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*“Bridges Christian College exists to cultivate
the hearts and minds of Spirit-empowered
leaders for ministry where life and God
connect.”*

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Editors

Richard Miller, Ph.D.

Justus Freeman, Ph.D. Candidate

Artwork by

Joshua Evans, M.S.

Table of Contents

Biblical Theology.

THE IDENTITY OF THE “LITTLE ONES” AND “LEAST OF THESE” IN MATTHEW:
AN EVALUATION OF μικρῶν AND ἐλαχίστων IN MATTHEW 10, 18, AND 25.
Justus A. Freeman, Ph.D. Candidate - Page 6

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF RICHARD N. LONGENECKER’S COMMENTARY ON
ACTS 2:1-21 IN THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES, VOL 9: A
PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE
Stephen H. Williams, M.T.S - Page 19

Spirit-Empowered Ministry.

FORGIVENESS IN FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM
Gary L. Pickens, D.Min - Page 35

WIND IN THE FIRE
David L. Craun, M.R.E., Ed.D. (ABD) - Page 44

Introduction to the Journal

The purpose of the Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism is to bless the church with pentecostal scholarship from the faculty of Bridges Christian College. One part of the journal is exegetical and the other part is more practical in nature. The rationale for such a broad scope is so that there will be literature for the biblical researcher and the ministerial practitioner.

Mission of the Journal

The *Journal of Biblical Pentecostalism* presents biblical exegesis, ministerial training literature, and research of church history through a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

Goals of the Journal

This Journal has the following goals.

1. To present exegesis of the Scriptures with a Pentecostal hermeneutic to help the church understand the Bible and its theological principles.
2. To demonstrate the unity of the Scriptures through intertextual interpretation of the Old Testament and New Testament.
3. To apply Scriptural principles to a Pentecostal, practical ministry environment.
4. To present research of the roots and traditions of the Pentecostal movement throughout church history.

Journal Categories

This Journal will present articles that are separated into the following categories:

1. Biblical Theology
 - This category presents interpretation of the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective. Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
 - This section is primarily focused on research on the biblical text.
2. Spirit-Empowered Ministry
 - This category presents articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry topics.
 - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are taken into consideration. The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

Biblical Theology

- The following section will present articles that exegete the biblical text with a Pentecostal perspective.
 - Various themes and theological principles in the Old and New Testaments will be presented.
 - This section is primarily focused on research of the biblical text.

**THE IDENTITY OF THE “LITTLE ONES” AND “LEAST OF THESE” IN
MATTHEW:
AN EVALUATION OF μικρῶν AND ἐλαχίστων IN MATTHEW 10, 18, AND 25.**

Justus A. Freeman, Ph.D. Candidate
jfreeman@bridgeschristiancollege.com

Introduction

The terms “little ones” and “least of these” are in three passages of the Gospel of Matthew. These terms are used in the following Matthean passages: (1) Matthew 10:40-42, (2) Matthew 18:6-10, and (3) Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus uses these terms in two contexts: of persecuted disciples and of church relationships. When one reads the phrases in Matthew 10:40-42, and compares them with Matthew 25:31-46, he or she will see the similarity between the two. The research question of this paper is to explore who the “little ones” and “least of these” in the text are? And what thematic implications result for Matthew? After an examination of the evidence, the terms in both passages refer to disciples who are downtrodden by persecution and difficulty. Furthermore, a theme of how the church is to operate during times of trouble potentially comes to light. This thesis will be shown through a presentation of the following sections: (1) the intertextual link between the “little ones” and “least of these,” (2) how the terms are used in the rest of the Synoptics, and (3) how the patristic fathers understood the terms.

1. Intertextual Link Between “Least of These” and “Little Ones”

There is a similarity in the language of Matthew 10:40-42 and Matthew 25:31-46. The context of both passages has to do with the mission of the disciples, and the persecution that they would face. The images that seem to tie both passages together include the phrase “cup of cold water” and the terms “disciple” or “brothers.”

1.1 The ἀδελφός (*adelphos*) of Matthew

The usage of the term ἀδελφῶν¹ by Jesus when describing these “least of these” is indicative of a close relationship. This is a relationship that Craig Keener² has pointed out as close to the same usage of ἀδελφός in other places like Matthew 12:10 and 28:10. Some scholars like Klyne Snodgrass³ contend that ἀδελφός in some places of Matthew cannot always refer to Christ’s followers, and cites Matthew 5:22 as an example. Joachim Jeremias also furthers this notion by

¹ This is the plural, genitive, and masculine form of ἀδελφός.

² Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 604, <http://www.questia.com/read/119907233/a-commentary-on-the-gospel-of-matthew>.

³ Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008). Snodgrass also notes that ἀδελφός is used in Matthew thirty-eight times; while twenty times it is used when designating literal “brothers.”

emphasizing that the term implies a “neighbor” rather than Christian brother.⁴ While there is merit in interpreting the principle of one’s treatment of their ἀδελφός in Matthew chapter 5:22 in a generalized way,⁵ it is hard to ignore the usage of ἀδελφός in other places, like Matthew 12:48-50, where Jesus says, “48 He replied to him, ‘Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ 49 Pointing to his disciples, he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (NIV). Verse 50 qualifies what it means to be an ἀδελφός in the kingdom of God. As in the case of Matthew 7:21,⁶ it is those who do the will of the Father who enjoy this type of relationship with Christ. In a similar manner, those who do the will of the Father in Matthew 25 are the ones who are granted eternal life. The term is used in other places of the New Testament in reference to brethren of Christ (e.g., Romans 8:29). Furthermore, there is a contrast between the title of ἀδελφός in Matthew 5 and 25. In Matthew 5:22 Jesus is discussing one’s ἀδελφῶ, while in Matthew 12:49 and 25:40, Jesus is discussing his own ἀδελφοὶ. In other words, the context of Matthew 25:40 concerns the treatment of Jesus’ ἀδελφοὶ in a way that is more specific than the ἀδελφοὶ of Christ’s followers.

1.2 “The Cup of Cold Water”

The other link between Matthew 10:40-42 and 25:31-46 has to do with the phrase “cup of cold water” in 10:42 and the giving of something to drink in 25:35. Both passages use this phrase in connection with receptivity or hospitality. According to verse 42, the “cup of cold water” is offered to the person “because he is my (Christ’s) disciple;” thus indicating that the one who offers hospitality is evidently predisposed towards the message of the Gospel.

Offering a cup of water was a common practice of hospitality by the host in the east and implies a reception of the messenger or traveler.⁷ In addition, the Old Testament also teaches the importance of receiving the messenger of the Lord (1 Kings 17:9-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37). This idea also reflects early Mishnaic teaching where it says, “a man’s deputy is like the man himself.”⁸ This identification of Christ with his followers is also illustrated in other passages like the conversion narrative of Paul in Acts 9:1-5.⁹ The *Didache* also teaches this same principle when it says, “Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as if he were the Lord.”¹⁰

⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, Revised ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 109, <http://www.questia.com/read/6464339/the-parables-of-jesus>.

⁵ The command to love one’s enemies in Matthew 5:43-48 also generalizes the term in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. This point is furthered when one notices that Lot called the Sodomites ἀδελφός in the LXX (Septuagint) version of Genesis 19:7. See Verlyn D. Verbrugge ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 15-16.

⁶ Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (NIV).

⁷ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (England: IVP Academic, 2008), 190.

⁸ D. A. Sola and M. J. Raphall, trans., *Eighteen Treatises from the Mishna* (2012), *Berachoth* 5:5.

⁹ Christ identified Paul’s (or Saul’s) persecution of believers with himself on the road to Damascus in Acts 9.

¹⁰ Michael W. Holmes trans., *The Didache in The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 363.

Moreover, 1 Clement spoke of how Abraham, Lot, and Rahab were honored for their hospitality to others;¹¹ hospitality that in some cases (Lot and Rahab's), was offered in the face of potential persecution. Ancient hospitality, at least principally, was supposed to be more than just mere tolerance; it was peaceable identification with the other person(s).

1.3 Those Imprisoned and the Epistle to the Hebrews

The next point of focus is the visitation of those “imprisoned” in Matthew 25:36, with whom Christ identifies himself. The giving of hospitality to the hungry, thirsty, and homeless (e.g., Mark 8:3; John 6:35); the visitation and care for the sick (e.g., Acts 9:36-43; 28:8; James 5:14-16); and the clothing of the poor (e.g., Matthew 6:30; James 2:15-17) are all taught as principles in the New Testament. However, the visitation of those in prison presents an anomaly. Jeremias states that the visitation of prisoners is not in a known Jewish list of good works.¹²

However, other scholars, like Arland Hultgren, believe that visitation of those in prison would be a necessary act of benevolence to prisoners in the Greco-Roman world.¹³ This, according to Hultgren, would be a necessary practice due to the poor conditions of the prisons.¹⁴ In order to bolster this view, Hultgren goes on to explain the story of how a Rabbi named Akiba¹⁵ in the Babylonian Talmud was imprisoned and needed water from one of his friends.¹⁶ This information is influential in Hultgren's view that the “least of these” in the text cannot just refer to believers, but to the poor in general.¹⁷ While Hultgren's idea is certainly merited, it overlooks the fact that Rabbi Akiba was probably visited by one of his close disciples named Joshua HaGarsi during his imprisonment.¹⁸

