

Signs of Life: Witness

Acts 2:1-21

2/21/2026

Scripture

[Act 2:1-21 NKJV] 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. 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?" 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." 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. 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. 21 And it shall come to pass [That] whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

Intro:

Illustration

breath on a candle or coals

In Acts 1, the disciples are in a posture of obedient waiting. They are praying. They are united. They are expectant. But they are not yet witnesses in the full sense Jesus described. Not in the way Acts will define witness. They have the message, but they do not yet have the empowerment to carry it with boldness into the world.

Acts 1 ends with anticipation. Acts 2 begins with activation.

Between the command and the commission stands a crucial reality: God does not send His people into the world powered by human resolve alone. Yes, our strategies, resolve, and dedication are things God uses, but unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it!

Jesus never said, “Go be my witnesses” in your own strength. He said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses.”

In other words, witness starts with our obedience, but it becomes eternally impactful when fueled by divine power.

And that brings us to Acts 2. And it's quite a scene... unlike anything the church had experienced since!

Main Point

Point 1

The Coming: God sends power

Scripture

[Act 2:1-4NKJV] 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.

Context

Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pent kost*, meaning “fiftieth” and took place fifty days after Passover. In the Old Testament, this feast is called:

The Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:9–10) The Day of Firstfruits (Numbers 28:26)

By the time of the first century, Pentecost had become one of the three major pilgrimage feasts when Jews from across the Roman world would travel to Jerusalem. That explains the international crowd Luke describes in Acts 2. God chose a day when the city was full of nations, languages, and accents; Jews from all over the known world. The timing is missionary by design.

So Pentecost matters historically because Jerusalem is crowded. But it matters theologically because Pentecost is loaded with meaning.

The prophetic significance:

Jewish tradition had long associated Pentecost with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. While the Old Testament does not explicitly date Sinai to Pentecost, by the time of the Second Temple period this connection was widely held in Jewish teaching and liturgy. Many scholars note that the chronology of Exodus places Sinai roughly fifty days after Passover, making Pentecost a fitting memorial of the covenant moment when God formed Israel as a nation.

When we look at the parallels and the contrasts, it's a powerful picture.

At Sinai:

God comes down in fire, sound, and visible manifestation (Exodus 19). The Law is given externally, written on tablets of stone. The people stand at a distance in fear. The covenant is inaugurated, and Israel becomes God's covenant people.

At Pentecost in Acts 2:

God comes down in fire and sound again. The Spirit is given internally, written on human hearts. God no longer dwells on a mountain but in His people. A new covenant people is formed, drawn from every nation.

This is not coincidence. Luke is showing that God is not discarding His earlier work but fulfilling it.

I could summarize it this way:

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

Sinai gave the laws but not the power. Pentecost brought the power and wrote God's law in a new heart.

Paul will later say, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). The Law revealed sin and God's righteous standard. The Spirit empowers obedience and witness.

The Harvest

Pentecost was also the celebration and consecration of the firstfruits of the harvest being dedicated to God. Farmers brought the first portion of the harvest to God as an offering, acknowledging that the whole harvest belonged to Him.

Now notice what happens in Acts 2:

The Spirit falls. The gospel is preached. Three thousand souls are saved (Acts 2:41).

Pentecost becomes the firstfruits of the gospel harvest. Jesus had already told them, "Lift up your eyes, for the fields are white for harvest." Pentecost is the first wave of that harvest breaking through the soil. The church is born in a season that celebrates firstfruits because the church itself is the beginning of God's global ingathering.

Application

This context is so important because it reveals a pattern we desperately need today. When the church operates in the Spirit's leading and empowerment, it goes from being a legalistic, rules-based religion of Sinia to being a dynamic, life-filled, holy body that is walking in supernatural strength and witness. When the church is filled with the Spirit, the harvest becomes evident. Lives are being changed, and hearts are being convicted. The Spirit's power brings forth firstfruits into God's kingdom.

And thus, the witness begins with a supernatural act of linguistics! I don't know what the tongues of fire looked like, but the imagery is powerful. The human tongue wasn't enough. It had to be set aflame by the Spirit's breath. Oh, how we need His fire, power, and inspiration to rest upon us today!

NOTICE: They spoke "as the Spirit gave them utterance." They weren't trying to manufacture an experience, an outpouring, or a language. They weren't getting everyone hyped up on emotional over-stimulation. They were simply submitted to the Spirit and were willing to receive the promise. May the mighty rushing wind of God's empowering Spirit rush through Grace and shake up Saint Joe with power it's not seen!

Main Point

Point 2

The Crowd: The world takes notice

Scripture

Acts 2:5-14 (NKJV) [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?" [13] Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." [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."

The people gathered in Jerusalem are described as devout... in other words, they were religiously committed people, but religion doesn't equal life.

I love the language used to describe them when they saw the Spirit's power at work through the church: some were amazed and marveled. They had questions about how this could be possible. Others mocked and tried to explain away this supernatural wonder by attributing drunkenness to the crowd. BTW, if this is a scripture someone tries to use to justify what's commonly referred to as "being drunk in the Spirit," acting like a wacko and stumbling around in some spiritual stupor, you need to realize that's not what was going on. Peter rectifies that by mocking them back, "Oh, drunk, huh? At 9:00 am?"

