

Today I will deliver part 3 of my sermon Sent to Proclaim the Gospel to the Nations.

Before I delve into my sermon, I would like to do a quick review of Part 1 and Part 2.

According to Acts,

The very last words of our Lord Jesus Christ before He ascended to heaven:

“... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

오직 성령이 너희에게 임하시면 너희가 권능을 받고 예루살렘과 온 유대와 사마리아와 땅끝까지 이르러 내 증인이 되리라 하시니라 (사도행전 1:8)

Christ said to his disciples, I won't leave you alone. I will send the Holy Spirit: According to Acts 1:8, what does the Holy Spirit give us?

Anyone?

**The Holy Spirit Gives Us Power**

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What does the Bible mean when it says power?

We -- Christians -- will have the power to be His witnesses to the nations!

What does witness mean?

The word “**witness**” in Greek is the word “**martus**” which refers to “**those who bear witness or testify to the truth.**”

So the Holy Spirit will give us the power to testify as witnesses to the truth.

**Only with power given to us through the Holy Spirit will we preach the Gospel to all the nations.**

**“This GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony TO ALL THE NATIONS, and then THE END WILL COME.” Matthew 24:14**

The end will come only when the Gospel is preached to all the nations. And this is our mission, our end, our goal – It is the **mission of the church. When I say church, do I mean a building? What is the church? The Biblical definition of church is not a building.**

**It is the gathering of believers.**

**Because we are gathered here in Jesus’ name, we are the church. And because of Acts 1:8, we want to increase the church – widen the church – we want all our loved ones, -- our family, relatives, friends, and even strangers to be members of the church because we love them. Because we want them all to be saved of their sin and enter God’s family. And this can only be done through the spread the Gospel.**

**That is why, Christians – even after 2000 years -- continue to meet together while we look forward as**

**one cloud of witness to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!**

**So before the end – before Jesus comes again – God has chosen witness – us Christians -- to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

- **We see the work of God's Spirit in the mission of the Church throughout the book of Acts.**
- **The geographical scope of Acts 1:8 provides an outline of the entire book:**
  - **Jerusalem (Acts 1–7),**
  - **Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12),**
  - **The ends of the earth (Acts 13–28).**

But in order to get the Gospel to the nations – to the ends of the earth -- the Gospel must be preached in other tongues.

But what does other tongues mean? We should answer this question with our Gospel glasses on – we should look at passages in light of the Gospel. So Acts 1:8 and the entire book of Acts helps us to understand what the Bible means when it speaks of other tongues when we look at it in light of the Gospel and its purpose – that is, to save sinners all over the world.

**The only way the Gospel can go to the nations is if the Gospel is proclaimed in other tongues – other languages.**

Since Babylon, the world speaks in different languages. As a result, most people in the world you cannot even communicate without a translator.

Do you know how many languages are there in the world?

Approximately 6800.

In order for the Gospel to reach all the nations, however, it had to start at some place? Where does the Bible say it starts? Jerusalem – **First in Jerusalem.**

If I want to be technical, the Gospel message originates from Heaven. Remember Gospel is a heavenly message and this Gospel is poured down through the power of the Holy Spirit to Jerusalem first **from Jerusalem and then to Judea/Samaria and then to the ends of the world!**

Just a sidebar, if you are an atheist or a non-Christian, Acts 1:8 is quite incredible because this is a prophecy made 2000 years ago and it's coming true – almost every nation in the world today has had the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them and almost every nation has Christian churches.

Christianity is the world's largest religion and it started with a poor, carpenter named Jesus and several humble, Galilean country bumpkins of disciples, many of them uneducated fishermen.

In spite of all the persecution they went through, how did these poor, humble people – without the use of force, fear, or fortune – spread the Gospel to the nations?

It could've only been through the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **In Acts 2:4**

**All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Acts 2:4**

**... other tongues ... = ... ἑτέραις γλώσσαις ...**

So the question:

What were the other tongues?

Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Acts 2:9-11

Were these, the languages the Diaspora Jews spoke in Acts 2? NO!

To believe that the Diaspora Jews from these places spoke these languages is bad scholarship and bad history.

Contrary to what most Christians believe today, these places are not languages during the time of Acts.

