the mighty rushing wind. But what is evidently happening here, behind the scenes, which is not stated by Luke, is that the hundred and twenty were in a place large enough to accommodate them and probably, since a large crowd immediately gathers afterwards, they are in an area somewhere adjacent to the temple or even on the temple grounds. They spill out of that room, all praising God in languages that they have never learned to speak, as the Spirit gives utterance.

They’re going out and they go out of that place of worship and they’re in that public arena.

By the way, if you look at the administration of the gifts of the Spirit in the Book of Acts, I think you will find, without exception, that all of the gifts of the Spirit occur within a public setting, not within the four walls of a church. That suggests to us that where the Spirit is at work, He wants to call attention to the personality of Jesus. By the time we get to 1 Corinthians 12–14, we find that spiritual gifts are occurring within the context of believers being gathered together. But in the first instance of its usage in the Book of Acts, the gifts of healing or miraculous gifts inevitably are being employed within public kinds of settings, to draw the attention of the world to the personality of Jesus Christ.

So these hundred and twenty are spilling out of that room, out into a public arena, where crowds can hear them addressing God in languages. They’re doing this in a rather loud way—as the Spirit gave them to utter.

Not only are they doing it loudly, but they’re doing it rather joyfully. So joyful are they that they are mistaken as being drunken with cheap wine, new wine or drinking early in the morning. And it is early in the morning. It’s nine o’clock in the morning when this whole thing takes place.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

Someone has said that most church services today are so serious and sober-sided that the world would never accuse us of being drunk in our experience with the Lord. What a wonderful thing to be accused of! To be so delighted in the Lord that people mistake that delight for inebriation. That's the kind of new wine that is present on the Day of Pentecost.

Of course, Pentecost, since it was one of the three feasts of the year, which was a pilgrim feast—three of seven were ones in which any male Jewish person, twenty years of age and older, who was living in Palestine, was expected to go to Jerusalem during that feast. Any pilgrim from outside (and there were four million Jews scattered throughout the world at that particular time. Many of them came in on the great high holy days such as Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. They were there from all over the inhabited Mediterranean world—fifteen different language groups.

Their response tells us what speaking in tongues really is. “We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.” Tongues, therefore, is not babble. Tongues is not talking to other people. Tongues is not prophecy. Tongues is, as Paul puts it, “He who speaks in an unknown tongue speaks to God” (see 1 Corinthians 14:2). Linking that phrase with a passage here in Acts 2:11. Speaking in other tongues is a language of prayer or praise to God. If we bring Romans 8 into the situation, about going through times when we don't know how to pray and the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that cannot be articulated, which can be a reference to speaking in other tongues. We have that when a person speaks in other tongues, they are either praying to God, they are giving praise to God, or they are making intercession by the Spirit unto God. All of those are forms of prayer and praise.

The reason why I point this out is because there are some people who say, “In the birthday of the Church, people didn't have time to go out and learn a foreign language and address people. They

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

didn't have time to go to language school. So the Holy Spirit, taking that into account, supernaturally gave the ability to the church to preach the gospel in a language they hadn't learned. It was early missionary service. When they finally had time to go out and learn languages, then that gift ceased from the church." I would simply note that tongues were not in their usage ever in the New Testament for preaching the gospel. They were the language of prayer and worship.

In fact, if you notice very carefully, it is an incredible occasion which has been called the birth date of the Church, where everyone is speaking in tongues in clearly identifiable languages, when they all get done, what's the reaction of people? We see the reaction if we look at the text closely.

#### **I. The first reaction is bewilderment (verse 6).**

What's the reaction of a person who has never been around people who are speaking in tongues?

"What's going on here?" That's understandable. It's right there in the text of Scripture.

Bewildered, and bewildered in this particular case; they're bewildered because, although they understand the language, they know the people speaking it don't have the native ability to speak that language.

#### **II. So bewilderment then passes to utter amazement (verse 7).**

And utter amazement then passes, in verse 12, to "amazed and perplexed." Then the last reaction, in verse 13, is ridicule. Nobody winds up believing in the message of the resurrection because the Spirit has been poured upon these believers in this particular way. It is not an incentive for evangelism. It is an act of praise and worship to God.

#### **III. Evangelism then comes when the crowd has been gathered.**

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

The work of the Holy Spirit generates the crowd. The church didn't have to go on an advertising campaign—"We know a lot of people are going to be in Jerusalem on the high feast day of Pentecost. We're going to take out a full page ad in the *Jerusalem Times* and tell everybody to gather at the Temple at nine o'clock in the morning." There's nothing necessarily wrong with advertising. But when the Holy Spirit is resting upon a body of people, it does not necessarily need to be advertised. Still, the most effective form of advertising is the power of God, as it's transmitted word of mouth, and the word spread all over the temple area and all over Jerusalem within a very short period of time: "There is something unique and special happening in that place. Let's get there and see what's going on." That's exactly what happens here.

