

Pentecost Change

Acts 2: 1 – 11 and Genesis 11: 1 – 9

I think it's generally true that people are always looking to improve, to change their lives for the better. That's why there are so many commercials for diet and exercise products – lots of people out there trying to change their appearance for the better. I just saw recently how you can now have a product called Dysport that will take away your wrinkles for a while this is a product similar to Botox. People are always looking to improve, to change for the better. Isn't that why people go to school? Isn't that why people go to conferences and seminars? Isn't that why people go to counsellors and psychologists? People want to be changed for the better.

What is it about yourself that you would like to change? If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be? Is it the way you look? Something to do with your health? Something to do with your level of expertise on a certain subject? If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

God is interested in change. In fact the word used in the Bible is transformation. Today is Pentecost Sunday, and as we take a look at what happened on Pentecost many years ago, we see that God changed many people's lives. Pentecost is the birth of the church where God's plans and purposes for His creation are realised and understood.

To understand Pentecost we must look further back in history, further back into the Bible right back to Genesis. Pentecost and Babel. New Testament. Old Testament. Two very different events and yet when we compare them we will see the unfolding of God's plan.

BABEL

The Genesis' account of the Tower of Babel tells us that after Noah's Flood everyone in the world spoke the same language. As the population began to grow people moved to new areas. A group of people moved to the Plain of Shinar. We know it as Babylonia or part of Iraq. There they decided to build a tower that would reach to the heavens. They wanted to make a name for themselves and they also did not want to be scattered to other areas of the earth.

Some scholars think that these people remembered the Great Flood of Noah. Apparently they did not believe that God would keep his word. They did not believe in the covenant of the rainbow. That God promised to not destroy the world again with water. To create a means of escape, they began to build the tower with baked bricks that were sealed together with tar. Perhaps they were trying to build a stationary type of a Noah's Ark. They may have been trying to outwit God and escape judgment for their sins.

Other scholars think the Babel People thought they could build a tower and reach to Heaven and somehow become gods. To become equal with God. How many lost souls do you know who are trying to get to Heaven in some way other than God's way? No one comes to the

Father except through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. On our own man is never good enough, powerful enough, smart enough, creative enough, loving enough, holy enough...to become a god and save himself.

PENTECOST

Before the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Pentecost for the Jews was called the feast of weeks, other names for this festival are 'Day of the First Fruits' or 'Day of reaping'. This feast is a time that celebrates God giving the Law on Mt. Sinai . The Law on tablets of stone. Pentecost for the Christian is a time to celebrate God placing the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers. Pentecost was the beginning of the church age, the first fruits of the Church, the reaping of all that Jesus had sown.

There is the "BC Pentecost," that Jewish people still celebrate today. Today, we enjoy the "AD Pentecost," where God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, writes His law of love in our hearts. The Holy Spirit enables man to keep Jesus' new command to love each other as Jesus loved.

Let's now unpack what happened at Babel and how God, reversed, or changed those events of Babel at Pentecost. (Before that, should we sing "Happy Birthday to the Church?")

1/ BABEL shows Man full of himself. PENTECOST shows Man full of God.

The Babylonians were so proud that the Lord said they thought that they could do anything that they wanted. He destroyed the tower to remind them that He was sovereign. They wanted to become gods.

At Pentecost the 120, Apostles and other disciples, in the Upper Room they wanted to become like Jesus. They were followers of Christ, they had sat under Jesus teaching and they knew Him as Lord. From Pentecost till now, the church has been characterized by love.

Our world is filled with people who are confused about the truth. Many are trying to teach our children that there is no real truth. Jesus said that he was the way, the truth and the life and that man can only come to God on God's terms. Those terms include belief in, faith in Jesus. He promises a peace that the world does not give. The early church and we live in a world that is full of war, unrest, confusion... Yet in the heart of a Christian with the Holy Spirit there is a peace that surpasses all understanding.

As it was in Babylon, the spirit of rebellion, selfishness, greed, and all manner of sin is very strong today. Man wants to do things his way. To take things into his own hands. In the Upper Room the early church obeyed the teaching of Jesus and instruction to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, to be filled with God.

When will this world ever learn that there will be no real peace, and justice and mercy for all, until the world begins to do things God's way? The Spirit filled church has been given the Great Commission to 'Go' and change the world, one person at a time with the Holy Spirit.

