

Manifestation

Good morning. Today we are in the third sermon of a new series in the book of Acts. And we've got to hit the ground running.

Here in **chapter 2** we have the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to the Disciples 10 days earlier: "...*you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now...*"

As we launch out into this chapter, some would say we are venturing into some choppy theological waters. And I must admit, there is certainly no lack of controversy associated with the subject matter before us.

In all likelihood, your theological boat will get rocked from time to time. Do not be nervous about that.

After all, the disciples were no strangers to navigating their way through choppy waters from time to time. Sometimes, it was the only way to get where they were supposed to be.

All I ask from anyone here or from anyone listening online is that they try to make the attempt to look at this book with fresh eyes. To remain mentally flexible enough to allow the Bible to speak for itself.

Here's a thought: Why not try to put ourselves in Theophilus' shoes? You remember, Theophilus is Luke's friend. He was the one for whom Luke had written this book.

And he was also the one for whom the gospel of Luke was written. So let's do our

best to read it the way Theophilus did. Just absorbing what it says, without cluttering up the information with any distracting theories. Just let it say what it has to say. Deal?

Alright then, based on the material that Theophilus had already read in **Luke 24** and what he just read in **Acts 1**, he would no doubt be expecting some kind of impartation of spiritual power to be imparted to the Apostles. Let's refresh our memory on this point.

Luke 24:49

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem *until you are endued with power from on high.*

Acts 1:4-5

4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;

5 for John truly baptized with water, but *you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*"

So, something big was in the works for the 11 Apostles. Theophilus was expecting that. But as he would soon discover in **chapter 2**, such an expectation would have been far too narrow.

It is probable that the scope of what was about to unfold in this chapter came as a total surprise to everyone who was present that day.

Because the impartation of power that Jesus had promised? It landed on every last person in that upper room.

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

What we are witnessing in **Acts chapter 2** is nothing less than the birth of the Church. The details set forth here provide us with a rough sketch of what Jesus was referring to in **Matthew 16**, when He said these words:

Matthew 16:18b KJV

...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Acts 2 records the birth of the church, and in that record we are given clear indications of what kind of church it would be.

The first clue we have regarding the nature of the church is how Jesus would go about building it. It wasn't going to be a jumbled mish-mash affair. There would be a definite structure to it.

And that would begin with the Apostles. Jesus had given them authority to direct and teach and oversee the life of the church.

But the ministry of the church? That was not to viewed as the exclusive domain of the Apostles or other ordained leadership. All believers would have a stake in the church that Jesus was building.

As Peter would emphasize many years later in his first letter, every Christian would function at a high level of spiritual significance.

1 Peter 2:9

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

"I will build my church." And so the first move in that direction was the big surprise of the day. The Holy Spirit fell upon the entire body of believers.

In the Old Testament you had the occasional person who would be elevated to a position of prominence and authority, and it would be said of them that ***"The Spirit of the Lord was upon him."***

1 Samuel 16:13a

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward.

The same thing happened in Saul's life. And such was the case with Moses, and eventually with the elders that served under him.

But in the church that Jesus was building, the reality of the Holy Spirit being upon individuals would not be an occasional thing. No, in Jesus' church, it would be the

norm. All of God's people would have the Spirit of God within them. And subsequent to that, the Spirit of God would also come to rest upon them, and fill them as described here.

Let's read on.

Acts 2:4-12

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?

8 And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

The second thing we learn—and it is more of a subtle hint at this point, but would become more prominent as time went by—but the church that Jesus was building would not be centered in Israel for long.

Soon, it would become an international affair.

At this point I need to clear up a rather common misconception as far as the issue of speaking in tongues goes.

Some have taught that this phenomenon—speaking in tongues—is when a person has been given the supernatural ability to preach the gospel in a language they have never learned.

In a similar vein, others have taught that this gift was simply being granted the ability to learn a foreign language more easily, so as to work afield as a missionary.

Neither of those interpretations accurately explain what was happening here in Acts chapter 2.

Yes, it is a fact that these followers of Jesus were suddenly speaking in languages they had not learned, and did not understand. And yes, the foreign visitors who were present there understood their own language as it was being spoken.

