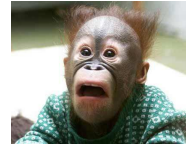


Evotional

Date: 11th May 2008 (am).

Speakers: Neil Durling.

Message title: “Amazed & perplexed by the Holy Spirit.”



Bible passage: Acts 2:1-13.

The message in brief:

The Azusa Street revival (Los Angeles, 1906) was notable for several reasons – importantly, the “democracy of the Holy Spirit” who fell upon all, whether black or white, young or old. William Seymour, one of the leaders, would often sit with his head in a box because he didn’t want to interfere with what the Holy Spirit was doing!

Prior to the above passage, Jesus had been with the disciples for forty days and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit. He then ascended to heaven. Without the Spirit there would be no story to tell; the book of Acts wouldn’t exist.

One writer spoke of the Welsh Awakening in 1904 as “An intensification of the Holy Spirit’s work in their midst.” This could also be said of that first Pentecost.

All the disciples receive the Holy Spirit (v.1-4):

All one-hundred and twenty of them were together in one place on the day of Pentecost which means *fiftieth*. It comes 50 days after Passover) and is one of the three great Jewish annual festivals, offering thanks for the first-fruits of the grain harvest. All male Jews had to travel to Jerusalem and come before God for the festival (Ex. 34:21-24, Lev. 23:15-21, Deut. 16:9-12).

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Fiery tongues (a manifestation of God’s glory) formed on their heads, they were filled (present continuous tense – an ongoing process) with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues (an audible and visible proof of God’s activity). This was an unearthly and indescribable experience. What did it mean? Some see Pentecost as a reversal of the past: The wind at the giving of the law on Sinai was no longer needed (Ex. 19:16). If the Tower of Babel saw humanity dispersed and divided through having different languages (Gen. 11:1-9), here tongues unite people from across the globe in Acts 2.

Heaven broke into earth...

The crowd outside are bewildered (v.5-11):

The Galilean accent was quite strong (like a Newcastle accent). Imagine French in a Newcastle accent; then you’ve got it! Robert Wall comments that Galileans were “notorious for their lack of linguistic talent.” It is a reminder that God works in collaboration with real, ordinary people and sometimes it is a noisy affair! The gospel is already drawing a crowd.

Some of the crowd were amazed and perplexed (v.12):

The Message translates this as: “Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it.” They then asked: “What does this mean?” They were *amazed* (lit.: Removed out of my state, out of my mind, beside myself, transported beyond myself with astonishment, amazed, astounded) and *perplexed* (lit.: In doubt, thoroughly non-plussed). The in-breaking of the Holy Spirit was profoundly unsettling and deeply threatening to the crowd on the street. They seem to be asking: “Why have they received the power of the Holy Spirit and we haven’t. Moreover, why now when the Messiah hasn’t yet come?”

Others made fun of them (v.13):

It is fine to question and doubt *so long* as we listen and try to find answers. However, some of the crowd didn’t do this. Instead they made fun of them, saying they must be drunk.

Question: When was the last time I was amazed & perplexed by what God is doing?

A prayer: Dear Father, I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Amen.