

Day of Pentecost – Epistle

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Acts 2:1-21

Day of Pentecost

Analysis by Paige G. Evers

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet

Joel:

*17 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.*

*18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.*

*19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.*

*20 The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.*

*21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be
saved.'*

DIAGNOSIS: Amazed and Wondering

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Another Year, Another Pentecost*

For generations “devout Jews” (v. 5) had observed the day of Pentecost, the festival of weeks mandated in Leviticus 23:15-21. People knew how to celebrate the day and what to expect. As for the disciples, they had just added Matthias to their group (Acts 1:26) to replace Judas—completing the cadre of apostles. After all the upheaval in Jerusalem over Jesus’ death and resurrection, things were becoming orderly again. Now it was time to observe the ancient festival of Pentecost. Why should this Pentecost be different from any other?

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – Sensory Overload

But, unexpectedly, this Pentecost is different. “A sound like the rush of a violent wind” (v. 2) and “divided tongues, as of fire” (v. 3) sets this Pentecost apart. The devout Jews are drawn to the disciples who were speaking in multiple languages. The crowd sees the tongues of flame with their eyes and hears the words of their native languages with their ears. But they can’t make sense of their senses. So they ask, “How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” (v. 8). The crowd is caught off guard, despite their ritual preparations. They are bewildered by sight and sound, “amazed and astonished” (v. 7). Observing the religious holy day of Pentecost is one thing, but encountering the supernatural is quite another!

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – Divinely Overwhelmed

First the people in the crowd marvel at **how** they each hear Galileans speaking in their languages. But then they wonder **what** the disciples are saying. The buzz in the crowd is, “we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power” (v. 11). In their amazement, the people in the crowd ask each other, “What does this mean?” (v. 12). The biggest skeptics “sneer” and accuse the disciples of public drunkenness (v. 13). Whatever the response, the underlying concern is the same: Who is behind this power? If God works deeds of power, those deeds must have something to do with me. Ultimately, the question for the hearers’ hearts is this: How do I stand before such an Almighty God?

PROGNOSIS: Empowered and Witnessing

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – A Gift, Poured Out

Peter confirms exactly what the crowd fears: These supernatural acts that they witness are the work of Almighty God. God has decided to “pour out my Spirit upon all flesh” (v. 17). But this outpouring of power doesn’t have to be dreaded. Peter explains:

God has raised up Jesus, who was crucified (vv. 22-24). In turn Jesus, “having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, [he] has poured out this that you both see and hear” (v. 33). For the gathered crowd, and for believers today, the day of Pentecost makes real the promise that because “God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (v. 36), and because Jesus has given us the promised Holy Spirit, we know for certain that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (v. 21). Those in the gathered crowd no longer have to wonder how they can stand before God. God’s greatest deed of power-the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ-has cleansed them from sin, made them acceptable before God, and given them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Not Fear but Joy*

The crowds’ initial amazement and bewilderment can now be transformed into trust in God’s promises; now that the Holy Spirit has been unleashed: “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (v. 17). Fearful astonishment at Almighty God turns to joy at living life in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *One Message, Many Languages*

Guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the members of the crowd can go into the world proclaiming in their native language what they have heard. They can tell those who speak their language what Peter told them, that “the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (v. 39). And they can live in ways that continually witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They can devote “themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (v.

42) and serve others in Jesus' name.