At this point in history, there was no such language as the Parthian language or Elamite language. You couldn't go up to a Diaspora Jew from these areas and ask them, do you know how to speak Phrygian, Pamphylian or Cappadocian? That would be silly. It would be like you asking me, Pastor, do you speak Canadian? Or you going to Derek and asking do you speak Scottish? Or you going to Jacqueline and asking, do you speak Kenyan?

No, Diaspora Jews from all these places listed here, contrary to what most Christians believe, spoke one of 2 **Lingua Franca** languages: Aramaic and Greek.

– the Diaspora Jews from these areas would have spoken one or both of the lingua francas, Aramaic or Koine Greek. So these two lingua franca languages are the “other languages” or “other tongues” Acts 2 is referring to.

If we look at the map, you see all the areas in Acts 2 mentioned. The West, light green and the East, in light grey.

In general, the West spoke Greek and the East spoke Aramaic.

Last week, I mentioned a group of Christians called Pentecostals and Charismatics that believe, contrary to scholarship and history and the known spoken languages of that period, that the “tongues” mentioned in the New Testament are not always actual intelligible languages such as Koine Greek and Aramaic. No, they think tongues is a heavenly language -- “the language of angels” -- whereby you privately pray to God in an altered state of conscience. (But we know that the Bible speaks of Hebrew as the language of angels.)

Speaking in tongues to Pentecostals and Charismatics means uttering repetitious, nonsensical syllables – what we call gibberish – or what scholars call ecstatic utterance.

Now, I know from history, from scholarship, from the archaeological evidence, from studying Koine Greek – as well as Modern Greek -- and from good exegesis of Biblical passages on the word “tongues” that my Pentecostals and Charismatics friends are wrong.

But let me just say before I continue, I was once a “tongue” speaker. When I was in high school, I attended a Full Gospel church that spoke in tongues. I have friends and relatives who speak in tongues.

And I believe Pentecostals and Charismatics are Christians – they are brothers and sisters in Christ.

But just as all people do, even good Christians make mistakes. Nobody knows everything and nobody is right about everything. We all hold erroneous views in our head.

For true orthodox Christians, when it comes to non-essential doctrines of our faith we can differ. But when it comes to the essential doctrines of our faith – doctrines that affect salvation – we are united – in harmony. That is why even though we are Presbyterian we are one with the Baptist, even though we disagree on when or how to baptize people. Christians of orthodox denominations are united in essential Christian doctrine (ie., salvation-issues)

### **Essential Doctrines (not an exhaustive list)**

- The Trinity
- Justification not by works but by faith alone
- The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
- The Second Coming of Christ
- **Non – Essential Doctrine**
- Baptism: credo vs. paedo; or full immersion baptism vs. sprinkling
- Frequency of Lord's Supper
- The Age of the Earth
- Which Bible version is best (eg., KJV only)

The issue of tongues is actually a non-essential doctrine. And we should not divide over non-essentials.

Nonetheless, we should engage in rigorous discourse over this important issue. When Christians disagree, we should do so with gentleness and respect and love and kindness. And we should simultaneously not have a lackadaisical, careless, unconcerned attitude towards Christian doctrines. The reason is that bad doctrine, bad teaching can hurt the church.

Once again, Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians are still brothers in Christ and yes speaking in tongues is a non-essential issue for salvation, but we have to be careful.

When we look at our church history, when Christians introduce new mystical, esoteric worship practices and new doctrines into the church, it always divides the church. Division always has a negative impact on the church. And this 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century tongue-speaking movement is no exception.

Did you know that Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians have traditionally divided Christians into two levels: 1) those who are baptized by the Holy Spirit evidenced through the speaking of tongues. (These people who speak in tongues, because they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, they are rendered as spiritual Christians empowered to live holy lives); whereas 2) those who do not speak in tongues – whom they regard as carnal Christians – these Christians are not empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But the Bible only knows of one Christian -- the Christian that is being sanctified daily, the Christian who is struggling but is still walking with the Lord everyday – dying to sin and living to God.

Dividing Christians into 2 ranks or statuses is dangerous. It gives tongue speakers false perceptions of self-righteousness and holiness. Much like the super-apostles that Paul criticized, tongue speaking leads to arrogance and feelings of superiority over others. It divides the church into the **haves and have-nots** .

Brothers and sisters, the book of Acts is not about dividing the church between those who speak in tongues and those who do not. No, the book of Acts is all about spreading the Gospel -- growing the church – so as one

body of believers – the universal church can “spread” to all nations so that as one body, one church, we can all corporately declare the glories of God in our own individual languages.

