

## Acts 2:1-13 Celebrating the harvest

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Please turn to Acts chapter 2 verse 1.

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There are a number of well known verses and passages in the bible and for many believers, particularly those who have a Pentecostal or charismatic background the first few verses of Acts chapter 2 are some of our favourites.

### Acts 2:1-4

- 1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.
- 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
- 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now let's step back a little from these famous verses and imagine for a moment what is must have been like for these disciples.

Remember that we are looking back and WE know the whole story, they didn't, they were only experiencing the present with a hazy view of what the future was going to hold for them.

It was only 7 weeks ago or just under 2 months since they celebrated the Passover with Jesus in the upper room a few days before he was crucified. This is not a long time. It's about how long we have until Christmas 2009.

And now the promise to them of being filled with the Holy Spirit was taking place right before their eyes.

From the story we know that they were all together in one place, it was a house and they were sitting down. It could have been the upper room - once again we don't know for sure. One thing we do know is that they would have been able to have been seen and heard quite easily from the streets as a large crowd had gathered by the house.

It must have taken the disciples by surprise as it was sudden, it was audible and it was visible.

There was a sound that was like a mighty rushing wind that filled the whole house where they were sitting and there was a sight that appeared like tongue shaped flames that came to rest on each of them.

This was a direct fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophecy concerning Jesus baptising them with the Holy Spirit.

### **Luke 3:16**

John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

And then something happened in them. They began to speak in other tongues or tongues that were not their own, different languages as the spirit gave them utterance.

Let's read on and see what happened next.

### **Acts 2:5-13**

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

6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

9 Parthians and Medes and 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,

11 both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

This was a providence of God in that he timed this event to occur exactly on the day of Pentecost when all the devout Jews were gathering from every nation to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feast of weeks or what the Greeks called Pentecost.

There were Jews and proselytes (people who had been converted to Judaism) present from every nation.

Let's take a look at the overhead.

It's like God is supercharging the scene in preparation for the birth of the church. What an incredible time to be alive.

And what did they see and hear?

They were astonished as they heard and saw these Galileans disciples who were a mixed race of people and were despised by the more pure bread Jews from Judea, but here they were witnessing them involved in an astonishing miracle, one that still occurs today in various parts of the world.

Not only did they hear them speaking in their own native languages and dialects what they heard is the mighty works of God being proclaimed.

It caused a number of reactions in the multitude some were amazed, some were perplexed, and astonished while others simply mocked and scoffed. One thing was sure they were not ignored.

I want to finish off this morning by looking at the two aspects of this scene and there are many.

The first is the celebration of Pentecost and the description that the mockers gave the disciples of being filled with new wine.

The celebration of Pentecost is the Jewish festival of weeks or first fruits. It is one of three pilgrim festivals that the Jews would gather in Jerusalem to celebrate up until the temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD

As I said earlier it was celebrated 7 weeks after Passover or 50 days which is where the Greek word Pentecost comes from.

It was a festival that celebrated the harvest as Chuck Smith describes.

This is the time when they would gather the winter wheat, the winter grains that had been sown, and the early part of June; they're ready for harvest. The Feast of Pentecost was marked by them taking a portion of their field and harvesting it. Tying the wheat and the sheaves, bringing them in and offering them before the Lord as a wave offering, as the priest would take the sheaves and wave them before the Lord and offer them before the Lord as the first fruits unto God. *"God, to You belong the first fruit. There's a harvest that is coming in, but this, Lord, is the first fruit. It belongs to You."* And they would give to God the first fruits of the increase of their land at the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Ingathering.

*Source: Through the Bible. Chuck Smith*

I believe that there is something quite significant about the way God orchestrated this scene that not only were there Jews from all over the world present, but that the festival itself celebrated the harvest and the first fruits of that harvest.

And on this Pentecost day God was going to add three thousand people to this band of disciples - the first fruits of a harvest that Jesus had promised them.

I mention this as a couple of weeks ago when Tom and Una were with us, Tom mentioned that a guy by the name of Tony Fitzgerald, an Aussie guy who not many have heard of but has had a long established ministry believes that 2010 will be a harvest year for the church.

As soon as Tom mentioned this, I had a witness in my spirit that felt that this was a word from God. So, for us as a church I believe we need to be expectant that 2010 will be a year of harvest and we need to be preparing ourselves for continued growth. Who knows how many God will add to the church next year?

We need to be ready and finally the way I believe we will be ready and not miss it is by being continually filled with new wine of spirit filled living as the scoffers accused the disciples of being drunk on.

Jesus said that:

**Mark 2:22**

And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins-and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

The new wine that Jesus is speaking about here is the good news or the Gospel of God's free grace which declares us right in his sight so that we no longer have to try hard or be better. This is what the Jews prided themselves on and what Jesus said was incompatible with the old wineskin of a religion based on works.

You cannot combine them together as both will be ruined. You need the new wine to be held in flexible wine skins that can stretch and take shape as God would lead us by his spirit.

The good news is good not because it comes through right behaviour but rather it comes through right belief.

This gospel is unpredictable, just like new wine; it transforms people's lives from various different backgrounds and can turn people who were at once so anti-Christ and turn them around to be prepared to not only live for him but also to die for him as it did in the life of Paul as we will see later on in Acts.

The gospel is the power of God for salvation for ALL who believe.

This gospel not only saves those who don't know God, it also is the very thing that continues to save us as believers and keeps us fresh, alive and new.

If it is continually new to us it will be continually new to others we come in contact with. Let's not live in the glories of the past or think we have somehow outgrown the gospel.

If the book of Acts tells us one thing, it is about God receiving all glory through the preaching, teaching and witness of changed lives that result from the good news that is Jesus Christ.

Let's not lose our focus in the years that lie ahead, let's not rely on old methods or old revelation and camp around these things - but rather let's ensure we always remain fresh and new by keeping our focus securely on Jesus, the one who not only began our faith but the one who is also in the process of perfecting our faith.