Certainly there is New Testament textual evidence that the Jews viewed each other already in an ὀδελφός type of relationship as Paul does in Romans 9:3.¹⁹ As a result, Hultgren's evidence does not lend weight to the argument that the “least of these” refers to the poor in general. The evidence presented for the benevolent practice of the visitation of prisoners fails to account for why this good work is not mentioned in Jesus' ministry. Matthew 11:1-4 (also Matthew 4:12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:19-20; John 3:24) mentions Jesus' interaction from a distance with John the Baptist who was in prison, but other than that, the places where Jesus speaks of imprisonment or hints at it in non-parabolic fashion, are in passages where he predicts future persecution of his disciples (Matthew 10:16-23; Matthew 24:9; Luke 12:1-12; 21:12). Imprisonment or persecution

¹¹ Ibid., 57-61.

¹² Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 207.

¹³ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 316, <http://www.questia.com/read/102538795/the-parables-of-jesus-a-commentary>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Akiba was a Jewish rabbi who was imprisoned possibly around AD 133 during the Bar Kochba revolts of the second century. See Reuven Hammer, *Akiva: Life, Legend, Legacy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 160, <http://www.questia.com/read/124912955/akiva-life-legend-legacy>.

¹⁶ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 317.

¹⁷ Ibid., 320.

¹⁸ Hammer, *Akiva*, 161.

¹⁹ Paul called the people of Israel his “ὀδελφῶν.” See Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft). Accessed October 28th, 2016. <http://www.nestle-aland.com/en/read-na28-online/text/bibeltext/lesen/stelle/55/90001/99999/>.

of these forms is exactly what took place in the early church (e.g., Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-22; 6:8-15; 21:27-36). It is also important to note that the discussion of the “little ones” and “least of these” are within these contexts of future persecution predictions. D. A. Carson describes this predicted church as a “witnessing and suffering church.”²⁰ The good work of visiting those in prison seems to fit better within the context of a persecuted church.

Possibly one of the clearest examples of the early church practicing this good work is found in Hebrews 13:1-3 where it says, “1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. 2 Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. 3 Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering (NIV).” Once again, one sees the special identification that the church is supposed to have with each other through the use of the word φιλαδέλφια²¹ in verse 1. The language in verse 3 is very similar to that of Matthew chapters 10 and 25. In addition, Leon Morris²² points out that this passage reminds the reader of what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:26, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (NIV).” Morris further points to the theme of hospitality in verse 2 and believes the principle to be a possible reference to itinerant Christian preachers.²³ Moreover, the text continues to say in Hebrews 13:5, “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you (NIV).’” David DeSilva argues that the emphasis placed on the care for the marginalized in the church in this text is clear.²⁴

Likewise, the context of Hebrews reveals a consistent theme of concern for imprisoned followers of Christ. For example, the author reminds the church in Hebrews 10:34 that, “³⁴ You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.” When commenting on Hebrews 13:1-3, Paul Ellingworth explains that, “the author’s repeated insistence on care for prisoners (Heb. 10:34) is clearly related to a situation of persecution for the faith.”²⁵ Thus, Hebrews 13:3 was addressing the current plight of imprisoned believers, while 10:34 served as a reminder to the church of their past struggles. No doubt, the reminder was intended to serve as an impetus for empathy on the church’s part for the imprisoned believers of 13:3.

How does this relate to the “little ones” and “least of these”? Other places in the New Testament indicate the close relationship that Christ has with his “body” and church family (e.g.,

²⁰ D. A. Carson, “Matthew” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 248.

²¹ Walter Bauer understands this term to be representative of “love to a brother in the Christian faith.” See William F. Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer’s Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der übrigen Urchristlichen Literatur* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 858.

²² Leon Morris, “Hebrews” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Volume 12* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 146.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 489, <http://www.questia.com/read/123238443/perseverance-in-gratitude-a-socio-rhetorical-commentary>.

²⁵ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 695.

Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:1-16). Being that the “least of these” are a part of the church community, then they are to be treated like a member of Christ’s body. The previous point will be elaborated on in more detail later.

Evidently even the church can forget their own members who are impoverished. Donald Guthrie says of Hebrews 13:3, “...prisoners are out of sight and apt to be forgotten, hence the exhortation to remember.”²⁶ Likewise Paul encourages the church of Colossae to “Remember my chains (Colossians 4:18, NIV).” The common thread of instruction for both passages is to identify with the suffering disciples of Christ. The pericope of Matthew 25:31-46 provides the backdrop for how the treatment of downtrodden disciples affects one’s eternity.