#### Acts 10:45-46

The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Some of you know that I took Bible archaeology courses at Hebrew University – one of the courses I took was a course on the Bible in Israel in Jesus time.

To set the context of our Bible verse Acts 10: Caesarea, I would like to show you a short video clip of me in ancient Caesarea.

<https://vimeo.com/137873013>

From Israel, that port city of Caesarea was the gateway to the Gentile nations. Caesarea was the most Romanized city in Israel. It is where we have our first Gentile convert, Cornelius. He is a Roman, not a Jew – so when Peter preaches the Gospel to him, they believe. And when Cornelius and his household come to believe – the Jews are surprised, they are astonished – why? Because these Gentiles – these Romans -- are declaring the wonders and glories of God in their own tongue. And what was Cornelius’s tongue?

I will give you a hint – it is the official language of the Roman Empire – Latin.

Latin – to the Jew at that time -- was totally pagan, completely unclean – a Gentile language. Why would you declare the glories of God in a dirty language associated with idolatry? Up to this time, no Bible was even

translated into this pagan language –that would have been unthinkable to the Jew. So declaring the glories of God in Latin by Gentile dogs would have shocked all the Jews. And that is why they were surprised. And the beautiful thing is – this tongue – Latin – We know from our vantage point today, looking back at our history – Latin would be used to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles for the next few centuries all over the Roman Empire. And we see the beginning of this history through the first few Gentile converts in Acts 11:

### Acts 11:17-20

“... if God gave them [Gentile] the same gift He gave us [Jews] who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?” When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.” Now those who had been scattered by the persecution ... spread the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.

The word “Greeks” in this passage refers to Gentiles of the Greco-Roman world. In Acts 11, these Gentiles heard the Gospel from the Jews. These Gentiles repented and believed the good news and then these Gentiles through other languages spread the Gospel to other Gentiles. Later in Acts, we see churches planted all over the Roman Empire and decades and centuries later we see in history that the Gospel would eventually spread to places like the UK and then to Africa and then to Asia.

And in Asia about 150 years ago, the Gospel came here to our nation Korea so that you can hear the Gospel in Korean and be saved. Praise God!

Brothers and Sisters, Do you see this **old picture**? This picture is a testimony of the work of the Holy Spirit work. It is a testimony of what the Holy Spirit did through the speaking of tongues. Do you recognize the pix of this house?

This is perhaps the first Protestant church in Korea. Do you know which church it is?

It is our church! Saemunan Presbyterian Church. Over 130 years ago, one of the first Christian services in Korea took place here in this house.

We owe a lot to what happened at this church. Some of you have grandparents or great grandparents that attended this church. If it weren't for the Gospel preached in Korean at this church, by the sacrifice of missionaries that planted that church, many of us would not be here today. Many of us would have never heard the Gospel and we would be lost in our sins. But thanks be to God that -- through the work of the Holy Spirit -- He sent missionaries from other nations to preach the Gospel in another tongue -- Korean -- so that you and I today can declare the glories of God in Korean, and in English, Swahili and Chinese and in all the languages of the world.

Here is another pix. It is a pix of the **Bible college** I planted 5 years ago in a rural area in Kenya called Litein. The students in the pix are pastors that are training to preach the right Gospel so that they can bring the Gospel in their language -- Kalenjin -- to their tribe in the remotest parts of Kenya. Over the past 3 years, some of you members of SEM church have financially sponsored about 12 student pastors -- most of them are now graduated as trained pastors and they are now serving their local churches, bringing the Gospel to thousands of people.

Brothers and Sisters, I want to end with the verse I started with: Acts 1:8

“... you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

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I want to thank SEM for your prayers and support for missions. You are playing a role in making Acts 1:8, a reality in the remotest parts of Kenya. Thousands of people are hearing the Gospel through your support and prayer. In light of Acts 1:8, let us **not sit on our hands and just strive to live a life that's comfortable and prosperous. This is what the world desires, but, for us, God will give us all that and more in the next life. Our life is short, momentary, so let us invest our lives today in the future – in eternity. Let us invest in the Gospel with our time, talent, and our treasures so that we can pass on the Gospel to the next generation and to the nations. Let us pray.**