It is when the crowd is gathered that Peter stands up and gives the intelligible response. Some wonderful things that I want to note about his sermon.

First, as he addresses that crowd, it says "he stood up." That phrase to me is so powerful. I take it, not only physically, but I take it spiritually. Just a few weeks earlier Peter was in no position to stand up. It was the grace and restoration of the Lord that came into his life that allowed him now to have this position. Anyone who ever stands up to witness, who has ever been down in their life and has gotten the grace of God to stand back up, is in a special place with God. Peter, bless his heart, had struggled and struggled for three years to stand up. But now, when it's time to get up on his feet and declare the glory of God, the Lord has made him whole. The Lord has worked out His purposes in his life.

You may be in times like Peter was, early in his experience, where you denied the Lord or where you failed Him or where you've wondered if the time would ever come when you would be strong. Take courage from Acts 2:14. That day is coming. "Then Peter stood up."

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

And his standing up was an act of solidarity. He didn't do it alone. Jesus was always concerned that his disciples do something alone, without others. That's why He sent them out, two by two, or sent them in groups or had the Twelve gathered together. The eleven stood up with Him. If you want to be heard when you speak, then you've got to raise your voice, and he did this. When he raises his voice, he starts out at the beginning, in the most wonderful, charitable, magnanimous way.

Many of the people that are gathered to hear him that day have been part of the group that originally heard the Lord teach in those same temple grounds. Just seven and a half weeks earlier, Jesus had made His last appearance in that area. Some of them had perhaps participated in the lynch mob that was saying, "Crucify Him!" Yet Peter, when he stands up, begins with no acrimony, no retaliation, no statement ("I'm sure glad to get this chance to speak to you people, because what you did to Jesus of Nazareth was shameful and deplorable. If you don't repent right now God's going to strike you all dead. And I'm here to help carry it out.") There's not an angry man who is present here. There is a man who is speaking by the grace of God and by the magnanimous character of God.

If we learned anything from the Christian gospel, it is the fact that reconciliation and forgiveness is an integral part of our life. The Christian must not simply respond tit for tat. The Christian has an obligation to go so far beyond what could be normal and expected in any human relationship. The Christian is expected to go the ninth, tenth and fiftieth mile in extending forgiveness and reconciliation. The Christian can never resolve their behavior by simply saying, "That person was in the wrong and I was justified in my behavior of whatever rebuke or meanness I gave to them," because the Christian is under the obligation to have the magnanimous grace of the Lord

## THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

### Acts 2

Jesus Christ. When that magnanimous grace comes into our life, it comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter has just been filled with the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit, and he was in no position to be mean. Mean people inevitably cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit, because you cannot have a mean and angry spirit simultaneously along with the Holy Spirit. He is called the “Holy Spirit” for a very good reason. He is the *Holy* Spirit. He is holy because He is God.

Peter gets up with this wonderful grace in his voice. Like a good public speaker, he starts with what his audience is interested in. His audience, at that moment, is not interested in Jesus of Nazareth. His audience is interested in this strange phenomena that is going on all around them. So he explains it. “These are not drunk as you suppose. It is only nine in the morning. We wouldn’t be drinking at that time. This is that which was prophesied by Joel. ‘In the last days,’ God says [Joel 2] ‘I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.’”

“Prophesy,” by the way, does not mean to get up and say something spooky about what’s going to happen. That’s what we often think of “prophecy” as. Someone being a foreteller. A prophet is not a foreteller. A prophet is a forth-teller, declaring the Word of God and the will of God. A good way I think to translate the word “prophecy” is “anointed preaching.” Or anointed proclamation of who and what God is.

“Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). That was spoken originally in a day when, by and large, a great portion of Scripture was not yet reduced to writing. How did one speak authentically on behalf of the Lord? Through the instrumentality of dreams and visions, which God granted to His people.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

We say, therefore, when dreams and visions occur today, that they are occurring, not as an additional revelation beyond Scripture, but they occur in line with and consistent with Scripture.

In fact, in law, one of the big debates that has been in the Supreme Court nomination as to whether Judge Bjork would give opinions that were consistent with case law. That has been built up in American jurisprudence over the last number of decades. Or would he try to throw all case law out and start a new thing? That's a great part of what the debate's been over.

