

God's Love Comes Down

Scripture: Acts 2: 1-41
Date: May 31, 2020

GIFT OF PROMISE

GIFT PROMISED

Normally birthdays are great celebrations with family, friends, cakes, candles, cards and presents. Those presents are contextualized – birthday, Christmas etc. To understand the gift that God promised we need to fully understand the origins of the gift. The purpose, the power and the potential of that gift for us.

OLD TESTAMENT PROMISES

The bible begins with an Old Testament that describes a covenant - an oath, an agreement, a promise - between God and Abraham which is later affirmed with Isaac and Jacob. A Covenant that proclaimed God's guidance, direction and blessing upon a people called by God to be His own.

That promise from God was faithfully lived out by God but not by the people. There was rebellion against God and there was rejection of the gifts of God. But God continued His faithful covenantal love providing truth through prophets to remind people of their relationship with Him and offering a return – a reconciliation – a restoration back to Him. There was a clear promise that God wasn't done with the story – yet

NEW TESTAMENT PROMISES

Later – after several centuries of apparent silence - God continued the narrative – the story of salvation. A gift for creation – humanity – to see / to witness God's laws lived out in love and God's love fulfilling the laws.

Jesus lived out God's call faithfully and obediently – in love. Jesus proclaimed God's truth as he taught of a Kingdom and lived out God's power as He healed and forgave.

Then Jesus gave another gift – His very life. A blood sacrifice to remove our debt guilt for our sins. An atonement for our separation from God that would revive us into awareness of our need for God, that would restore us into fullness with God and that would redeem us into the people we were made to be

JESUS RESURRECTION

But the gifts kept on coming because death wasn't the end – it was part of the new beginning. Jesus' resurrection promised a new power that the gift of God be subjected to the powers of this world – clamouring to separate God's people from Him

JESUS ASCENSION

The gifts God gave us in Jesus were expanded in another promise – another gift was coming. Even as the power of God in Jesus Christ was leaving - the power of God through the Holy Spirit was arriving

PENTECOST PROMISES

The disciples were promised that the Holy Spirit would come. They weren't told where or when or how. They were only told to go and wait so they went back to Jerusalem – worshipping, praying and preparing themselves for what was next.

GIFT OF POWER**SPIRIT COMES**

Suddenly the Holy Spirit came with great power and glory. Signs and wonders that were not of human origin (lest the credit be diverted from God) nor were they of human intention (lest the focus be diverted from God).

SOUND MIRACLES

Suddenly from heaven came a sound of a violent wind that filled the room. A force that was noisy, chaotic, terrifying, energetic and powerful that was so big and so great that it was clearly beyond human capacity to create and beyond human capacity to control.

SIGHT MIRACLES

Then tongues of flames appear descending from heaven. Splintering from one flame and each separate flame rested on each person there. Not just on the leadership but on each and every person showing that God's power was for the collective and the individual.

SPEECH MIRACLES

The power display continued as the group began speaking in different tongues each praising God because what came from God is now offered back to God. A response of gratitude for God's presence and a response of praise to God's gift

GIFT OF PROCLAMATION**PETER MESSAGE**

This display did not go unnoticed. The crowd gathered doubted the veracity of the crowd's praises and they doubted the veracity of the signs and wonders. Their initial response was that the crowd was drunk.

The Peter stood up to speak - the man who rebuked Jesus and even denied Jesus stands up to declare the truths. The fisherman who was called to fish for men now responds to the allegations of the crowd. He defends the group as being sober. They may be drinking – but it's not wine – it's the Holy Spirit.

Peter speaks of the Covenant narrative - the history of the Jewish people themselves. In the midst of this Pentecost festival he reminds them of their redemption from slavery. Peter then speaks of the Jesus Christ narrative. The redemption from slavery by God – again through the life – the death – the resurrection of Christ.

Emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit and empowered by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit Peter speaks truth to the crowd. Truth of their history, truth of their present and truth of their future

GIFT OF PERMISSION**PILGRIMS RESPONSE**

The crowd responds to Peter's message as the Holy Spirit has prepared them – prepped them to hear the gospel of good news. And they respond in faith and in hope. 3,000 that day believed AND were baptized as a group of about 120 becomes 3,000.

PROTECTION VS. PERMISSION

We also have the choice in our response to God's presence, God's power and God's proclamation. We can look at the miracle and hear the message and reject them much like putting up an umbrella to divert the rain from our clothes and body. Sometimes we reject them because we're afraid or because we're overwhelmed. But the choice of permission letting God give us a blessing of forgiveness, a blessing of grace, a blessing of hope remains.

GOD'S GIFT OF PENTECOST**PIVOT / PROMISE**

God's promise began at the beginning of the covenant with Abraham. It continues now with the disciples but is now taking a different shape. There was the direction of God for His people and now there was to be a direction of God by His people. It's a pivot point as the covenant people become the church people.

OLD / NEW

Pentecost symbolizes the blessings of God upon His people. To Israel the Pentecost feast was a remembrance of the days after the release from Egypt. A covenant renewal festival that was celebrated fifty days following the Feast of Passover reminding them of the new beginning seen in God's power as it guided them through the desert.

For the church the Pentecost is again a reminder of God's power and direction. Unifying it together for His purpose and His glory. In Genesis 11: 1-9 we read of God dispersing the people as they languages divided them. But what separated people now unifies them and what confused them now communicates to them.

GIFT / GRACE

The gift of the Holy Spirit empowered the church and emboldened the church. The church was gifted by God as He pours out His Spirit upon the church, it was gifted by God as the grace of God as Christ pours out His life for the church and it was gifted by God's power as the Holy Spirit pours out over it.

The church wasn't born at Pentecost. It was revealed during Christ's life, it was forgiven through Christ's death, it was freed through Christ's resurrection and it was found through Christ's ascension as the Holy Spirit came to dwell in and work through the people. As Christ's love went up in the ascension and as God's love waited for the power of the Holy Spirit so to as God's love came down to empower the church it will also go out as God's ambassadors as the God's light in a broken and hurting world.

AMEN