

There Came a Sound from Heaven

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The video version of this teaching is at: <https://youtu.be/hgicunmaCng>

The scripture reading is Acts 2:1-41

Last week we spoke of the gathering together of the disciples and followers of Yeshua in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit or Helper whom Yeshua had promised. As we discovered, they did not sit idly by, hiding in the upper room out of fear or other reasons. Their purpose in the upper room was to gather in anticipation, in prayer, and in unity and mutual support, looking forward to the day of Shavuot. When that day finally came, they were not in the upper room but in the Temple courts along with thousands of Jewish pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from the far reaches of the diaspora to attend this appointed time.

Acts 2:1-2 NKJV 1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Many of Yeshua's disciples and followers had been a part of His ministry from the beginning. They had seen the throngs of people coming to wherever Yeshua was to listen and learn from the Master Himself. They had seen the many healings and miracles He had done. They had seen Him crucified and buried, and many had seen Him after His resurrection. Their waiting was now over, and their journey was about to begin!

Shavuot or Pentecost is the last of the spring moedim or appointed times. Both the Hebrew and the Greek names for this feast day indicate numbers or counting. The word Shavuot is the Hebrew word for weeks and the word Pentecost is from the Greek word pen-tay-kos-tay' number 4005 in the Strong's Concordance meaning fifty. The Feast of Shavuot is connected to Passover and the earlier moedim through the Counting of the Omer. The word omer means a sheaf of grain, specifically that of barley or wheat. The time of Passover is the first of the barley harvest and the time of Shavuot is the first of the wheat harvest. The commandment to count the days between the harvests is given in the Torah.

Leviticus 23:15-16 NKJV 15 'And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 'Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

The fiftieth day following this Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread was historically the day that God made the covenant with the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai and the Torah was given. Having witnessed the events of Yeshua's crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection during the previous month of Nisan at Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits, the disciples now anticipated a great event to come at the end of the counting of the Omer at the feast of Shavuot. Many thought that Yeshua would return and reestablish the kingdom of David at that time, but most probably didn't quite know what to expect.

As they gathered in the Temple courts on that day, they were about to receive the empowerment to carry out their commission.

Acts 2:2-4 NKJV 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of

fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

This must have been, not only an amazing experience for the gathered disciples, but an awesome sight for the others in the Temple courts who were witnesses to the event. Some would have recognized the striking similarities with the events at Mount Sinai which happened historically on the same date.

Exodus 20:18 NKJV 18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

Jewish tradition holds that at Mount Sinai, God spoke simultaneously in all seventy languages of the nations. Everyone in the camp, including the mixed multitude which came out of Egypt with the Children of Israel, heard God's voice in their own native language. The same was true on this day in the Temple courts.

Acts 2:5-6 NKJV 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

The events here in Acts chapter two and the events of Exodus chapters nineteen and twenty form an inseparable line of connection. There are striking similarities between the giving of the Holy Spirit at this Feast of Shavuot, and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. The prophet Ezekiel foresaw this day when God declared through him in

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV 26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

The reaction of the gathered pilgrims from the many nations was a mixture of amazement and mockery.

Acts 2:7-8,13 NKJV 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8 "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?... 13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

Peter was the first to address the gathering crowd and curious onlookers. Having received the promised power of the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke to them with renewed boldness and confidence in his words, quoting from the prophet Joel, whose prophecy was now being fulfilled before them this day.

Acts 2:14-21 NKJV 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15 "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19 I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 21 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

Peter directly addresses the mockers who say the disciples were drunk with new wine by explaining that this is a sign; they are observing prophecy being fulfilled in their presence. Peter not only points to the Joel passage to refute the claim that they are drunk, but to point to direct evidence that the Messianic Age has begun.

Peter demonstrates that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that day is the down payment of the promises yet to come. Proof that they have entered into the new covenant spoken of by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The apostle Paul later spoke of how the Holy Spirit seals us in Messiah.

Ephesians 1:13-14 NKJV 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Following the quotation of the Prophet Joel, Peter reminds those present that even if they were not actual witnesses to Yeshua's ministry, His signs and wonders, and mighty deeds, they would have certainly known of Yeshua's crucifixion, death and resurrection because of the public nature of these events just fifty days prior! Peter, then, cites a Psalm of David as proof of Yeshua's Messiahship.

Acts 2:25-28 NKJV 25 "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

A common Jewish midrash in that day assumes that, in this psalm, David is speaking of himself and his legacy in a spiritual or metaphorical sense. Peter demonstrates to them that this Psalm is about the resurrection of Messiah! And this interpretation is supported by a promise the LORD made to David.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 NKJV 12 "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Peter then proclaims to the gathered crowd that Yeshua has been raised up and that he himself, along with the others present, are witnesses to Yeshua's resurrection and ascension.

Acts 2:33-35 NKJV 33 "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. 34 "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

Peter is telling them that everything they had seen and heard about Yeshua of Nazareth, from His birth to His crucifixion and on to His resurrection and ascension, had been foretold in the scriptures and recorded in the Torah, prophets, and writings!

Peter was demonstrating in his dissertation, Messiah's role before the Father. The Son had received the gift of the Spirit from the Father and had passed that gift on to His disciples! Peter explained that this miracle and outpouring of the Holy Spirit that morning, which appeared as drunkenness to some and the miraculous utterance of foreign languages to others, was in fact, the very sign of the new covenant and "heart of flesh" spoken of by the prophets.

