

From Confusion to Christ ***How Pentecost Reverses Babel***

Genesis 11:1-9 & Acts 2:2-11

Pentecost (May 19th) 2024

I. Introduction

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, being poured out from heaven upon Jesus' disciples, began to turn back the confusion of Babel. From that _____ of mankind, we come here to the _____ of mankind into the united people of God. This is the beginning of Acts, and it is the beginning of the new humanity: a people consisting not only of the descendants of Abraham, but of all the nations on the earth.

At Pentecost, we have the bringing in of the firstfruits. God begins with devout Jews gathered from all the nations. But it doesn't end with them. What begins at Jerusalem ends, so far as Acts recounts, in Rome where Paul is preaching the Gospel. And this same work continues into our own day, as the Holy Spirit continues His work of gathering men and women and children of every tribe and nation and tongue into His flock, to be numbered among His people.

II. The Texts

Genesis 11:8-9: So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Acts 2:1-4: When the Day of Pentecost had 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 the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

III. From Godless Unity to Confusion

Driven after collective exaltation, eyeing God's command with suspicion, mankind contravenes His decree, plants down, and builds a city and a tower with its head in the heavens. The Lord takes notice of their actions. He comes down to see the city and the tower the sons of men had built. They are united. They are diligent. They are working together. But all in pursuit of the foolish, old lie whispered by the serpent. They have fed into the lie that they can get it all on their own—that they can get a name, a place of permanence, and a dwelling place with God—all *apart* from _____.

What does God do? He staves off their work. He puts an end to their foolish venture. He does so by disrupting their _____ unity. He cuts off their work at the root. "Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (v. 7). Thus the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city and their tower. The bustling city was forsaken, the tower was given over to the wild animals. And mankind was scattered. This is the sin of Babel and God's judgment upon it.

IV. From Babel to Christ

How does the work that God began at Pentecost overturn this judgment? Pentecost began the work of gathering together a united people—a new humanity, united in Jesus. This is the end goal or mission of Pentecost. But, *how* is this plan to be carried out? How is this new unity accomplished? How does Pentecost reverse Babel?

First, God reverses Babel by dealing with the root issue. He deals with our _____. He is a gracious God, but He does not sweep sin under the rug. He does not wink at the fact that our *sin* caused Babel. Before there can be any restoration of mankind, any gathering of the scattered, there must be reconciliation. This is why we have for the first Spirit-filled sermon, Peter preaching the Gospel; Peter blasts his hearers, and then calls them to come to Jesus. Mankind united in rebellion is united in our guilty standing before God. But God unites us in forgiving us our sin.

Secondly, God unites us by graciously _____ us. He does this by graciously giving us what we sought after in the first place. Back at Babel, mankind sought after a name. Mankind also sought after permanency, immortality. We wanted something to survive and last down through the ages. And we wanted to dwell in the heavens, in God's realm; we want to be like Him. We sought after these things, but we sought them by our own strength—and more foolishly, we sought after them apart from God. At Pentecost, however, God shows very clearly how generous He is, and how merciful. He begins to unite mankind by graciously giving us a _____. We are given the name of Jesus Christ—we are made Christians, marked by Him at baptism. He gives us _____ and permanency. The Spirit of God fills His people and because He lives in us, we live forever. Paul calls the Spirit God's 'guarantee'—"the guarantee of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). And He makes us like _____. We are remade to resemble God (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

Thirdly, God unites us by causing us to _____ the true and living God. He unites us by giving us eyes to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. At Babel, in our sin, mankind collectively focused on ourselves. We worshipped our own collective good. But at Pentecost, God turns back Babel by uniting us in a hearty love of Him centered on Jesus. To put it another way, He unites us by restoring proper worship. We were not made for ourselves (Col. 1:16). At Babel, we were idolaters. At Pentecost, we become Christians. We collectively exalt the name of Jesus Christ. We are His people. He is our God. And we unite together with one accord to extol Him, to seek His help, to serve Him, to worship Him. And the result of this is rich, deep unity.

Finally, the fourth way God reverses Babel and unites us is by restoring to us our _____. We are recommissioned to multiply and fill the earth, subdue it and exercise dominion. But this work takes on the additional element of discipleship. We continue the good work began at Pentecost, bearing witness to Jesus Christ. And we multiply and fill this place with righteousness, with upright living, with a distinctively Christian culture—united together in advancing His kingdom and His dominion into every corner of our world. This is the work of the Holy Spirit through us as He renews the old creation and reorients all things back to our Maker.

V. Conclusion