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PENTECOST: GOD'S WARNING TO THE JEWS AND HIS SIGNAL
TO THE GENTILES

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS
NUMBER 6
ACTS 2:5-11

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Sub-titles

Why The Jews Fell Under God's Discipline
Pentecost: The Fulfillment of Prophecy
The Failure Of The Jews and The Opportunity of The Gentiles
How God Used The Gift Of Tongues from 32 A. D. to 70 A. D.

ACTS 2:5-11 To understand the background of this passage, we must remember the discipline which God delivered on Israel because of their unbelief and their rejection of Christ's plan of redemption.

721 B. C. God delivered discipline when Assyria came in and took many of them captive.

586 B. C. when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem and took many Jews captive to Babylon for a period of 70 years.

68 B. C. when the Jews fell under discipline from the Romans and the final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

A study of the history of the Jews shows how God warned them again and again, but they would not hear. God had to discipline them 400 years in Egyptian bondage as he tried to build them into a great nation.

Now at Pentecost, 32 A. D. God sent the final warning that their doom was coming. It came in 70 A. D. and the Jews have been scattered all over the earth. They will be scattered until Christ calls them back and before the final end millions of them will be saved.

ISAIAH 28:11 "For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to his people." Here Isaiah gives a prophetic line which describes what will happen to Israel. "For with stammering lips" refers to Gentile languages. You see the Jews had a musical language that flowed beautifully, but the Gentile languages sounded to them like stammering lips. So, this prophesy of Isaiah is a warning of the coming doom. The Jews were the custodians of the Gospel and had been given the responsibility of giving the Gospel to the whole world. They failed God. Isaiah prophesied that God would shift gears, would turn from the sweet flowing Jewish language, and would evangelize the Jews and the whole world in the stammering language of the Gentiles. This is what Isaiah prophesied and Pentecost is the warning that the time has come when this is going to happen.

1 COR. 14:21 "In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord." Here is the great "Tongues" passage and this passage is quoting Isaiah 28:11. It reminds us that in a very limited time (In fact, it was to last from 32 A. D. to 70 A. D.) tongues were to be used to evangelize. Tongues had to do with evangelism, and worship services are to teach believers doctrine so they can go out into the world and evangelize. A worship service is primarily to enlighten believers, then they go out and win others. In this Corinthian Church, which was the worst church on record, the gift of tongues was being abused. Tongues were being posed as a great means of spirituality, which they were not. Tongues was limited to a period, as stated above.

Therefore the speaking in all the various languages on the day of Pentecost was a solemn warning of the coming discipline God would bring on the Jews.

1 COR. 14:22 "Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe." Tongues had nothing to do with the believer. Tongues were used by the believer as a sign to the unbelieving Jews.

RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS We have already studied how nations have risen and have fallen because they believed or rejected Bible doctrine.

The Assyrian nation rose then fell in 612 B. C.

The Chaldean nation next rose, then fell away

The Persians then became a world power, but soon faded

Then came the Macedonians - then the Romans.

Even though the Romans were not Christians, there were two times in the life of the Roman Empire when Bible Doctrine gave Rome a golden age. The golden age came under Augustus Caesar - and in this time Christ was born, "in the fullness of time". Every system of apostasy had been tried by the Romans and found wanting. Then a bit later another golden age came to the Roman Empire during the Antonine Caesars. The Canon of Scripture had been completed in 97 A. D. and from that point for 100 years there was comparative peace on earth, largely as a result of Bible Doctrine. Bible Doctrine makes the difference in a national entity. The Jews experienced this in their golden age. Peace only comes from knowing Bible Doctrine and practicing it. Living Bible Doctrine will bring peace. This is contrary to the liberalism of our day.

Now in 70 A. D. the Jews would go into slavery, Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the 96,000 Jews left would be scattered to the four winds of the earth. But before they go into this slavery they will have a warning - It is prophesied in Isaiah 28:11 and re-emphasized at Pentecost. A group with stammering speech (Gentile languages) will go to the Jews and witness to them. It was a sign with a purpose. The Jews were under a curse, and the only way to remove that curse was for a Jew to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour. He then becomes unified with Christ. If he was a Jew but is now converted, he ceases to be a Jew and becomes a member of the body of Christ. If he was a Gentile and accepts Christ, he is no longer a Gentile but a member of the body of Christ. When a Jew accepts Christ, it is a cursing turned to blessing.

NO UNKNOWN TONGUE It might clear up something for all of us to be reminded that there is no such thing as "unknown tongues" in the Bible. Where that word "unknown" appears in your Bible, it is in italics and it means it does not appear in the original language of the Bible. In the Bible the word "tongue" is always a sign, a miracle, a definite language.

Here at Pentecost we will see the first fulfillment of this prophesy. Tongues here at Pentecost is the speaking of the gospel in some foreign language under miraculous conditions. (Our missionaries take months and years to learn to speak some new language. At Pentecost they spoke many foreign languages without any study or preparation. It was an amazing miracle.)

The people who speak in tongues here in Acts are Galileans. They speak only Aramaic. Aramaic is a combination of Chaldean and Hebrew, and we call it a Semitic language.

ACTS 2:5 "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." "Dwelling at Jerusalem" carries the meaning of temporary dwelling. The word "devout men" refers to self-righteous, religious people.

These Jews have come from all over the world to Jerusalem, out of every nation. You might ask the question, how had those Jews gotten scattered all over the world? You will recall when Alexander The Great went on his world conquest, he came to the gates of Jerusalem and he was met by the High Priest, who showed him from the Book of Daniel where the prophetic message of Daniel referred to him and his coming conquests..