Therefore, the context of future predictions of persecution by Jesus in Matthew chapters 10 and 24, the lack of the mention of the good work of prison visitation in the Gospels, and the mention of imprisonment and prison visitation being practiced in the early church, indicate that the good work of visiting those in prison refers to a future fulfillment in Matthew 25:36. This idea also supports the argument that the “least of these” of Matthew 25 are Christians. Hence the common theme throughout these texts is identity with Christ and His body.

1.4 The ἐλαχίστων and μικρῶν

A brief note must be mentioned concerning the terms ἐλάχιστος (“least”) and μικρός (“little”). The terms that shall be discussed in the following section, namely, ἐλαχίστων and μικρῶν, are plural and in the genitive case in Matthew 10:40-42, 18:6-10, and 25:45. The terms are in the singular forms ἐλάχιστος (*elachistos*) and μικρός (*mikros*) in a Greek lexicon or dictionary. Thus, the following section will present the forms of the words as they are presented in certain Scriptures, or as it relates to how they are expressed in the dictionary.

Regarding the use of these terms in Matthew, it is true that in Matthew 5:19 where ἐλάχιστος is used, it is used in a negative sense for disciples who teach others to disobey the commandments of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. The term ἐλάχιστος is closely tied with the term μικρός (Matthew 10:42; 18:6, 10, 14); with ἐλάχιστος being the superlative. Walter Bauer understands ἐλάχιστος also to be a superlative of μικρός, and interprets it to mean those who are “unimportant”²⁷ in Matthew 25:40. John Nolland sees it as “... almost impossible to not find an echo of ‘one of these little ones’ in ‘one of the least of the least of these brothers and sisters.’”²⁸

So why is the term ἐλαχίστων used in Matthew 25 and not μικρῶν? One reason could be that ἐλαχίστων refers to the very least of Christ’s disciples and μικρός the disciples in general. In texts where “little ones” is used, the disciples are to be viewed as “little ones” who humble themselves to a state of vulnerability and trust in Christ’s provision (Matthew 10:42; 18:6, 10, 14). Yet,

²⁶ Donald Guthrie, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham: IVP Academic, 2008), 268.

²⁷ William F. Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature: A Translation and Adaptation of the Fourth Revised and Augmented Edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch Zu Den Schriften Des Neuen Testaments Und Der übrigen Urchristlichen Literatur*, 248.

²⁸ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2005), 1032.

Origen (a.d. 185-a.d. 254) in one of his homilies, quotes Matthew 18:10 in the following way: “Do not despise one of these least ones in the church.”²⁹ Whether or not Origen was utilizing a textual variant seems unclear, but it is more likely that he is quoting Matthew 18:10 from either memory or how he understood the text. The latter is even more likely since in his *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, he used the terms “little ones” when discussing Matthew 18.³⁰

Another point of interest is how Clement of Alexandria (AD 150-215) quotes Matthew 10:41-42. In his *Stromata*, Clement uses the terms “least of these” in place of “little ones” in Matthew 10:42.³¹ Could it be that Clement passed down his understanding of the terms “little ones” and “least of these” to Origen?³² Evidently, Origen understood the terms “little ones” and “least of these” to be synonymous. However, it is better to understand ἐλαχίστων in a superlative sense compared with μικρῶν. This is especially true if the righteous sheep of Matthew 25 are given eternal life because of how they treated the ἐλαχίστων of Christ’s brethren. Thus, the humility of the “little ones” leads them to live a lifestyle that cares for the ἐλαχίστων of Christ’s downtrodden disciples.

The term ἀδελφῶν that was used by Christ to describe the “least of these” in Matthew 25:40 is used in other Matthean contexts when referencing His disciples. The idioms that are used in Matthew 25:41-46 are almost identical to that of Matthew 10:40-42, and both are in contexts where Christ predicts future persecution of his disciples. The anomaly of the good work for visiting those in prison points to a future fulfillment in the life of the church. Finally, the term ἐλάχιστος is more than likely a superlative of μικρός in the context that indicates a group of disciples who are downtrodden by persecution or other maladies. Therefore, the terms “least of these” indicate a group that is even more downtrodden than the “little ones.”

2. The Usage of the Terms “Little Ones” in the Synoptics

The terms “little ones” is also used in other parts of the Synoptics; namely Matthew 18, Mark 9:42, and Luke 17:2. While the terms are very identical to Matthew 10:42, the context lacks a persecution theme.

2.1 “Little Ones” in Matthew 18:1-6, 10-14

The context of Matthew 18 emphasizes the necessity for humility in Christ’s disciples. Verses 1-6 says:

²⁹ Origen, *Homilies on Luke: Fragments on Luke*, trans. Joseph T. Lienhard (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 18, <http://www.questia.com/read/88940844/homilies-on-luke-fragments-on-luke>.