You look at Scripture and prophecy, that bear that relationship as well. Prophecy is not going to throw out Scripture case law, Scripture precedence. Prophecy is going to line up with and agree with Scripture. As a person said in a camp meeting in California in 1919—somebody was praying in a camp meeting and got up with a revelation, they had seen a vision of Jesus as Jesus only. In that vision, they discovered that there was no God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It was just Jesus. He was the Father! He was the Spirit, and He was the Son. So what was called the "Jesus Only Movement" began. "It was not wonderful they had that vision!" They ate too much spaghetti! It was not a valid vision. It did not line up with Scripture case law. It did not build, precept upon precept. It tried to throw out everything the New Testament represents by the character and nature of God. It is, therefore, not a valid vision. Joseph Smith's vision and Joseph Smith's dream and the Mormon angle were not valid. Kingdom Now visions and dreams about this kind of stuff they've been dreaming, to manifest the sons of God and the like are not valid because they don't build on Scripture case law.

But the vision and dream, when it occurs, how do we get anything done in the kingdom of God unless people get on their knees and start asking God to grip them with something?

The great works and movements of God that have been done today have been done largely because people in their youth have gotten on their knees and said, "O God, what do You want to

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

do with my life? Where do You want me to go? What function do You want me to have in life?

Lord, I'm willing to do anything. Impress me with something. Lay something on my heart."

Sometimes, a partially formed vision or idea comes. Sometimes, there's a fully formed kind of purpose, but it's there because there's been this kind of a thing in the heart. God's work doesn't get done mechanically. It can never grow dynamically simply because people say, "There are five rules to do this in the kingdom of God and if I follow all five rules, then everything will come together." It's not that way at all. It must be a matter of heart and spirit. That's why just being a good student is never sufficient in regard to getting on in the work of God. One must be gripped.

I shared before the service with a friend of mine who is looking at God's call on his life and wrestling with a lot of things. I said, "What's in your gut?" It's not what's in your head—and I respect the head, believe me, I do. It's there for a reason, not only biologically, but structurally. It's meant to control everything else going on. We get in trouble when we disassociate the head and put it underneath the feet and put it alongside the heart. It's there to control, to be the governor. But it's, what are you dreaming? What's visceral to you? What are you really absorbing in your life and going for?

I think that's bound up in this idea in the last days. Young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams. I don't think there's a sharp distinction between those two verbs in the Scripture, which is being quoted from Joel. The Hebrew has what is called parallelisms, where a thing is stated and in the next line is restated with a synonym. And to try to make a distinction between dreams and visions to say visions are something that happens to you when you're in a reverie, when you're awake, and dreams happen to you as a visual experience, while you're asleep—is probably being a little bit over-mechanical with the words. They're probably parallel

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

to one another—visions and dreams. Something that you see that is better felt than told, better emoted than simply reasoned out, better coming to us by instinct and intuition rather than logical streamlined thinking processes. Dreams and visions. Young and old are going to have this. The church needs to be empowered to go beyond itself. Dream dreams and have visions that are beyond the ordinary and the natural.

That Peter says, “It’s part of what’s going on here today. When you hear these people speaking other languages, they’re fulfilling Joel. They’re prophesying, they’re dreaming dreams and having visions. On My servants in those days, men and women, I will pour out My Spirit.: Isn’t that wonderful? One of the aspects of being filled with the Spirit is, as we seek more of God, we pour out our heart to God. Hanna, for example, in the Old Testament, I think had a pre-New Testament experience of the baptism in the Spirit. Her prayer is described as her lips moving but she is not speaking intelligible speech, and the old priest, Eli, comes to her and says, “What are you doing?” She says, “I’m pouring out my soul to God!”

When we pour out our souls to God, what is God doing back? Pouring out His Spirit. And if I understand the pouring out of the Spirit is that people get thoroughly wet with what God is doing. They get saturated with what God is doing. A later term that will be used of the Holy Spirit coming, in the Book of Acts, is that He will “fall upon,” just falling on you. It creates a visible kind of sensation. Strong verbs are being used to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Not a titillating sensation, but a powerful, surging, work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being poured out. The Holy Spirit falling upon people.

And they will prophesy. The whole function of the Spirit is to bring God’s truth to people.

Then, as Peter goes on to continue to quote from Joel, he says, “I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:19–21, NIV). Wait a minute! They’re only speaking in tongues, Peter! What’s this business about the moon being turned to blood and the great and glorious day of the Lord, signs in the heavens above and all? What’s going on?

There are three terms thus far in Acts 2.

First term—Day of Pentecost (2:1). It’s meant to be a term that describes the condition of the church until Jesus comes.

