

The Day of Pentecost

GOD WILL POUR OUT THE SPIRIT ON ALL FLESH

Acts 2:1-21

The Day of Pentecost

Analysis by Peter Keyel

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: Suspicious

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Bewildered*

Devout Jews are living in Jerusalem. Since they are devout, they presumably keep the Law, go to synagogue every week, keep the Sabbath and otherwise worship God. More so, they are confident that they do it correctly. They've even got so much diversity that even the most diverse modern congregation today must seem bland and homogenous. And yet, something crazy is happening. A small crazy fringe ethnicity, Galileans, are speaking in tongues. Each in their own language hears God's deeds of power. Even though God's deeds of power are clear to the listener, still the bewildering fact is that a Galilean can say this clearly.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *What does this mean?*

The response to hearing God's deeds of power is not "Alleluia" or "Praise the Lord." It is suspicion. There must be something going on here. The devout Jews, much as Luther will later on, critically examine the world around them with the question,

“What does this mean?” The best their devout senses can make of this is that the Galileans must be drunk. In many ways, it’s always preferable to assume a minority group is out of their senses, rather than speaking prophetically. We don’t need to change the status quo. If the Galileans are just drunk, the devout Jews can safely get on with their devout lives.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Cut off from God’s Spirit*

Here, where Jews try to dismiss the Galileans, they are instead dismissing God! God’s power is present and clear for the Jews to see—nothing is being lost in the translation. The devout Jews, for their hardness of heart, reject what God is doing because it is not on their terms. Hence, their confusion and their question, “What does it mean?” The problem is that if one has to ask what God’s deeds of power mean, one is already cut off from God. The devout Jews don’t understand what God’s works of power mean, even when they are told clearly. In passing the Galileans by, the Jews are just going about their lives until the darkness of death claims them. They cannot understand, and are given up by God.

PROGNOSIS: Faithful

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *God’s Spirit poured out*

The story doesn’t end here. Peter, also filled with the Holy Spirit, reveals what God is doing, here in the Holy Spirit. This is intimately tied to God’s previous action in Jesus. Jesus died so that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” God vindicated Jesus in the resurrection. God has not given up on the devout Jews, and Peter’s coming testimony (v. 22f) is expressly that Gospel truth. God’s Spirit, given up on Golgotha, is poured out now for all.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Prophecy,*

visions and dreams

The next stage in God's plan is the action of this Spirit's pouring out. This is faith being kindled in the hearts of those smitten with God's Spirit. The Galileans' response is "Praise the Lord." Can the devout Jews ignore God's Spirit, or keep it safely leashed with those careful laws and expositions of "What does this mean?" Peter tells them no—you will prophesy, you will have visions, you will dream dreams. The Spirit is poured out on everyone, regardless of tribe, nation, race, creed, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc. The Spirit will work in her mysterious ways in all of them, just as these Galileans were previously chosen. There is no longer any question of what this means!

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : Portents

Peter interestingly does not tell them what comes next. There isn't a new set of laws to live by. Instead, he tells of the portents on the earth as well as one summary of what has happened that: "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." In some ways, this is not all that necessary. Without the bewildering confusion borne out of suspicion and rebellion, the way forward is clear to each. "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs" and we will all go out and show and tell of God's deeds of power in our own languages. All this is but a portent of the "coming of the Lord's great and glorious day."