³⁰ Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. John Patrick, chap. 16, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/ecf/009/0090457.htm>.

³¹ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata: Book IV* in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 47, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf02.vi.iv.iv.v.html?highlight=least,of,these#highlight>. This may not be enough evidence to support the view that Clement influenced Origen’s interpretation of the “little ones” and “least of these,” but the connection is nonetheless striking.

³² Origen evidently spent some time as a pupil under the tutelage of Clement of Alexandria. See *Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History*, trans. C. F. Cruse (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 197.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”² He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.³ And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.⁶ “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea (NIV).

The cause for Christ’s teaching is indicated in verse 1 where the disciples’ inquired about who the greatest is. Jesus responds in verses 3-4 by teaching the principle of humility. Because a child was not seen as important in Jewish society,³³ the theme of humble servitude among Christ’s followers becomes clear. J. D. Kingsbury says, “...they were also ‘little ones,’ for they understood themselves to be totally dependent on their heavenly Father.”³⁴ Though the context lacks a persecution theme, it does contain similar phrases. Verse 5 echoes the same principle as Matthew 10:40-42. Those who receive Christ’s followers because they are predisposed towards the message of the Gospel are receiving Christ himself. Verse 6 continues to explain that those who cause these “little ones” or followers of Christ to stumble are guilty of a grave offense.

Verses 10-14 of Matthew 18 continues the teaching of humility among Christ’s followers. Verses 10-14 says:

10 “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.¹² “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off.¹⁴ In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish (NIV).

To despise one of the “little ones” is to miss the point of verses 2-3. Christ values all of his disciples and so should the rest of his followers. While the same terms are used in Matthew 18 as in chapter 10, the context determines the emphasis, and the emphasis here is on church relationships, rather than how disciples operate in the midst of persecution or difficulty.

2.2 “Little Ones” in Mark 9:42

The context of Mark 9:42³⁵ is a parallel of Matthew chapter 18. Once again, one sees the language of “the cup of cold water” repeated in Mark 9:41 which emphasizes the reception of

³³ France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 270.

³⁴ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 156, <http://www.questia.com/read/123740979/matthew-as-story>.

³⁵ “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea” (NIV).

Christ's message. In this case, the command to receive those because they are the followers of Christ is directed towards the disciples. Verses 38-41 illustrates this point when it says:

38 "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." 39 "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, 40 for whoever is not against us is for us. 41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward (NIV).

According to R. Alan Cole, the reason for the instruction seems to be that the disciples are opposing the work of the Spirit, much like the scribes had in Mark 3:22.³⁶ Connecting 9:42 with the preceding verses parallels the command to not "despise" the "little ones" in Matthew 18:10. The disciples are not to prevent Christ's followers from operating according to His will.³⁷ Like Matthew 18, the context lacks any persecution theme with the warnings against causing the "little ones" to stumble directed at the disciples. While the "cup of cold water" phrase is present in this passage, the difference between it and Matthew 10:40-42 is that it lacks a persecution narrative.

2.3 "Little Ones" in Luke 17:2

The final place where the term "little ones" is used in the Synoptics is in Luke 17:2. Walter Liefeld believes that the terms "little ones" in this context refers to new Christians or those of low repute.³⁸ Leon Morris believes that it refers to Christians of any age, and those who are "helpless as they are apart from God's aid."³⁹ The connection of verses 1 through 2 to verses 3 through 10 indicates that the context is dealing with relationships within the church community. Verses 3-4 follows verse 2 by saying, "So watch yourselves. If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them (NIV)." The remainder of the passage to verse 10 recapitulates this same principle. As in the case of Mark 9 and Matthew 18, the persecution predictions are lacking in this section as well; thus indicating that the terms are used differently here due to context.

The terms "little ones" are used to designate disciples in the rest of the Synoptics, but the context of each of these terms deal primarily with inter-church relationships. Though the language of the "cup of cold water" is used in Mark 9:41, it is used in a context where Christ is teaching the principle of receiving all of His "little ones" among his followers. While the contexts lack predictions of persecution, they certainly can contribute to understanding what is taught in Matthew 10:40-42 and Matthew 25:31-46 through the use of the terminology. What

³⁶ R. Alan Cole, *Mark*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (IVP Academic, 2008), 151-152.

³⁷ See Walter W. Wessel, "Mark" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 707.

³⁸ Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 8* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 994.

³⁹ Leon Morris, *Luke* (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 279.

may be these passages are that: (1) the “little ones” refer to disciples who are to serve Christ and others in humility, and (2) those who receive the followers of Christ are evidently aligned with His message. The “little ones” then would refer to disciples in general, while “least of these” would be more specific.

