

The Promise Fulfilled



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 23:16; Mark 16:17; John 4:35; 14:16-26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:4, 5, 14; 2:1, 2, 5-7, 22-35.*

Memory Text: “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (*Acts 2:2-4*).

This week we read about one of the greatest and most important events in salvation's history: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This remarkable and phenomenal event came in fulfillment of what the Lord had promised before He returned to heaven: that these apostles and disciples would be “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (*Acts 1:5*) and would be given “power from on high” (*Luke 24:49*). The Holy Ghost came upon them as He had promised, and they began speaking in other languages “the wonderful works of God” (*Acts 2:11*). How interesting and insightful that the first thing they did with this gift was witness for their Lord. Of course, this was only the beginning of what the Holy Spirit would do, and is still doing, for the Lord's church.

As we will soon see, this great event didn't happen in a vacuum. It was the culmination of many other events, all centering around the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. Among those events, too, was the Lord's preparation of His people in order that they be ready to receive this wonderful outpouring from heaven.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 29.*

Faith and the Promise

“Being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (*Acts 1:4, 5*).

In the above verses, Jesus talked about the promise that you “have heard of me.” What promise is He talking about? See *John 14:16-26, 16:7-13*.

According to Acts 1:4, the disciples were to remain or stay or even sit in Jerusalem until the promise was fulfilled. The emphasis in the command to “wait” or “sit” is upon the fulfillment of God’s promise in due time. The waiting itself would not bring the Spirit. The word translated “promise”—*epaggelia*—as it is used in other parts of the New Testament, stresses God’s grace rather than human effort. It is God’s gift, received by faith.

Faith, of course, is a gift from God, as well (*Eph. 2:8*), but there are things believers can do in order to strengthen faith. It’s very foolish and presumptuous to assume that just because we have been promised faith that we will be given all we need, with no effort or cooperation on our part. Great things are promised to those who have faith (*Rom. 5:1, Heb. 11:6*), but faith is something believers must cherish, cultivate, and protect.

What are some practical ways in which we, even with a modicum of faith, can cultivate that faith and create a personal environment in which it can grow stronger? The following texts will help provide answers (*Deut. 4:9; Ps. 119:1, 2; Col. 3:1, 2*). What other things can you think of that protect and even strengthen faith? What works especially well for you personally?

Waiting as Preparation

Yesterday, we looked at the texts where Jesus told the disciples to remain in Jerusalem, which is exactly what they did (*Acts 1:12*). Here we see immediately one of the great principles of faith: obedience. One can hardly expect the promises to be fulfilled in those who disobey the Lord.

Read Acts 1:14. What key element is found in this text that helps us understand the attitude among the disciples that enabled them to be ready to receive, as a group, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? See also Acts 2:1, 46.

There's a story told about the great English Admiral Lord Nelson, who, right before a major naval battle, took two feuding officers to a place where they could see all the enemy ships amassed to make war against them. "Yonder," said the admiral, "are your enemies. Shake hands and be friends like good Englishmen." In other words, the issues at stake were too great to let personal differences stand in the way of victory.

In the same way, we can see here how important unity was among these disciples, who, in the past, weren't always united.

Read Mark 9:33, 34 and Luke 22:24. What caused dissension between the disciples in the past?

What the above texts from Acts show is that after the disciples had come into unity and were no longer striving for the highest place, the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. Differences had been put away. They had a common goal, a common purpose much more important than any and all personal quibbles. They had to work through these things before they would be ready to work together toward their common mission. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (*Acts 4:32*).

What are some of the things that work against unity in your own local church? What can you do to be a unifying force in your church?

The Pentecostal Fulfillment

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1, 2).

Pentecost is derived from a word that means “fiftieth,” a reference to the 50 days between the Feast of the Unleavened Bread and Pentecost—which is the Feast of the First Fruits. In this feast, the children of Israel would present a wave offering of the wheat harvest to the Lord, expressing their thankfulness for His material benefits to them (*Lev. 23:15-21*).

Also, because the rabbis had concluded that 50 days after the Exodus the Lord had given Israel the law at Sinai, the festival came to be understood among the Jews as a memorial of Sinai, as well. In that sense, it commemorated the founding of the 12 tribes of Israel as the nation that had entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord, a “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (*Exod. 19:6*) that would preach the truth about God to a world steeped in sin and idolatry. How fitting that this feast day would represent a crucial phase in the founding of the early Christian church, which also was called to preach the truth about God to a world steeped in idolatry and sin.

Look up Exodus 23:16 and John 4:35. How do these texts help us understand the spiritual context of what was happening in Acts 2?

What’s fascinating, too, about this time is that of all the festivals, Pentecost attracted the largest number of Jews from different lands. Acts 2:5 talks about the devout Jews from “every nation under heaven” who were there. What a perfect opportunity for the incredible outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the early church in order that it be ready to fulfill its mission to the world.