But regarding the content of the things being said while speaking in tongues? Let's look back to the text, and see what the hearers had to say.

Acts 2:11b

...we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God

Once again, the Apostles and their friends had no idea what it was they were saying. But they were not preaching sermons. They were not evangelizing. What they were doing was praising God.

These Christian believers were not primarily addressing the crowd. They were speaking to God, their audience was God Himself, and the crowd was simply allowed to eavesdrop.

Now this particular manifestation of the Holy Spirit—speaking in other tongues—deserves far more attention than I can devote to it today. As this series develops, we will have occasion to revisit it again, as this gift occurs several times during the course of the book.

But before we move on, I should note the initial response of many who were there, and their take on things as they observed this phenomenon occurring.

Acts 2:13

Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

Right from the outset, tongues got people to talking. And wondering. And snickering. Not much has changed in 2,000 years. But have no fear—we’ll look further into this later on in the series.

I believe it is significant that this event took place where it did. For many hundreds of years, the religion of the Jews had consisted of a predictable, measured form of worship centered on the Temple in Jerusalem.

But this was a new beginning. The church was being born. And this exciting new phase of God’s Kingdom work had begun—for all intents and purposes—in the local Motel 6.

Perhaps it was God’s way of announcing that Ground Zero for the work of His Kingdom

would no longer be the Temple. An entirely new approach was on the horizon.

The church that Jesus was building was not going to be centered in a religious facility. Moving forward, a significant amount of God’s work would be conducted purposefully outside of the walls of established religious facilities and institutions. We need to remember that.

Oh yes, I almost forgot to mention anything regarding the wind.

Acts 2:2

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

The wind symbolizes two things about the Holy Spirit. First of all, it speaks of His power. “***A rushing mighty wind.***” Just think in terms of a spiritual hurricane.

And the wind also portrays the invisible nature of the Holy Spirit. Just like with the wind, we can’t see the wind itself, only its effects. But those effects can be pretty dramatic.

And please notice: this mighty wind—this move of the Holy Spirit—came on them out of nowhere. There was no warning. There was no working up to it. It just happened.

One minute, everything was calm and peaceful. The next, they found themselves in a spiritual hurricane.

There is no such thing as cultivating the presence of God. You know—creating a spiritual atmosphere by external means such

as stained glass or organ music. Or loud music for that matter, along with some fog machines.

The Spirit of God showed up, and the only thing we know that the Apostles and their friends had to do with that was that they prayed.

No manipulation of any sort. The church that Jesus was building would have to be a church of prayer.

And then Peter stands up and addresses the mocking accusation that was being tossed around. That these people in the upper room were just a bunch of drunks.

Acts 2:14-18

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is *only* the third hour of the day.

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants. I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.

Several things are noted by Peter here that would be characteristic of the church Jesus was building. First of all, it would be very inclusive.

“*Sons and daughters*” are mentioned. That is speaking of a youth movement. The young people were not to be left standing in off in the wings while the older folks ran the show. The Holy Spirit was going to be poured out on the youth, specifically.

Now not to worry, the old folks wouldn’t be left out either, just so you know.

Vs. 17

...your young men shall see visions, *your old men* shall dream dreams.

And here is another interesting detail regarding the youth. It was not just the sons being emphasized. The daughters were put on an even footing here. Which was quite a significant departure from the norms of that time.

Let me add something here. As the New Testament was being written over the next few decades, it would be made very clear that God was ordaining male leadership for the church. But in terms of the contributions to be made to the spiritual life of the church, the ladies would have a major impact. Peter echoes the same sentiment in the next verse, without any reference to age.

Acts 2:18

And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy.

Which brings up a question. What exactly did that entail? What would they do when they prophesied?

The basic idea behind the verb “*prophesy*” in the New Testament appears to be very

different from the Old Testament use of the term.

But once again, I can't take time to develop that thought now. But I need to point out that there is one unifying characteristic here regarding the type of church that Jesus was building.

It's a general characteristic that is highlighted throughout this entire passage. By whatever means it would be expressed, the church that Jesus was building would have a distinctively supernatural aspect to it.

