

Pentecost
May 23, 2010

Genesis 11:1-9
183-184-176/188-185

Thank God for Pentecost!

- I. See the mess sin makes.
- II. See the change the Holy Spirit works.

Dear Christian friends,

It's pretty easy to see the **connection** between this reading and Pentecost. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled the apostles to fluently speak foreign languages – languages they had never learned or studied. NOTICE that they didn't speak some **gibberish** but real foreign languages that real people were able to understand. HERE at the **tower of Babel** we learn the origin of the languages of the world. They are God's judgment on man's **sinful pride**.

As we now look more closely at these verses we do so with this thought: THANK GOD FOR PENTECOST! Looking at the **tower of Babel** 1)see the mess that sin makes. Looking at **Pentecost** 2)see the change that the Holy Spirit works.

I. See the mess that sin makes.

These verses take us to the **days** and **years** after the flood. As Noah and his family left the ark God specifically told them, ***“Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.”*** HOW LONG after the flood this is we can't say for sure.

“As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.” ***“Shinar”*** is another name for **Babylon** – today's country of Iraq. As Noah's descendants moved into this area they SAW IT as a great place to settle down. It was a ***“plain”*** – they had a ready water supply with the **Tigris** and **Euphrates** rivers nearby. ***“And they settled there”*** – settled there in direct defiance of God's CLEAR command to spread out and fill the earth.

Did you notice something here? Man AFTER the flood is just as bad as man **before** the flood. The flood brought God's judgment on **sinful man** but the flood didn't change man's sinful heart. BEFORE the flood we're told, ***“The LORD saw ...that every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil all the time.”*** AFTER the flood it's no different. Jesus went to THE HEART of our problem with sin when He said, ***“From within, out of man's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, all kinds of wickedness, cheating, sexual immorality, jealousy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil comes from within.”*** Paul bluntly admitted, ***“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.”***

We see that heart SO DEFIANT and **rebellious** right here. Settling down in Shinar the people ***“said to each other, ‘Come, let's build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may ...not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.’”*** This was no RASH decision but a well-thought out plan of action. They spare no effort. ***“‘Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They used brick instead of stone, and tar instead of mortar.”*** They were DETERMINED to stay put right there and **determined** that their city and tower would LAST LONG into the future. They were deliberately defying God's clear will. Their attitude was, ***“Say what YOU want, God, but we're going to do what WE want. And if You don't like it – TOUGH LUCK!”***

It gets even worse. ***“Come, let's build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves.”*** Forget living FOR GOD. **Forget living** our lives so that God is the CENTER of attention – so that all the glory and all the focus are on God. Hey,

it's MY LIFE – it's about me and **what I want**. These men wanted their grandchildren to **one day point** to that big tower and say, "MY GRANDPA helped build that!" Their priorities in life – the purpose of their lives – were all MESSED up. God was shoved off to the side – they themselves were FRONT and **center**.

See the mess sin makes! It's SO EASY to see the sin in these people – but do we also see it in our own **hearts** and **lives**? As we daily confess our sins do we BEGIN – or **at least include** – confessing that we are "BY NATURE sinful and unclean"? Do we see our OWN HEARTS as the heart of our problem with sin – "Lord, there is '**nothing good that lives in me, that is in my sinful nature**'"?

Do we see ourselves DELIBERATELY defying and **ignoring** God's clear will for our lives? **We know God says** we are to LOVE – HONOR – obey – respect our parents – teachers – boss – FORGET THAT! **We know** what God says about pornography but where do we go surfing on the internet – what movies do we watch? **We know** what God says about drinking too much – about the language we should use – about our priorities in life – but is it, "HANDS OFF, God – it's my life!"? Do we SEE THE MESS sin is making in our lives – our marriages and families – our neighborhood – our relationship with God?

"But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building." God knew what was going on. Moses' point is that God was acting ON THE FACTS – God wasn't being PETTY or blowing things out of proportion. God's judgment is tempered with His mercy. God thwarts their plans but He spares their lives. We have another solemn warning not to PLAY GAMES or MESS around with God. If anyone thinks God is a **push-over** who will somehow just excuse our sins with a "That's OK" – just go see Adam and Eve **standing outside** of the Garden of Eden – see the smoke rising from Sodom and Gomorrah – see the flood waters covering the world – see the confusion here at Babel.

