

*How does one describe the indescribable? The most amazing scenery I've ever seen, we saw at the Yosemite National Park in California. And I have no way, to describe it to you. How do I describe the panorama of vast sandstone cliffs, with amazing waterfalls interspersed amongst them? How do I describe a picturesque valley with babbling brooks that are actually almost raging torrents by Australian standards, surging past? I just cannot describe the beauty. I would just stand there and look, with my jaw dropped....*

*Here's a few pictures by the way. I did my best to try and capture it in images.... But it's still nothing like what it was, to see it in person...*

*Show pictures*

How does one describe the indescribable????

Luke devotes a mere 4 verses in the second chapter of Acts, to describe the indescribable. And I long for him to describe it in **more** detail, but he hasn't, because really that's not the point. The point comes in Peter's explanation of what it was about. We get 4 verses describing what happened, 9 verses on other people's reactions, and the rest of the chapter is telling us what it was all about.

How does one describe the indescribable?

First, let me set the scene:  
Upwards towards 200 000<sup>i</sup> people have gathered in Jerusalem for the great harvest feast of Pentecost (it was also called the "feast of weeks"). Israelite Jews and God fearing

converts to Judaism from every nation of the known world, all converge on the temple precincts of Jerusalem....

Now, what was this festival – this “Pentecost” all about? We Christians tend to think of “Pentecost” as the day that God gave His Holy Spirit to the fledgling church. But “Pentecost” was an existing festival, **long** before Jesus was born. So what was it?

“Pentecost” was a harvest festival – it celebrated the **end** of harvest. But, by Jesus' time, it had also become a time to celebrate the giving of the Law. It was a time the Jews celebrated Moses bringing the 10 commandments down from Mt Sinai.

And it's very interesting, to contrast the giving of the Law to Moses, with what happened at Pentecost – the giving of the Holy Spirit.

- Moses ascended Mt Sinai – Jesus ascended into Heaven.
- In Moses' absence, the people rebelled against God, and they donated their earrings to the cause, and Aaron made a golden calf for them to worship – But in Jesus' absence, the disciples prayed.
- The Law came down to Moses – The Holy Spirit descended onto each of the believers, like tongues of fire coming down
- When Moses brought the law down from the mountain, he was met with a loud sound of the people rebelling against God – When the Holy Spirit came down, there was another loud sound (like the rushing of wind), as the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples

- When the Law came down, 3000 of the rebellious were killed – When the Holy Spirit came down, 3000 of the repentant were saved.

There's an amazing contrast here, and one that we would do well, not to miss. It's a contrast of the inadequacy of The Law to save, compared to the absolute Salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit achieved what the Law could never do. The Law could tell you what was wrong with you, but you were left powerless to change. While the Holy Spirit, was God moving in, and giving the disciples the power to live in God's grace.

So there was an amazing contrast.

How do you describe the indescribable?

The disciples of Jesus – 120 of them – were gathered together in one place.

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

*We've all been through storms, haven't we?? We know what a big wind sounds like. But it's actually quite difficult for us to divorce the sound, from the rest of the experience of being in a storm. I've been in storms that were so furious, I had to warn the kids, get right away from the glass door – it could shatter.... The sound was **loud**, but then it was gone.*

*A friend of mine told me about his experience of going through a category 4 cyclone. He experienced the eye of the cyclone (that's the quiet, still patch, right in the centre of the cyclone). But to get to the eye, means you have to have copped the brunt of a cyclone, and it's coming again – you're only half-way there.... And he said, there was so much noise, and everything about it was frightening. But what frightened him, was not so much the sound – it was the house continually being buffeted, and moving, and wondering if it's going to stay in Kansas (you know what I mean)....*

*And he said to me, "If you've experienced a violent storm" (what we would call a super-cell) "That's just what it's like to be in a cyclone, only a super cell might last for a maximum of 15 minutes (usually only 3 or 4) and a cyclone blows for days"....*

How do you describe the indescribable? The sound was like a strong wind. That's probably about the loudest thing that the disciples had ever heard. They didn't have jet engines, or guns, or heavy metal punk rock.... It was loud. But it wasn't scary. The scary part of a storm, isn't the sound – it's everything else, and the destruction that's being reeked all around you. But when the Holy Spirit came, there wasn't any destruction. And interestingly, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for Spirit, is "Ruah" – A loud, deep breathing...

So, it sounded like a loud wind, but it wasn't a loud wind.

And it looked like tongues of fire that appeared and divided and rested on each of them. And it looked like fire, but it wasn't fire – they weren't burnt.

**4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (languages) as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

That's what happened – they were filled with the Holy Spirit. And to be filled with the Holy Spirit, was not unique to them – Various prophets and Kings had been filled with the Holy Spirit before. Jesus had been filled with the Holy Spirit.