3. The Downtrodden Ones

Given this treatment of the passages above, how are the “least of these” to be understood in Matthew 25? Based on observation, they would be disciples who are downtrodden by physical difficulty or persecution. The sheep or righteous ones would be admitted into the kingdom of God based upon their alignment with such disciples. This is indicative of their reception of the Gospel message. In contrast, those who are goats, or not admitted, are the ones who fail to identify themselves with such a group. This is illustrated by looking at how some of the patristic fathers interpreted the “least of these” and how one further examines the surrounding contexts of Matthew 10 and 25.

3.1 “Least of These” in the Patristic Fathers

The phrase “least of these” was understood in multiple ways by the patristic or early church fathers. Epiphanius the Latin comments on Matthew 25:31-46 by saying:

What then, my most beloved? Does our Lord hunger and thirst? Is he who himself made everything in heaven and on earth, who feeds angels in heaven and on earth, who feeds angels in heaven and every nation and race on earth, who needs nothing of an earthly character, as he is unailing in his own nature, is this one naked? It is incredible to believe such a thing. Yet what must be confessed is easy to believe. For the Lord hungers not in his own nature but in his saints; the Lord thirsts not in his own nature but in his poor. The Lord (who) clothes everyone is not naked in his own nature but in his servants. The Lord who is able to heal all sicknesses and has already destroyed death itself is not diseased in his own nature but in his servants. Our Lord, the one who can liberate every person, is not in prison in his own nature but in his servants. Therefore, you see, my most beloved, that the saints are not alone. They suffer all these things because of the Lord. In the same way, because of the saints the Lord suffers all these things with them.⁴⁰

Epiphanius identified the “least of these” as the Lord’s servants or disciples. Epiphanius’s final statement paints a picture of the Lord’s close relationship with disciples who are downtrodden by difficulty or persecution.

Origen also identified the “least of these” as disciples of Christ. He said in his *Commentary on John*, “Now it is clear that the things done to Jesus’ disciples (also) happen to him. Therefore,

⁴⁰ Epiphanius the Latin, “The Lord Hungers in His Saints,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Matthew 14-28*, ed. Manlio Simonetti (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 234.

when he points out those who have received benefits, he says to those who have done the beneficial deeds, ‘what you did to these, you did to me.’”⁴¹

Although, Pope Pontianus (AD c. 200-c. 236) generalized the terms “least of these” when he stated:

Most dearly beloved, study to lift up the oppressed, and always help the necessitous; for if a man relieves an afflicted brother, delivers a captive, or consoles a mourner, let him have no doubt that that will be recompensed to him by Him on whom he bestows it all, and who says: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Strive, then, unceasingly to do what is good in such wise that ye may both obtain the fruit of good works here, and enjoy the favour of God in the future, to the intent that hereafter ye may be worthy to enter the court of the heavenly kingdom.⁴²

Though Pope Pontianus (also known as Saint Pontian) condemned Origen as a heretic at a Roman Synod,⁴³ it seems unlikely that this had any bearing on his decision to quote Matthew 25:41 in the way that he did. What this shows is that there was some varying opinion among the early church fathers as to the interpretation of the “least of these.”

After examining some of the patristic fathers, it is evident that there were multiple understandings of the terms “little ones” and “least of these.” It is unlikely that the environment influenced these interpretations since Pope Pontianus underwent persecution during the reign of the Roman emperor Maximinus in AD 235.⁴⁴ This evidence illustrates that the interpretation of the “least of these” has been debated throughout time, and the discussion has not currently changed. Even though there are some who interpreted the “least of these” as downtrodden disciples, the best approach to discovering the interpretation still lies with the intertextual use of the terms and phrases in Matthew.

3.2 “Least of These” within the Context of the Sheep and the Goats

The context of the parable of the sheep and goats further indicates that the “least of these” are downtrodden disciples who have experienced persecution or trouble. In the context of the parallel passages of the Matthew 10 and 25, Jesus teaches the disciples to expect persecution, and that alignment with him will result in salvation. This is evidenced by other scriptures, like Matthew 10:22 where he says, “22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved (NIV).” Warnings against fear and denial of Christ are prominent throughout chapter 10 (Matthew 10:26-33). Jesus echoes the same predictions to his disciples in Matthew 24:9 where he says, “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and

⁴¹ Origen, trans., Ronald E. Heine. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Books 1-10* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 48.

⁴² Pope Pontianus, *The Epistles of Pope Pontianus*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers Volume 8: The Twelve Patriarchs, Excerpts and Epistles, The Clementia, Apocrypha, Decretals, Memoirs of Edessa and Syriac Documents, Remains of the First Age*, Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 1046.