This so impressed Alexander The Great that he became very fond of the Jews and he chose Jewish leaders to man his outposts all over the world. In this way little Jewish groups sprung up all over the world. They had come from these far flung outposts to Jerusalem for the Passover. This is why the Scripture says they were in Jerusalem "out of every nation under heaven".

ACTS 2:6 "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." "Noised abroad" more correctly translated says, "when they heard this amazing sound". The Holy Spirit came suddenly and with great noise. The noise must have been something like a sonic boom. It is entirely possible that this is exactly what happened and all the city was startled and came out into the streets and flocked into this central place to see what had happened.

"Every Man heard them speak in his own language." Remember, the ones doing the speaking were Galileans, and they could speak only one language, which was Aramaic. They no longer spoke pure Hebrew. Only the Priests could speak Hebrew. The word "heard" is the imperfect tense and it means they kept on hearing them speak, and the language says that they kept on listening just as long as they spoke.

ILLUSTRATION Suppose you were an Englishman and had made a trip to Africa. You found yourself in the midst of a "Swahili Tribe" and all were speaking Swahili. Then suppose that suddenly one of those natives began to speak in beautiful "English accent"? Well, you know what you would do. You would immediately gravitate in his direction to hear everything he wanted to say.

This is exactly what happened that morning so long ago at Pentecost when all these Jews from every nation under heaven there in Jerusalem heard these followers of Christ witness to them in their own languages.

ACTS 2:7 "And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?" They were astonished at the language and astonished at the content of the speech. The word "amazed" is from "ex-histimi" and means to stand outside of yourself, or as we say, to "jump out of your skin". They couldn't understand what was happening for they knew these doing the speaking were Galileans and yet they were speaking in the languages they understood.

LOOK AT THE NATIONS REPRESENTED

1. Parthians. They occupied that mountain country northeast of Persia or Iran and southeast of the Caspian Sea. This was a nation of great and strong warriors. In fact, they were never really conquered. Herod The Great was a genius, but he was defeated by the Parthians. They had a great deal to do with history. Alexander The Great left a band of Jews there to direct that part of his empire. These Parthians were there at Pentecost and heard the Gospel in the Parthian language.
2. Medes. These very interesting people teamed up with the Chaldeans to defeat Assyria in 612 B. C. You recall the Medes and Cythians took Nineveh, the Cythians took all the beautiful women and the Medes took the money and treasures. They returned to their high plateau and built quite an empire with that wealth. These Indo-European people were famous horsemen. They heard the gospel preached that morning in the Median language.
3. Elamites. These people were East of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley and lived in all the country East of Babylon. This is one of the most isolated regions of the earth. They heard the Gospel in the Elamite language that day.
4. Mesopotamia. This is that country in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Assyria and Babylon were in this area. So the Jews from this area heard the gospel in their language that day.

5. Judea This referred to the area just around Jerusalem, so these people heard in the language they had been speaking all the time, but I am sure they heard Aramaic more correctly spoken that day of Pentecost than ever before in their lives.
6. Cappadocia. This takes us all the way up to Armenia. This is the center of the Hittite Empire. This is where iron was discovered and they made the iron wheels for the chariots of that part of the world. These great merchantmen and traders heard the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost spoken in the Cappadocian language.
7. Pontus. This is the area which is now Southern Russia up there on the Black Sea. They too heard the Gospel spoken in the Pontian language.
8. Asia. This is the Roman Province of Asia settled by the Gauls. This is the area we call Turkey today.
9. Phrygia. These people were part Greek and part Asiatic people. They had a very strange and difficult language, but at Pentecost they heard the Gospel in their own mother tongue.
10. Pamphylia. This is that difficult area in Asia Minor where John Mark got cold feet and turned back. This is the home of the pirates.
11. Egypt. This is an area of the world well known to us and had been infiltrated with Jews over many centuries. They were at Pentecost and heard the Gospel in the Egyptian language.
12. Libya. This is an area in North Africa, the land between Egypt and ancient Carthage. They too heard the Gospel in their language that day.
13. Cyrene. This was a Greek city in Libya, but they spoke a different language than the people of Libya.
14. Those Dwelling Among The Romans. These are the people of Italy, France and Spain. In other words, Jews from the vast Roman Empire heard the Gospel in Italian that day.
15. Strangers of Rome. This meant religious Jews from all the whole Roman Empire were there at Pentecost. They came for the Passover, they stayed to be born again when they heard the Gospel in their own language. Isaiah had predicted 700 years ago what would happen, and now the red light had been turned on - believe this, the Gospel really got out to the whole world in a hurry.
16. Crete. In Crete they spoke the hardest Greek of all the world. In fact, no scholars have ever mastered this language. But even though it was difficult, these people from Crete heard the Gospel that day.
17. Arabians. These people never had been conquered. They live all down that area by the Persian Gulf. The Arabs were great traders and lived as nomads. But at Pentecost they heard the Gospel.

INDEED AMAZING They all heard them speak in "their own language" the wonderful works of God. In other words, they heard John 3:16. They heard "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved".

The wonderful thing is that several thousand of them accepted Christ and in a period of a few weeks the Gospel was scattered to the whole world. The language says, "All were amazed and some were in doubt".

What happened was that some never did get with their language group and they couldn't understand what was going on. As we will see in the next study, they thought these people were drunk.

But Simon Peter stood up and spoke in Aramaic and explained to them what was going on. Our next study will explain to us one of the most misunderstood passages in all the Word of God.