How do you understand your own role in the mission of the church to preach the gospel to the world? What role are you playing? What more could you do?

Heaven and the Outpouring

Read Acts 2:22-35 and then answer the following questions:

1. What contrast is Peter making there between David and Jesus? What was his crucial point?

2. How central is Christ's death and resurrection to Peter's whole speech?

3. What was the promise of the Father? (vs. 33).

4. What incredible event in heaven prompted this outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

“Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing. For this they were to wait before they entered upon their work. When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 38, 39.

What does today's study reveal to us about the close harmony between heaven and earth? In what ways can you be more sensitive to the reality of this close tie between heaven and earth? What things might you have done in the past 24 hours that showed a callousness toward the reality of this close link?

The Gift of Language

Read Acts 2:5-15. In what clear way does the Bible here explain the meaning of the gift of tongues that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? What kind of languages were being spoken here, and why is this answer important for us today?

Try to imagine the scene. Devout Jews from all over the then-known world were assembled (as they did every year) for the great festival, when suddenly—what happens? A bunch of Galileans, known as rather rough rural types (not exactly the sophisticated elite of Israel) suddenly start speaking in all these different languages! What’s going on here?

One could imagine the consternation of those who suddenly heard them speak in their own language. They were so baffled that at one point (*Acts 2:13*) someone accused them of being “full of new wine,” a rather silly reply if you think about it. (After all, how many people under the influence of alcohol suddenly start speaking in foreign languages that they never knew before?)

Along with what’s here in Acts 2, read Mark 16:17. How does that verse help us understand what the gift of tongues meant?

It’s very clear from Acts 2, where the gift of tongues is first mentioned, that “tongues” is the Spirit-endowed ability to speak in foreign languages. In fact, the word translated “tongue” (such as in 1 Corinthians 14) is *glossa*, which means “language.” If we use the principle of interpretation, in which difficult passages are interpreted on the basis of simpler ones, then some of the more difficult texts that deal with tongues (*1 Corinthians 14*) need to be examined in light of what’s clear—and it’s clear that in Acts 2 the gift of tongues was the ability to speak in foreign languages. This point is important, especially in light of the phenomenon now called “speaking in tongues,” in which people believe their repetition of unintelligible utterances are a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. This is certainly not what happened when the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 30–37; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 19–21; *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 242–247.

“The Holy Spirit, assuming the form of tongues of fire, rested upon those assembled. This was an emblem of the gift then bestowed on the disciples, which enabled them to speak with fluency languages with which they had heretofore been unacquainted. The appearance of fire signified the fervent zeal with which the apostles would labor and the power that would attend their work.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 39.

“Some of these persons have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver. Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 412.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, read aloud Acts 1:14. What important elements help bring about such unity among those who, in the past, had been at variance with one another? What can you do, as a class, to help your whole local church find the same kind of unity so apparent in the early church?
- ❷ We saw how the disciples had to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Is there anyone in your class or church who is waiting for a promise from God—of any kind? If so, what can you do, as a class, to help keep this person or persons from being discouraged as they wait? What can you do, in a practical way, to help them not give up?
- ❸ The “tongues” phenomenon has been growing. Why not, as a class, work together to create a good Bible study on this topic that you could give to help anyone with questions about “tongues”?

The Little Warrior

Charlotte Ishkanian

Noelyne Mantari is a tiny woman, but she's a mighty warrior for Jesus in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Noelyne works as a volunteer missionary, a lay woman who takes the gospel commission seriously. She visits people in their homes, sometimes even staying overnight to help a family through difficult times. Once the crisis has passed, she teaches them a better way to live. Her work includes marital counseling and instruction on preparation of nutritious food. And, of course, she prays for them and shares her love for God with them.

Noelyne's husband, a member of another denomination, supports her in her work. He often helps her carry out her ministries, prays with her, and gives her funds to carry on her work as she needs them. Sometimes he attends church with her.

Through her husband's work as a high school teacher, Noelyne has met the wives of many of the teachers at the school. She makes it a point to stay in touch with these women and greets them at every opportunity. Before long the wives comment on the peace and joy that radiates from Noelyne's countenance, and they ask her what makes the difference in her life. She loves to tell them simply, "It's Jesus."

Many of the families she works with are Christian, though they sometimes do not attend church. Noelyne began organizing prayer bands among the wives to pray for their husbands and the other teachers at the schools. The women pray for their children as well. These prayer bands forge bonds with the women, who then are open to learning more about healthful living and how to prepare clean, nutritious food for their families. And from there,



it is an easy step to sharing her faith principles. She has seen that the wives pass on what they have learned to their husbands.

In her simple way, Noelyne creates a contagious atmosphere for Christian living in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Our mission offerings help spread God's love around the world and provide literature and services that help the church family grow in strength and faith.

Noelyne Mantari (left) shares her faith in the highlands of Papua New Guinea.