⁴³ “Saint Pontian,” *Britannica Encyclopedia*, accessed November 2, 2016, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Pontian>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Pope Pontianus was exiled to the mines of Sardinia with his contemporary, Hippolytus (AD 170-235).

put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me (NIV).” Because this type of context is absent in other places where the term “little ones” is used, it seems more likely that Christ is using the terms to emphasize the need for his disciples to be entirely committed to aligning themselves with Him, even if it means unpopularity.

3.3 “Least of These” in the Alignment of the Righteous

The context of the sheep and goats pericope determines that the “least of these” are downtrodden disciples. Even though the New Testament teaches the care for all who are downtrodden, Keener notes that sickness and poor clothing were common occurrences among the apostles (Philippians 2:27-30; 2 Timothy 4:20; Romans 8:35; 1 Corinthians 4:11).⁴⁵ If the “least of these” are disciples, then this would include all of Christ followers who are downtrodden by trouble or persecuted. The willingness of the righteous (the sheep) to align themselves with this group of disciples who are the “least of these” evidently shows that they are operating in the will of God.

On the other hand, the lack of willingness to associate with the “least of these” by the unrighteous leads them to eternal punishment. Why the unrighteous did not associate with the “least of these” remains unclear, but fear of persecution, forgetfulness, or refusal to help the lowly disciples in need are possibilities. Harkening back to Hebrews 13:3, Robert Smith says, “To avoid sharing the fate of those condemned to prison and maltreated, erstwhile friends often faded from sight at the first sound of the rattling of chains.”⁴⁶ Even those who were supposed to be aligned with Paul deserted him when he was imprisoned (2 Timothy 4:16).⁴⁷

It is clear that this passage is teaching the disciples that when they align themselves with those within in their ranks who are persecuted or downtrodden by difficulty, then their allegiance to the Lord is truly revealed. Robert H. Gundry concurs with this interpretation when he explains that the “least of these” in Matthew 25, “refers to those who carried the gospel from place to place as they fled from persecution. To show hospitality of faith to such a disciple is to demonstrate the genuineness of one’s own discipleship.”⁴⁸ Likewise, Carson rightly says, “As people respond to his (Christ’s) disciples, or ‘brothers,’ and align themselves with their distress and afflictions, they align themselves with the Messiah who identifies himself with them.”⁴⁹

The righteous, who are surprised (Matthew 25:37-39)⁵⁰ at the admission into the kingdom of God, are admitted because they are aligned and operating as true members of Christ’s body. This harkens back to 1 Corinthians 12:26 where Paul teaches the Corinthian church about the importance of unity in the spiritual body of Christ. Suffering on the part of fellow Christ followers should be felt by the whole if they are truly a part of the body of Christ. Moreover, a

⁴⁵ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 605.

⁴⁶ Robert H. Smith, *Hebrews*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 169, <http://www.questia.com/read/123682588/hebrews>.

⁴⁷ Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:16, “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them (NIV).”

⁴⁸ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 514.

⁴⁹ Carson, “Matthew,” 522.

⁵⁰ Carson clarifies that the righteous and unrighteous are not surprised at their destination after the judgment, but at the reason why they are judged in such ways. See Carson, “Matthew,” 522.

few verses earlier (1 Corinthians 12:22-23),⁵¹ Paul argues that if smaller parts of one's physical body are treated with care, then how much more should one care for the seemingly insignificant in the spiritual body of Christ. Therefore, the unrighteous are surprised because they are doing what only comes natural to them. For example, if a part of one's physical body hurts, he or she takes care of it without any thought. Thus, the pericope of Matthew 25:31-46 teaches the principle that true alignment of the body of Christ begins with one being completely submitted to the will of God (as in Matthew 7:21); so much so, that operating accordingly becomes natural.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are multiple ways of understanding the meaning of the "least of these." Some say that the "least of these" are the poor in general, while others believe them to be disciples. The interpretation has evidently varied since the time of the patristic fathers; although there still can be a number of conclusions drawn from the intertextual study of Matthew 10:40-42 and 25:31-46.

First, the "least of these" are disciples as evidenced by the use of ἀδελφῶν in the text, and how the term is used in other places of Matthew where Jesus is referring to his own spiritual family. While it cannot be said with certainty that the "least of these" refers only to disciples who are persecuted, it does emphasize the need for the care of all downtrodden disciples. Therefore, these are disciples who are downtrodden by persecution or some other difficulties. The context of Matthew chapters 10 and 25 determines this by the similar use of phrases ("cup of cold water") and Christ's prediction of persecution.