Now with this kind of material to consider, it seems obvious to me that as we proceed through this series, I will need to include some topical teaching on ***The Gifts of the Spirit.***

I should say that that many well-respected Bible scholars believe that these supernatural gifts are no longer valid. Their understanding is that the gifts of the Spirit ceased functioning when the last Apostle passed on.

On the other hand, there are many others who believe that such is not the case, but that the gifts remain active until this day. I would fall under the latter category.

When Jesus was describing the nature of His church, He said "***The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.***"

It seems to me that as long as this war with Satan goes on, the supernatural aspects of the church would not lose their usefulness. And wasn't it Paul who said something like this?

"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds..."

But I'm not going to switch our focus this morning and start arguing about which side of that particular debate is right.

For the moment, we are simply in pursuit of a better understanding of the nature of this new thing that Jesus was building. What was the nature of the church?

We are almost done.

Acts 2:19-20

19 I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

Those are words describing end-time events. Which leads me to believe that the church Jesus was building would live in anticipation of His imminent return.

Wayne and Joel were sharing some thoughts with me along these lines yesterday. And it just makes sense that if we are going to adjust our view of things to line up with God's, then it is imperative that we address this issue with clarity. What issue?

The great and awesome day of the Lord.

Jesus is coming back. None of us doubts that. No one knows the hour or the day it will happen, but we are strongly urged by Jesus to stay prepared.

To live our lives in the anticipation of His coming. Get ready, and stay ready. And while we're doing that, how about helping others to get right so they are ready too?

That's the reality we must live in. Are we keeping that at the forefront of our minds? We must not become careless in these matters.

And then Peter ends this part of his sermon here where he's quoting from Joel, and I love his emphasis.

Acts 2:21

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Right there is the overriding message of the church that Jesus is building. It is a message of salvation, a salvation that is open to any and all who will call on the name of the Lord.

And how pray tell does one call on the name of the Lord? Well, it seems to me that the sensible thing to do is start with that word "**Lord**".

When you call Jesus Lord, you acknowledge He has the power to save. He is Lord of all, and He overcame the power of death and the grave.

Hebrews says this about Jesus. "**Through death he destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.**"

When you call on the name of the Lord, you're calling on the one who beat the devil at his own game. You are asking Him for eternal life, which He is happy to bestow upon you.

In addition to that, you must remember that if you call on the name of the Lord, you automatically imply your own willingness to submit to the Lordship of Jesus, and stop playing religious games.

You know, the kind of games Paul spoke of 2 Timothy:

...having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.

If you call on the name of the Lord, you enter into a relationship with Him that exists on His terms. He is in control. The boss. For real, not just mouthing religious jargon.

That's why Paul said that no one can call Jesus Lord, except by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now I could go downtown right now and probably find some guy hanging around who could care less about Jesus. But I bet if I hand him \$20 on the condition that he will just mouth that phrase—"**Jesus is Lord**"—he'd probably do it.

But it wouldn't make any difference at all in his spiritual state. Because it's not a matter of repeating the right words. It's a matter of whether or not a person's heart stands behind those words.

And it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit working in a person's heart that they can be moved to say it and mean it.

Jesus is Lord.

And the Lord Jesus gladly comes into the life of any individual who will call on Him from the heart, asking Him to be their Lord and Savior.

“He who comes to Me I will not turn away.”

Alright, now it's time for some homework. The sermon title was “**Manifestation**”. But Manifestation of what? Of the church being the church.

This week, let's try to manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in our life as a member of the Body of Christ.

Ask the Lord to let His Spirit rest upon you. To empower you as a witness. And then ask specifically for the opportunity to speak to someone else about your faith.

This week proclaim Jesus as Lord, live for Jesus as Lord, and lift your praises to God that you are allowed to have Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

So this week, we will try to consciously be the church that Jesus is building. To seek His kingdom, seek His power, and seek His glory. Let's be the church. As far as it lies with us, let's be the manifestation of His kingdom—a gathering of hearts and lives where Jesus is exalted and followed wherever He leads.