Second term—Last days (2:17). Not the generation that will be alive when Jesus comes. That’s how we often use the term, but that’s not the scriptural definition of the term. The last days began on the Day of Pentecost. When everybody’s speaking in tongues, what’s Peter saying?

This is that which Joel prophesied: “in the last days.” If Peter, therefore, uses it in that moment to describe the coming of the last days, then it’s the last days. The last days began on this day, this Day of Pentecost.

Third term—the Day of the Lord. His coming (2:20).

The Day of Pentecost, the last days, the day of the Lord—three epochs of time. The Day of Pentecost and last days run parallel to one another. What Peter is doing here, in quoting Joel, is a little bit deeper than the A.M. of the last days: the pouring out of the Spirit. And the P.M. of the last days: before the coming of the day of the Lord is the break up of the cosmos. Those two elements—A.M. and P.M.—mark the whole totality of what is meant by “the last days.”

Are we in the last days? Sure. We’ve been in the last days since the Day of Pentecost. Are we in the A.M. or the P.M. of the last days? The moon hasn’t yet been turned to blood and the stars have not yet fallen. So I would assume that it is still the A.M. But given nuclear holocaust and

## THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES

### Acts 2

the like, I suppose the P.M. could happen rather quickly, couldn't it? So who knows how close to the P.M. we really are.

And really, when it comes right down to it, does it really matter how late we are? Given the fact that, existentially, this is the last generation—that is, it is *your* last generation. You've only got one go-around at it and you live at the end of time and I live at the end of time because this is all the time that you and I have.

But in this Day of the Lord, everyone who calls upon Him will be saved.

Something I want to point out. Something that is really noteworthy—looking at the making of Peter, the man of God. I have said, in regard to Peter, that he shows us that the two most important qualifications for being a disciple is a willingness to learn and a willingness to obey. If you have that in your life, you're going to be a powerful Christian. The willingness to learn and the willingness to obey.

In regard to the first—the willingness to learn—we see that Peter did not waste those three years with Jesus of Nazareth. He was at work, learning. You say, “How do you know that?” Because, as you watch him in the first two chapters—and we've already seen a clue to his leadership in Acts 1—you see him in action, and you will find that whenever he's faced with, his mind immediately flies to the Old Testament. He is saying, “What parallel is there that I can use as a reference to contextualize or to understand this present event?” So, in Acts 1, where he's faced with the need for the replacement of the leadership that Judas left, he flies to the Old Testament and he quotes Psalms. If you think that's easy to do, try doing that without a concordance. By the way, I'm always going to my concordance. I know “it” is somewhere in Scripture. I take the key word and look it up. Now they've even got Bibles on computer. That's a marvelous thing.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

Peter didn't have all that. What did he have? He didn't have a concordance. And the Bible wasn't even in a bound book. The Bible was in separate scrolls. And since scrolls were so expensive, the average middle-class person wouldn't have one in their own possession (the totality of Scripture). They might have a little scroll with a portion of Scripture, but those across were kept in the Torah case in the synagogue, where they were gotten out to read on the Sabbath day.

So how in the world does Peter have such mind access to the Psalms? When the Day of Pentecost happened, it wasn't something he was prepared for. He was just told to wait in Jerusalem, but the Lord never said, "While you're waiting, here's what you need to expect. You need to expect cloven tongues, and you need to expect a mighty rushing wind and you need to expect everybody's going to speak with other tongues. And by the way, Peter, I suggest in advance you learn Joel 2, verses 20–22. It would be a good idea to have that ready so you can reference that." Not at all.

Peter is caught by surprise by the events of Pentecost. He has to get up and give the sermon. When he gets up, his mind, all the time, has been thinking. He's been talking in other languages, but now it's time to preach the gospel and speak in languages that can illicit a response. And by the way, when people are talking in other tongues, the reaction is mocking. When Peter's done preaching, their reaction is that they're cut to the heart. That's a significant difference. Because when Pentecostal saints gather to worship, the world is not always going to understand and is going to think we're a little weird. We know it builds us up, so we go ahead and do it anyway. But when true preaching is completed, it ought to say something to the authentic need of the human heart. They were cut to the heart.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

What does Peter do in this moment? He stands up and his mind, I think, has been searching like a computer does. His mind has been searching the Scripture. Here he is—without carrying personal copies of the Scripture on his person or in his home and yet he's got it so tucked away. I think Jesus of Nazareth must have had some special seminars on Scripture memorization.