"There the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the earth." Now jump ahead to Pentecost. A crowd from ALL OVER the **Mediterranean world** had gathered in Jerusalem. **"In their own native languages"** they hear the apostles **"declaring the wonders of God."** THANK GOD for Pentecost! After seeing the mess that sin makes...

II. See the change that the Holy Spirit works.

WHAT is the miracle of Pentecost? Is it that **"sound like the blowing of a violent wind"** and the **"what seemed to be tongues of fire that came to rest"** on the apostles? That was impressive. Was it the disciples speaking those foreign languages they had never learned? That too was a mighty important miracle. The disciples used that gift to **"declare the wonders of God"** in languages the people could understand. Through that preaching of the **gospel** the Holy Spirit brought about 3,000 people to faith in Jesus as their Savior.

THANK God that we too have heard those **"wonders of God"** in our own language! THANK God that week after week here at church – day after day at home – we are able to hear over and over **"the wonders of God."** NO MATTER how often we hear them we just really can't GET OVER them or hear them enough.

WHAT **"wonders"** of God! God Himself – the very God we had **defied** and **snubbed** with our sins – God took it UPON HIMSELF to clean up the **mess caused** by our sins and to save us from hell's unending punishment. WHAT **"wonder"** – the eternal Son of God born that little baby in Bethlehem – Jesus taking our place under God's law – Jesus living for us a life of **perfect love** and **obedience** and

then giving us all the credit for it. WHAT **“wonder”** – we stand at the cross and see Jesus punished in our place – Jesus forsaken so that we might be forgiven – Jesus going through hell so that we might live forever with Him in heaven. WHAT **“wonder”** – Jesus risen from the dead – alive again – Jesus ascended into heaven **“preparing a place”** for us – Jesus ruling and working all things for our eternal good. WHAT **“wonders”** – what peace - comfort – forgiveness – hope! THANK God for the change the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts THROUGH that simple gospel message. The Bible teaches that **“no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord!’ but by the Holy Ghost.”** We didn’t decide to **become** Christians – God graciously made us Christians!

THANK God for the change the Holy Spirit has worked in us. THROUGH the gospel The Holy Spirit took us who were **“dead in sin”** and **“made us alive in Christ.”** We who were spiritually blind to the TRUTH about **our sin** and **God’s amazing love** – the Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to see Jesus as God’s Son and our Savior. We who were deaf to God – the Spirit has opened our ears to hear our Good Shepherd speaking to us through His Word. WHAT A CHANGE! We who were slaves of Satan are now children of God – heirs of eternal life in heaven through Jesus.

That change shows up in our **daily lives**. Paul says that **“if anyone is in Christ** (is a Christian) **he is a new creation.”** As Christians we have a whole new understanding of WHY we are here. Now **“whether we eat or drink or whatever we do”** we are here to **“do it all to the glory of God, giving thanks to the Father through our Lord Jesus.”** What’s the purpose of your JOB? To make money – pay the bills? FIRST and **foremost** the purpose of your job is to glorify your God! **What’s the purpose** of your marriage – of school – or watching TV – cooking supper – using the internet – having that **drink** – playing cards, etc? WHATEVER it may be – it’s to bring glory to our loving God and Savior. UNLIKE those builders of Babel – our lives are NO LONGER all about me but all about Jesus.

See the change the Spirit makes. **These people** at Babel wanted a RALLYING POINT – **something** to keep them united no matter what. They had **“one language”** – they wanted ONE city and tower. We Christians have something FAR BETTER. We Christians can be so different – speak some **many different** languages – come from totally **different cultures**, etc. – but we have **“one Lord – one faith – one baptism – one God and Father.”** We are members of the ONE, holy, Christian and apostolic Church. We can be so different in **so many ways** but what unites us is SO MUCH GREATER – God’s Word – God’s Son.

“From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the earth.” Now the Lord is BUSY GATHERING His elect from the four corners of the earth. The Holy Spirit has brought us into the **one flock** of the Good Shepherd – and He now uses us JUST AS He did Peter and the apostles that first Pentecost. The Spirit uses us in our **everyday lives** – uses our offerings for Christian education and missions – to bring the SOUL-SAVING – soul-CHANGING **“wonders of God”** to others. God even shows us the END RESULT of it all – **“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and LANGUAGE, standing before the throne of God and in front of the Lamb”** in heaven. Because of Pentecost we have that to look forward too. THANK GOD for Pentecost and the change the Holy Spirit has worked in us! Amen.