Peter then finishes up with an announcement directed to the entire House of Israel.

Acts 2:36-37 NKJV 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

As Peter spoke to the crowd, it's as if their hearts were broken and transformed. Perhaps some in the crowd that day were also present in the crowd who called for Yeshua's crucifixion at the previous Passover. They now understood that Yeshua was indeed the promised Messiah and they were cut or pierced to the heart! Without hesitation Peter answered them with the good news of repentance and salvation.

Acts 2:38-39 NKJV 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

The gospel message had not changed. Peter spoke the same message as John the Baptist, and the same message as Messiah Yeshua Himself, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand." Peter called on them to be baptized "in the name of Yeshua."

Before His ascension, Yeshua said that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him by the Father.

Matthew 28:18 NKJV 18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Peters' call for them to be baptized in the name of Yeshua is in recognition of that authority. Their immersion would declare their allegiance to Messiah Yeshua. First Fruits of Zion in their work, The Chronicles of the Apostles explains this concept.

"The apostles believed that the immersion in His name entailed a mystical union with Him, with His suffering, His death, and His resurrection. They spoke of being immersed into Messiah as if Yeshua was the living water into which the new disciple submerged himself. In that respect, immersion signified entering into a new identity as a disciple of Yeshua and a citizen of the kingdom"ⁱ

Peter, also, assured the crowd that they too could receive the Holy Spirit just as others had that morning. And it was not just for that generation, but for many generations to come until Messiah's return to take His place on the throne of David on earth.

The promise of salvation is for all who call upon the name of the LORD as Peter quoted from the prophet Joel back in verse 21. Peter offered several proofs from scripture that Yeshua of Nazareth was the Messiah and had risen from the dead just as the scripture said. And Peter concludes by returning to the prophet Joel with the promise that this salvation through Messiah Yeshua is for all and for future generations who are "afar off." This promise of salvation is echoed by the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 57:19 NKJV 19 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him."

Years later the apostle Paul also used these same passages, specifically Joel, as evidence that even the Gentiles who call upon the name of the LORD will receive salvation.

Romans 10:11-13 NKJV 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

After finishing his speech, Peter then directly called them to repentance. He must have been very convincing.

Acts 2:40-41 NKJV 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Three thousand received salvation that day in the Temple courts. In contrast, some fifteen hundred years earlier, the Children of Israel stood at the base of Mount Sinai amidst the thunderings and lightnings and received the Torah of God announcing that they would be obedient to all the words of God. Forty days later, on the 17th day of the fourth month, now known as the month of Tammuz, three thousand died because of the sin of the golden calf. Back then their sin brought death, now Yeshua's remission of sin brought them life.

Many of these three thousand may have seen Yeshua themselves. They may have witnessed some of Yeshua's miracles and healings or even been the recipient of them. Now on this day they understood the true identity of Yeshua and his Messiahship. On this day they were willing to re-immense themselves, not as a convert to some new religion, but to be identified with the Master Yeshua. To be identified with His death, and resurrection, and for the atonement for their sin that He offered them. They would emerge from this baptism as new disciples of Yeshua the Messiah. A new man or woman, born of the living water of Yeshua.

Peter and all the others present that day in the Temple, including the three thousand, who received the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, were now fully commissioned and equipped to carry out the mission that Yeshua had charged them with. The Apostles' Journey had just taken its first steps.

Study Questions:

1. Our teaching this week focuses on the giving of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost or Shavuot. Compare this endowment of the Holy Spirit with the Spirit given to the seventy elders chosen by Moses in Leviticus 11:14-17. As recorded in the Torah, what other people are given the Holy Spirit?
2. The mockers in the temple courts who observed the Holy Spirit descend on the disciples, stated their opinion the disciples were drunk. It seems that this drunken appearance is not unusual from the viewpoint of an outsider. Compare this "drunkenness" with that of Hanna and Saul as recorded in 1st Samuel 1, 10, and 19.
3. In Peter's sermon in the Temple courts that day, he presents a unique picture of the resurrected Messiah. Peter uses quotations from Psalms 16 and 110. Discuss how Peter used these Psalms of David as proofs of Yeshua's resurrection and position of authority in heaven.
4. Peter urged those present to be baptized "in the name of Yeshua." As part of the "great commission," Matthew 28:19, Yeshua told His disciples that they should baptize new believers and disciples "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." How is Peter's instruction not in contradiction to that of Yeshua?
5. The events of Acts chapter 2 take place in the temple courts immediately following the morning sacrifices. (the 3rd hour) As part of the ceremonies specified for Shavuot, the priest offer a wave offering of 2 leavened loaves of the first fruits of the wheat harvest. What is the significance of these

loaves being leavened? How is this wave offering connected to the giving of The Holy Spirit that morning?

6. What new insight did you gain from this teaching? How do you respond to this new insight? How will you realign your life based on this new understanding?

Bonus to do on your own: (An opportunity to dig into some history using extra-biblical writings.) Acts 2:9-11 contains a listing of the nations represented at this pilgrimage feast. Chose one of them and research where they were located and the nature and history of their presence in that land.

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ⁱ FFOZ The Chronicles of the Apostles, D. Thomas Lancaster, Vol 1 p57