Babylonians wanted to further their power. Christians are called to spread the power and love of the Lord.

2/ BABEL brought the destruction of the Tower. PENTECOST brought the foundation of the Church.

The people who lived on the Plain of Shinar had to have known of the story of Noah. They had to have known that there were certain things that God had forbidden. Yet they did their own thing and tried to get away with their sin. As a result, God poured judgment upon their works. He changed their language and scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

On the day of Pentecost, God began to build his church on the Rock, Christ Jesus. He is our Foundation. He is our Rock. The Tower of Babel had been built with hands. Constructed by man. On Pentecost the believers in Jesus became temples of the living God. Temples not built with hands. The heart of the believer is meant to be full of the Spirit of God as the Holy of Holies in the Temple was full of the Spirit of God.

On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, the veil of the Temple was torn apart from the top to the bottom. God reached down and symbolically said, "Through my beloved Son, Jesus, man can come into my presence." Through Jesus, and only through Jesus, man may become holy. Jesus is our sacrifice and our high priest. Do you live filled with the Holy Spirit?

3/ BABEL scattered Man in fear of God's wrath. PENTECOST sent believers to share the Good News.

Can you imagine those who lived in Babylonia telling their children about how it used to be and how God had brought judgment? Telling them of the Flood's destruction and the destruction of the Tower? Most people know about the wrath of God and are afraid to meet Him as Judge. Yet, few know His love. God is love. He wants to have a personal relationship with you.

The language of the Babylonians was being used to build an earthly kingdom. The languages of Pentecost were used to tell the world that Jesus was the Lord, the Messiah. (The languages the Believers spoke were real languages. See verses 4,6,8,11.) Believers spoke in languages that all could understand and explained that the Promised Holy Spirit had been given to all who would believe. They told the crowd of the need for them to believe in Jesus.

After Pentecost the resident believers stayed in Jerusalem, the rest of the faithful were sent back to their home lands, to the uttermost parts of the earth. On the trips home and when they got home, they told everyone in languages that they could understand, of the prophecies, love, miracles, teachings, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They told people that he would one day come again and that they needed to repent, believe, love, and be ready to meet Jesus. They told the people of their need to be baptized by water and Spirit. Have you been filled with Him?

Pentecost can be summed up in one word, and I believe that word is change. That the

Human Heart be changed from being hard towards God to being a heart of flesh. We see the change that took place in the disciples, and the change that took place in those 3000 people. Our world today needs change. There are so many people who do not believe in Jesus Christ. And there are so many Christians who are like those disciples were before Pentecost – confused, weak, timid. We need the Holy Spirit to fill us, and change us, empower us, so that we become courageous and able to fulfil the tasks that Jesus has set before us.

Our problem is, we don't think we need to be changed. "I'm alright the way I am," we say to ourselves. "What do I need to change about myself?" The answer is, a lot. Yes, it's true, we are Christians, but we still have sinful habits that we don't want to get rid of. We still have moments when we are selfish. We still have moments when we completely misunderstand what God is telling us in the Bible. We still have moments when we fail to share our faith because we're too timid. We still need to become more and more the people that God wants us to be.

One of the greatest challenges parents face is discipling their own children, modelling faith and raising strong believers for the next generation.

How does a person change his soul? You can't do it by trying to be a better person. That's like saying that there is something wrong with my car, but I'll try to change that by being a better driver. You need someone to work on your engine, your soul. And that someone is the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Do you see the changes that took place on Pentecost? No longer were the disciples confused. Now they understood the plan of salvation completely. No longer were they timid. Now, they were confident, speaking publicly. Look at Peter – two months earlier he was so afraid that he denied Jesus three times. Now he was speaking to the crowd with confidence and understanding that he had never had before.

Are you like the Babylonians, trying to do it on your own? Are you relying on your own strength or the power of other men to bring about what you need? The Tower of Babel People gathered together to do their own thing. The Church born at Pentecost obeyed Jesus, gathered together, waited for his promise, were united in Christ, prayed... And God gave them His Promised Holy Spirit. Then they went out empowered to share what had happened to them, the good news, and the change from old to new. Have you received the Holy Spirit? Come. Be filled with the Spirit. Allow Him to fill you with His love. Be at peace with God. Know that Jesus is your Saviour.