But this was the first time that the Holy Spirit had been given so freely, to ordinary men and women. – ordinary people – not just priests and kings and prophets... - ordinary people.

Now, a big heap of international visitors, had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost). Just like when the Olympics were in Sydney – a single city got filled with international visitors. And that's what it was like in Jerusalem at Pentecost time.

And when the disciples of Jesus – uneducated Galileans – began to speak in other languages – languages that these foreigners spoke back home, they were just totally perplexed – what's going on? What's it mean???

And some people – I'm guessing these folk were probably the locals – said “They've had too many alcopops...” - That's the best translation I can give you. Some of our bibles translate it as “wine” – “they've had too much wine”. But in the Greek, it doesn't say wine. It says they've had

too much γλεύκους (Glukose) .. Sweet new wine.  
Alcopops. They've got a sugar high, and they're drunk.

(When's the last time, by the way, that you've been so publically joyful in the Lord, somebody's accused **you** of being on the alcopops?) We're all very respectable, aren't we?

But of course they weren't – it was too early in the day for that – it was only 9 o'clock in the morning... And anyway, I can't remember the last time I've observed the excess of alcohol fuelling a multi-lingual fluency in the local town drunk, can you?....

They were filled with the Holy Spirit. And they just had to praise God. And God enabled them to praise Him,,, but in a language that they'd never leaned.

That's what happened..... But what does it **mean**??? What did it mean to them? What does it mean to us???? And the remainder of the chapter, is devoted to answering that very question.

**1.** The first thing it means, and the most important thing that it means, is Jesus Christ is vindicated – that means He was **proved** to be right and true. Jesus was exactly who He said He was. He **said** He was God's Son, and He is. And the greatest travesty of justice that has ever happened in this world, was when the Religion who were supposed to come under God, and point people toward God, put God on trial and sentenced Him to death. But Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He was vindicated. And now, His Holy Spirit coming in power, proved that He was exactly who He said He was.

We're not going to be spending any more time on that point, because we're going to cover it in more detail a little later in the chapter, and that'll be either next week or the week after.

2. The second thing it means, that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Disciples – is we are now living in the Last Days.

Never before, in history, had the Holy Spirit been poured out on **all** people. But the Prophet Joel had prophesied that this day would come. He said:

<sup>17</sup> " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on **all** flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;  
<sup>18</sup> even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Now I want you to consider for a moment, "Does God still give His Holy Spirit today, as He did to the 1<sup>st</sup> century church?"

You know, some churches today, deny that the Holy Spirit can have that sort of impact on us. They say, "That was just a time for the 1<sup>st</sup> century early church." "It was just a blip on the radar screen – a bump on God's timeline, and we've passed that now. And they say that when the New

Testament was written, this kind of activity of the Spirit, finished.....

No one will ever be able to convince me of that argument, because my Bible tells me that in the **Last** days, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh... And there's nothing after the last.

The Last Days began at Pentecost. Jesus ascended into Heaven, and at Pentecost, a new relationship between God and His people began. The period of time that God calls "the last days" began, when God filled His people with His Holy Spirit.

Now, we don't know how long "the last days" will continue. In fact, as I read the Bible, I see that the Apostles had every expectation that Jesus would return in their own life time. But He didn't. And the Scriptures tell us, that no one knows when Jesus is going to return, but it could be at any time, because "today" is one of "the **last** days".

And if the last days **began**, that means the last days are **continuing**. We are in a time when God fills His disciples with His Holy Spirit.

**3.** The third thing it means, and this is the most exciting part, I reckon: The Holy Spirit of God, is available for **all** people who put their faith in Him.

There is no class distinction. There is not gender distinction. There is no age distinction. There is no special leader distinction. There is no academic distinction. There is no geographical distinction; or racial distinction:



You don't have to be born into the right family. You don't have to attend any fancy school, or the most prestigious university. You don't have to be a 'born leader' or an athlete. No one is too young. Jesus Himself said, <sup>Matthew</sup> 21:16 .... **have you never read,**

**" 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise?'"**

So, not one of us here, are too young to be filled with the Spirit. Not one of us here, are too old to be filled with the Spirit.

You don't have to be a special "type" of person – what God is looking for, is a people who will yield themselves to Him. And these are the people who He will fill with His Holy Spirit.

4. The fourth thing we learn, is when Disciples of Jesus Christ are filled with the Holy Spirit, these disciples will be supernaturally empowered to do what cannot humanly be done.

Ordinary people spoke in languages they'd never learned. And they were using these languages to proclaim the amazing works of God. Ordinary people could prophecy – That means God Himself spoke through them.

Ordinary people were given a boldness to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Put up your hand (by the way) if you feel you do **not** have the boldness you need, to tell other people about Jesus. Be honest now – put up your hand if timidity; shyness; apprehension; tentativeness; a lack of

confidence, is what holds you back from proclaiming Jesus.....

