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Pentecost Day

June 8, 2025

Text: Genesis 11:1 – 9 & Acts 2:1 – 21 & LSB 497 “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord”

Title: Ghost, Light, & Fire

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. It was all unexpected, even though they should have anticipated God’s displeasure with them. It all started with an idea that sounded good at the time, like most ambitious plans do. Genesis 11 tells us that all of the people of the earth were speaking one language at this point in history because they were all directly descended from Noah and his children who had repopulated the earth after the flood. Genesis tells us that the people found a nice plain in the land of Shinar somewhere in the Mesopotamia area, and they decided to settle there. It didn’t take them long to come up with the idea to make bricks out of the clay of the area, and to use the bitumen or tar in that region for mortar to build themselves a city.

“Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth,” they said to each other. Like I said, it had to sound like a good idea at the time, after all they needed shelter to live on that plain, and with the right materials there, why not build a city? It just made sense to their way of thinking. The Lord had His own thoughts about their plans though.

“And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the Lord dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth. And from there the Lord dispersed them over



the face of all the earth.” Why did God punish them? Because what they were doing was a direct violation of His command to human beings.

When God blessed Adam and Eve at the beginning of creation, He commanded that they multiply and “fill the earth,” and when He blessed Noah after the flood He gave his family the same command. They were to “fill the earth,” but instead they were all remaining in a single location with no intention of moving on. The people clearly say that they’re building the city so that they *won’t* be dispersed over the whole earth. With their words and actions they are declaring their independence over the Lord’s will, and the punishment for it is having their language confused and having the Lord spread them throughout the world. God says that this is only the beginning of what they’ll do if they’re allowed to go on speaking one language and being one people, so He confuses them and suddenly everyone is speaking a different language.

It’s a punishment that endures still to this day, but people don’t typically think of it that way. In fact, our world has taken the punishing curse that began at the tower of Babel and twisted it into something that we call diversity and then celebrates it instead. At the same time, the world demands that diversity be a reason to deny absolute truth so that no religion can be the right one. In the name of diversity, the world declares all religions to be equally true “belief systems” even as Jesus declares that He is the only way and the only truth.

Don’t get me wrong, the Lord has given us some good things through the punishment that began at Babel just as He says that in all things He works for good for those who love Him. The variety that we find in such things as art and music and food is truly something to enjoy, but to treat the world’s divisions as something to be cherished and desired is to celebrate something that began as a curse from the hand of God Himself. In the Gospel of John, Jesus prays that we may all be made one in Him, not remain divided. We are to seek unity, not diversity, especially when it comes to faith in Him and His Word.



Of course, the curse of Babel causes problems in our world. Many wars throughout human history have begun because of the divisions that began at Babel. One nation rises up against another because they believe that they are better or stronger. Perhaps it's the result of miscommunication brought on by the challenges of language. Or it may begin with the desire to take the possessions of another country because that country has more or has something unique. Whatever the reason, many of the conflicts throughout history might have been avoided with a better ability to communicate, an ability that suffers under the curse of Babel.

And this curse causes other problems as well, especially when it gives rise to discrimination. One group decides that they are somehow better than another simply because of the way that the second group looks. Humanity has used all sorts of things from skin darkness to facial features or body structure to find a reason to not like someone else. Or maybe an air of superiority comes from simple geography. One group looks down on another just for living on the "wrong side of the tracks." We Christians can take this kind of view without realizing it, and we often use it as an excuse for not witnessing to certain people because they just don't seem to belong with us. I saw this attitude all over southern Missouri with people who wouldn't go near different churches because this church was "too rich" or that one was "too poor" or it was a "black church" or a "white church."

Perhaps we are even guilty of such a thing here. It's certainly something to consider as we continue to worship and live here in this corner of God's Kingdom with so many different people from so many different economic levels as we gather together each week. It's something for us to think and pray about on this Day of Pentecost, are we really doing our best to spread the Gospel of Christ to our surrounding community? Remember, whenever you leave this place, you are entering the missionary field, and there will always be people around you who desperately need to hear about the love that Christ has for you and also for them.



It all began unexpectedly even though they had been told to expect it. They were all gathered together in one place in Jerusalem after the Lord Jesus had ascended into heaven ten days before. The city was beginning the festival of Pentecost which was the Jewish celebration held 50 days after the Passover Feast. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks and it was a time of giving thanks for the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. Pentecost was also the time when the people commemorated the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai after the nation was delivered from slavery in Egypt. Many Jews had traveled to Jerusalem to participate in the celebration as they did every year, but they certainly weren't expecting to experience what the Lord had planned for them on that very day.

“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance...And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language...”

With these events, the Holy Spirit arrived to reverse the curse of Babel, at least for a little while. Where the Lord confused the languages of the people at Babel, here He caused a different kind of confusion that came from different people suddenly hearing their own language spoken clearly by people who were obviously not educated enough to do so. The speaking in tongues that is happening here is not some random babbling that no one is able to understand. On this particular morning, the Holy Spirit finally arrives, the disciples are given the ability to speak fluently in languages that they never knew before, and the unification of God's people begins.

But the people who are hearing it don't believe it at first. This isn't the way that they are used to things being. Uneducated men who are clearly from Galilee don't typically speak their foreign language and a city as large and as important as Jerusalem is to the Jewish world is typically filled with people who speak different languages. They accuse the disciples of being



drunk even though the Greek word translated as “utterance” is a specific reference to clear speech. The evidence shows otherwise, but the people just don’t know what to make of what they are seeing and hearing, until Peter speaks up to assure them that they are witnessing the fulfillment of a prophecy from Joel that the Spirit of God will be poured out on all flesh.

The stanzas of today’s sermon hymn shed even more light on the arrival of the Holy Spirit. The first stanza tells about the graces of God being poured out by the Spirit, and the fervent love of God given to us through Him. It encourages us to celebrate the unity of His Church from every land and every tongue, the unity that began to be restored with the Spirit’s arrival at Pentecost. The second stanza calls Him “holy Light, guide divine.” He illuminates the Word of God to those who hear it, and gives us the correct understanding of the Gospel as He keeps us from error. It’s why Peter and the rest of the disciples were able to preach to the crowds that day when just a few days before they still didn’t understand it all. The final stanza refers to the Spirit as “holy Fire, comfort true.” Through Him comes the power and the desire to do the will of God, and then to endure the trials and persecutions that may come as a result.

The Light and Fire of the Holy Spirit accomplish the removal of darkness and impurity from our life. With His Light He reveals the darkness of our sin, and with His Fire He purifies us of that sin and brings us the comfort of forgiveness like a fire’s warmth on a cold day. The Holy Spirit works to bring us to faith in the Savior, and then He continues to purify us throughout our life of faith whenever it might begin. The Holy Spirit even gives us the ability and the words to be God’s witnesses when we find that we have been given an opportunity to share the Gospel of Christ with someone. Because of the reversal of the Babel curse and these wonderful gifts that were poured out on the Christian Church on that Day of Pentecost, we celebrate the Holy Spirit’s arrival once again today even as we continue to pray, “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord...” Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.