No, the mockers said that because it's the same thing people must do today. If people don't want the conviction of the spirit, they have to find a way to mock the work God does through the church. It's easier to mock than it is to surrender. When people don't want to wrestle with what God might be doing, they often default to cynicism. Dismissing the spiritual as emotional, psychological, or irrational is a way of avoiding accountability to it.

Again, this passage is not a passage trying to define what the gift of tongues looks like in a gathering of believers. This passage demonstrates the powerful, supernatural witness associated with the Holy Spirit. And when we look more deeply into biblical history, we start to see a grander picture emerging.

The Reversal of Babel

In Genesis chapter 11, we witness the prideful ambition of humanity as they unite to build the Tower of Babel, seeking to reach the heavens by their own strength and, in effect, to usurp the place of God. This act of collective rebellion was not merely an architectural project, but a theological declaration of independence from the Creator—an echo of the original sin in Eden, where humanity sought autonomy from God (Genesis 3:5).

The Lord observes this prideful resolve and, in an act of righteous judgment mingled with mercy, confuses their language. By scattering them, He restrains their capacity for unified evil, reminding them, and us, that true unity apart from God becomes a platform for idolatry and self-exaltation (Genesis 11:6-9).

This divine intervention fractured humanity, introducing linguistic and cultural barriers that persist to this day. Yet, the story of Scripture is not only one of judgment, but of redemption. God's ultimate purpose is not perpetual division, but reconciliation—first between God and humanity, and then among peoples. As the Apostle Paul writes,

Scripture

Ephesians 2:14 (NKJV) [14] For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

At Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, God reverses Babel's curse, not by erasing diversity or changing physical language, but by redeeming it. The Holy Spirit descends, and the apostles proclaim the gospel in many tongues, sending the message that the good news of Jesus Christ transcends every language and nation. This is not simply a return to human unity, but the creation of a new humanity in Christ. This will now be a people united not in prideful ambition against God, but in humble worship of God .

Quote

— Augustine

Augustine once rightly wrote, "Many tongues are a sign of division, but the charity of the members of Christ, gathered from different languages, makes one body".

At Pentecost, God demonstrated that true unity is found only in submission to His lordship and in the redemptive work of Christ. Through the gospel, the scattered peoples are being gathered into one family, anticipating the day when all nations, tribes, and tongues will worship before the throne (Revelation 7:9-10). The story moves from Babel's confusion to Pentecost's harmony—a testimony to the sovereign grace of God who alone restores what human sin has shattered.

Application

A church in the Spirit's power will get the world's attention. Some will surrender, some will mock, but either way, something powerful is taking place that the world can't ignore. Sadly, the church's witness is often blurred by compromise, self-righteousness, or cultural mimicry. When the church looks exactly like the world, the world has nothing to wonder about.

Main Point

Point 3

The Context: The Word gives meaning

In Acts 2, an experience drove people to ask questions, but when Peter stood up, Scripture gave the answers. This was the first mass evangelistic event and presentation of the gospel, and it used the OT scriptures.

Scripture

Acts 2:15-21 (NKJV) [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. [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. [21] And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Peter brings prophetic context to the outpouring of the Spirit by quoting from the book of the prophet Joel.

It's important to note that he specifically says, "This is what was spoken," not, "this is the fulfillment." It emphasizes that it was an ongoing fulfillment; something that would continue from that point forward. Joel prophesied approximately 800 years before the day of Pentecost happened, speaking of the last days. Sometimes God's timeframe looks like forever to us from our finite standpoint, but to God, time is not a factor. The "Last Days" began on the day of Pentecost, reflected in the outpouring of the Spirit for the Kingdom age, but it's been the last days for 2000 years, and we are in the last days currently. I believe the promises that God's word prophesied 2800 years ago still hold for the present moment. His Spirit is still being poured out. And it's not limited to certain Christians of certain ages or sexes: Sons and daughters, old and young, servants and masters—all will partake of the promised power.

The threefold sign of the last days

Joel defines three identifying elements of the last days:

Signs of the Spirit on His people - people will experience spiritual gifts of prophecy, dreams, and visions as the Holy Spirit empowers them. Prophecy can be the foretelling of events revealed by God, or, as in Acts 2, a “forth-telling” of the mighty works of God that is spiritually empowered. Not every dream is a sign from God, but God’s Spirit clearly communicates in spiritual dreams (unconscious) and visions (conscious). Signs in the Heavens and Earth - I love that Peter doesn’t leave out parts of God’s Word simply because it wasn’t physically happening at the moment. Here, Joel describes what Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos also described as things taking place prior to the Day of the Lord, or His ultimate wrath, upon all those who rejected Him. These are the signs that John saw in His vision of Revelation as the 6th seal was broken (Revelation 6:12-14). At some point in the future, stars will fall from heaven to earth. Jesus describes it in Luke 21 as “The powers of the heavens being broken.” Signs of Salvation - and this is the ultimate emphasis of Peter. All these things take place ultimately to bring the hope of salvation to mankind. And notice the scope of the invitation and the method: WHOEVER - salvation is open to all who come to understand their need for forgiveness and salvation. Calls on the name of the LORD - the road of salvation is not self-effort, religious activity, or moral performance. It all begins with a desperate, helpless cry to the only one with the power to save, Jesus.

Conclusion

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

When the Spirit comes, the church finds its voice, the world takes notice, and the Word brings clarity. A living church is a witnessing church. Not because of its physical strength, but because of its spiritual life.