

Thank God for Pentecost!

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

Dear Christian friends,

It's easy to see the **connection** between this reading and Pentecost. **At Pentecost** the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled the apostles to fluently speak foreign languages they had never learned. 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 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 the Holy Spirit works.

I. See the mess sin makes.

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

"As people traveled in the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they settled there." "**Shinar**" is another name for **Babylon** – today's 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. So "**they settled there**" in direct defiance of God's COMMAND to **spread out** and "**fill the earth.**"

Did you notice something? Man AFTER the flood is just as bad as **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 men's HEARTS, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, all kinds of wickedness, cheating, jealousy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evils come 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 right here. Settling down in Shinar the people said, "**Come, let's build a city for ourselves and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, ...so that we will not be scattered over the face of the earth.**" This was NO RASH **decision** but a well-thought out plan of action. They SPARED no effort. "**Let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used mud brick instead of stone for building material, and they used tar for mortar.**" They were DETERMINED that their city and tower would LAST LONG into the future. They were deliberately defying God. 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 worse. "**Let's build a city and a tower whose top reaches to the sky, and let's make a name for ourselves.**" Forget living FOR GOD - living so that God is the CENTER of attention – **so that all the glory** goes to God. Hey, it's MY LIFE – it's all about 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** – that **“nothing good that lives IN ME, that is in my sinful nature”**?

Do we see ourselves DELIBERATELY defying and **ignoring** God? **We know** God says we are to LOVE – HONOR – obey – **respect** – our parents – teachers – boss – government – 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 TRUSTING Him – being CONTENT - but is our attitude, “HANDS OFF, God – it's my life!”? Do we SEE THE MESS sin is making in **our personal** lives and our relationship with God?

“The LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the people 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 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** 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 earth. 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 wonderful works of God.”** THANK GOD for Pentecost! After seeing the mess that **sin makes**...

II. See the change the Holy Spirit works.

WHAT is the miracle of Pentecost? Is it that **“sound like the rushing 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** was an important miracle. The disciples used that gift to **“declare the wonderful works of God”** in languages the people could understand. Through their 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 **“wonderful works 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 **“the wonderful works of God.”** NO MATTER how often we hear them we just can't GET OVER them or hear them enough.

WHAT **“wonderful works”** they are! God Himself – the very God we had **defied** and **snubbed** with our sins – God took it UP HIMSELF to clean up the **mess caused** by our sins and to save us from hell's unending punishment. WHAT **“wonderful works”** – 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** – **trust** and **obedience** and then giving us all the credit for it. WHAT a **“wonderful work”** – we stand at the cross and see Jesus punished for the sins of the **whole world** – Jesus forsaken so that we **could be forgiven** – Jesus going through the hell we **had coming** so that we could live forever with Him in heaven, WHAT **“wonderful works”** – 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 **“wonderful works”** – what peace - comfort – **forgiveness** – **hope!** THANK God for the change the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts THROUGH that **simple gospel** message. We didn't decide to **become** Christians – the Holy Spirit 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 is **God’s Son** and **our Savior**. We who were deaf to God – refusing to listen 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.

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 summer vacation – watching TV – cooking supper – cutting the grass – having that **beer** – playing cards, etc. WHATEVER it may be it’s to bring glory to our **loving Savior**. UNLIKE those builders of Babel **our lives** are NO LONGER all about us but ALL ABOUT JESUS!

See the change the Spirit makes! **Those 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 have** **“one Lord – one faith – one baptism – one God and Father.”** We are members of the “ONE, holy, Christian and apostolic Church.”

“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 now He 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 – **“wonderful works 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 to. THANK GOD for Pentecost and the change the Holy Spirit worked in us! Amen.

Explanation to the 3rd Article (in bulletin)