What happens? When you put the Word of the Lord in your heart and the occasion arises, I have found myself, it comes to mind at the most important moments of your life. When you think you've forgotten it, suddenly that Word is there. That, in Peter, is a great work of the Holy Spirit in his life. When he needs it, it's there, and he can quote from it extensively. As we continue to go through his sermon in Acts 2, where he preaches Jesus of Nazareth, he is so at home with the Psalms that he plays the Psalms like a concert pianist can search the ivories and get the tune that is needed. Powerful. He was willing to learn.

What we have on the Day of Pentecost is this most wonderful of phenomenon that we have on the educational and process level, the people of the Lord have been trained, the discipline and skill of their training and his educational methodology shows through, fine and clear. They are not ignoramus up there. They know exactly what they're doing. They're eyewitnesses to the glory and majesty of Jesus Christ and they, along with being eyewitnesses, have schooled themselves in the Master's school of study and they have emerged intact with their lessons. They have not been slothful stewards. There is excellence in their human attributes and qualities.

But that would not have been sufficient. Alongside that human excellence has come something even more important. That is, the overriding work of the Holy Spirit to gather an audience and ultimately bring it, first with an interest of the gospel and then, to bring it under the conviction of the work of the Holy Spirit.

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

The Holy Spirit does not work independently with people so the educational training and the preparation is unnecessary. The human Christian has the responsibility to mature and prepare themselves for duty and service to the Lord, that must be there on one dimension of the personality, because the Holy Spirit doesn't operate within a vacuum. He operates within a human personality.

But on the other hand, educational maturity, the ripening of spiritual disciplines, do not of themselves make for a powerful Christian witness. That can only come through the agency and blessing of God when He poured out, through His Spirit, among us. That is, where the area of hunger is in my life. Because educationally, I think when I have that dimension where I am at need, in my own life is the work of the Holy Spirit, to a level that is far beyond any natural abilities or proclivities that I have or you have. That's where we all are, I think. That's where I want to be open in a new way to the Lord.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, we realize that You are the God of uniqueness. You don't create the same star twice. You don't even create a cell that is like another cell. Or a fingerprint that is like another fingerprint. There's not a single one of us that has the same voice pattern. Our chromosomal structure is different. Although we all have the same number, the intermeshing is such that it has produced all the variations that are present in us and throughout the world. You seem to be in this business of making originals. You don't make signed copies. You just do original stuff. So when we look at the Day of Pentecost, our instant inclination is to say, "Do the very same thing again! Bring the mighty rushing wind again! Bring the cloven tongues of fire again." Yet, Lord, we realize that we're not in Jerusalem. It's not the Jewish feast, Day of Weeks. In this sanctuary tonight, there are not people gathered from all over the world who are God-fearing Jews who would

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

understand languages we would speak. We cannot, because You're the God of such originality, ever take an event and perfectly replicate it. Yet, at the same time, in Your originality, You do maintain a core of basic uniformity. We're created two-legged and two-armed and two-eyed, one-nosed, two-eared. So that throughout the stamp of the uniqueness of Your creation, that also has that clear identity in a skeletal structure or in laws of motion and gravity. You do replicate. We look at this Day of Pentecost and we realize that You, in pouring out Your Spirit on this generation, will most likely do something that is different from that Jerusalem day and You most likely will do something different than You did in Azusa Street and You most likely will do something different than any revival or sweeping of the Spirit that we have seen or heard or read about. Because You are the Lord who does things uniquely and originally. Yet when You work, we also can see Your patterning. Lord, in our own lives, we want to open ourselves up to You to ask You, in our generation and in our lifetime, to visit us in ways and through Your acts of power that cannot be explained within the human context or the human definition. We ask, Holy Spirit of God, that You would sweep across us and fill us deeply, powerfully with Your Spirit. We ask that You would visit Your people with dreams and visions so that we may be galvanized in Your service. Not content with living life, in simply making a living—but to live life to the highest potential and calling You have for us. I pray for that person here this evening that is not only a young person but an older person, who's mid-career and whose heart You are tugging and saying, "You haven't dreamed and you haven't had visions. You're going through life and it's become dull and humdrum. In this hour, I'm reaching into your life and I'm asking you to waken your hunger for Me, because I want to visit you and I want to put avenues of opportunity and service in your life that you haven't seen because you're so concerned about the day-to-day and getting through, and about straight-line living. I want to visit you with My Spirit and put you in

## **THE EVENT OF SPEAKING IN TONGUES**

### **Acts 2**

arenas of service and opportunity that you haven't envisioned. We ask for that, Lord, in our lives.

Come, Holy Spirit upon Your people. Visit us. We ask, through Christ our Lord. Amen.