You want to tell others about Jesus. You know **God** wants you to. You know you should be doing it.... But there's something holding you back, and we all need that boldness... If I've just described you, then you're someone who needs to experience the filling of the Holy Spirit.

God will begin to use you and I, in ways that we have never imagined... And wow, what an amazing blessing that is.

To do something we can do for God, well that's a duty.... But wow, what an incredible blessing it is, when **God** does something **through** us, that **only** God can do... And I know a lot of you have experienced that – when God does something that only God can do, and you go “Oh, Wow”... Isn't God Good???? And it just makes you overflow with praise and joy, because you've not only seen, but you've experienced the activity of God.

*I heard somebody telling the story once, of a lady who said, “I hope nothing supernatural ever happens in our church”. What a crazy thing to say... And yet a lot of people in churches this morning, right across the world, are wishing for exactly that – that nothing supernatural would happen in their church – that nothing would disturb them...*

When the Holy Spirit fills a church, **expect** the supernatural. I'm praying for the Holy Spirit to fill this church. And I hope you're praying for the same thing... Because do you know what we're asking for when we pray for Holy Spirit? We're asking for God.

A church without Holy Spirit, is a church without God. A church devoid of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, is a church lacking the activity of God. And that's why we should eagerly desire God to move in this church and this district, in a supernatural way. God wants to. He's just looking for a people who are willing to yield to Him completely, so that He will begin to do His mighty work.

5. The fifth thing that Pentecost reminds us of, is a day called "The Day of the Lord". Or as the Old Testament calls it, "The Day of YHWH"

YHWH – The Lord our God – is a God of Justice.

*We Australians generally don't understand "Justice". There once was a time that our jails were known as "the justice system, or the penal system", where penalties were imposed. But now they are seen as places of reform, and so we call them "Correctional centres" or "reform schools". And the aim of a jail sentence, or a fine, is not to get justice for those who were wronged, but to **reform** those who did the wrong-doing.*

*And that's why there's so much who-ha at the moment over the 2 of the Bali 9 who are about to be executed in Indonesia, for transporting drugs. I don't know if you've noticed the language that's been getting used, "They don't need to be executed – they've been reformed" ... And it's like the media cannot understand why the Indonesians would continue to carry out an execution, when there's some evidence that they've been reformed.... And there is a mis-meshing between the ideology of reform, and the ideology of justice.*

Reform works on the premise that all people are basically good, and just need another chance, where as **justice** works on the reality that all people are basically bad – we’re corrupt, and deserve to be punished. And it’s only when someone rescues us out of our corruption, that we have any hope of being good.

The strange thing is, most people, when they are wronged, cry out for Justice. They don’t cry out for reform – they cry out for justice. They want people to be punished for the wrong they have done, and so they cry out for justice. And guess who’s listening... God is....

The Day of the Lord, is the day that God has set, and it is coming, where God will deal in Justice. And on that day, there’s only one thing that will save us. The cross. The justice of God, **demands** that our sins **must** be punished. And sin is punishable by death. Reform’s got nothing to do with it. I cannot make up for my wrong-doing, by becoming a better person. No matter how good I become, justice demands retribution for the bad that I’ve already done.

But praise God, there is a way out. And the way out is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was crucified, so that those who believe in Him, will never be punished for their sins. The vengeance of God, was fallen upon Jesus, and those who believe in the Christ, are forgiven, and will never suffer God’s vengeance.

So, there is a sombre warning for us. When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church, there was no doubt about it – right then, the **last** days had begun. But that also means, “The Day of The Lord”, is on its way. And on “The Day of

The Lord”, those who have called on the Name of The Lord, will be saved, but those who have rejected the Lord, will be condemned.

Today I want to leave you with 2 questions.

Firstly, “Am I Saved”? – Am I ready for the Day of The Lord? Have I been saved from judgment through faith in Christ, who took my punishment for me?

If not, you need to do something about that. You need to get right with God. And we’ll be talking about that next week. But next week might not be soon enough. We are living in the Last Days now. The Day of The Lord, may come before next week. “Are you saved?”

And the second question I’m going to leave you with, is this: “Am I living between Easter and Pentecost?”

There are a lot of people in churches today, who believe in the resurrection, but they have not experienced Pentecost – they have not been baptised with the Holy Spirit...

And today, I would like to pray that God will fill us – that God would fill this church, with His Holy Spirit.

So, let’s have a time for questions and conversation, and then I’d love it if you would be willing to pray together with me, for a filling of God’s Holy Spirit. That His Spirit would come in power. That we would be filled to overflowing –

that we be a people who would have a new boldness, to proclaim the mighty works of God. That God would do what only God could do – that we would experience the supernatural work of God, in this place.

But first, the questions:

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<sup>i</sup> Witherington Ben III, *The acts of the apostles: a Socio-rhetorical commentary* (p.156)