Secondly, the imprisonment of the "least of these" presents a good work anomaly that is realized as a need in the future church. The further witness of the New Testament is evidence for this. The disciples did experience imprisonment, abandonment, and were instructed not to forget those who were experiencing such things. Due to the poor conditions of prisons in Jesus' day, there would be a need for the care of His disciples during their time of imprisonment.

This leads to the final conclusion that the sheep and goats pericope does not teach a mere Christian philanthropy, but rather an alignment with the will of God. This alignment is expected even when it is inconvenient or unpopular. How the church is supposed to operate in the context of relationships within its own community, is a common theme attributed to Matthew by scholars such as Merrill Tenney.⁵² However, the fact that the treatment of the "least of these" in the other Synoptics leaves questions as to other themes in Matthew. Can one not only discern themes of church community in Matthew, but also of how the church is to operate in times of trouble? If anything, the importance of φιλαδελφία relationships in the New Testament church community comes to the forefront in Matthew 25:31-46.

On a final note, the author of this article wonders what the implications are concerning the relationship of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Could the Jewish flavor of both writings have any bearing on their commonality of topics related to persecution of the church? Is the

⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 12:22-23, "22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty (NIV)."

⁵² Merrill Tenney, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 158-159.

persecution referenced in the Epistle to the Hebrews a practical example of what Jesus talked about in Matthew 25:31-46? The relationship that the Epistle to the Hebrews has with Matthew 25 in the context of the imprisonment of the believers could require more research and may be the subject of a future article.

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF RICHARD N. LONGENECKER'S COMMENTARY ON ACTS 2:1-21 IN THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES, VOL 9: A PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVE

Stephen H. Williams
swilliams@bridgeschristiancollege.com

1. Introduction

According to Assemblies of God scholars Robert and William Menzies, “The Pentecostal bestowal of the Spirit recorded in Acts 2 has given definition to the movement.”¹ As such, Acts 2:1-21 is considered a foundational passage and the paradigm for contemporary Pentecostal experience. In that passage, Pentecostals have contended for their distinct doctrine of subsequence, initial evidence of tongues as the sign of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, and a scriptural foundation for mission fueled by eschatological impulses. However, Pentecostalism has been heavily influenced by the hermeneutics and biblical scholarship of Evangelicalism. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, a popular conservative commentary series, can be found in the libraries of Pentecostal colleges, seminaries, and churches. The author of the commentary “The Acts of the Apostles,” Richard N. Longenecker (PhD, University of Edinburgh), approaches Luke's second volume from the Baptist tradition. The purpose of this essay will be to attempt to provide a critical evaluation of Longenecker's commentary from a Pentecostal perspective. To do so, I will summarize Longenecker's exposition, compare, and contrast his commentary with the perspectives of Pentecostal commentators and contemporary scholars to find points of agreement and disagreement. I will also attempt to flesh out how Longenecker might affirm Pentecostal theology. Finally, I will conclude with my insights gained and my personal reflection.

2. Summary of The Acts of the Apostles: Richard N. Longenecker

2.1. Longenecker's Commentary on Acts 2:1-21

2.1.2 Introduction

Longenecker divides Acts into three main sections, each stressing Christian mission. He places Acts 2:1-21 within an introduction which he labels “The Constitutive Events of the Christian Mission;” Acts 2:1-21 placed into the fifth section titled “The Coming of the Holy Spirit.” Longenecker further divides Acts 2:1-41 into two sections: “The Miracle of Pentecost” covering 2:1-13 and “Peter's Sermon at Pentecost” covering 2:14-41, with 2:14-21 labelled as the “Apologia section.” In his introduction to “The Coming of the Holy Spirit,” Longenecker notes that although all four gospels mention John the Baptist's preaching, only Luke makes the

¹ Robert and William Menzies, *Spirit and Power: Foundations of Pentecostal Experience* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 9.

connection between John's prophecy of a "baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire" with the Pentecost event. He asserts that Luke draws a parallel between Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan River (Luke 3) with the Spirit baptism of the assembled believers at Pentecost (Acts 2) which is seen as the final constitutive factor for all that occurs in Jesus' ministry in Luke and in the church's mission in Acts.²

2.1.3 Acts 2:1

Longenecker begins his commentary section with a lengthy treatment of Acts 2:1 and the significance of the Spirit coming on the Day of Pentecost. He explains that the Spirit came during a festival known in late Judaism as Pentecost. Pentecost was celebrated on the 50th day after Passover, also known as the Feast of First fruits or Feast of Weeks (Ex 23:16; Lev 23:17-22; Num. 28:26-31). Longenecker draws attention to the fact that the Feast of Pentecost for first century Jews was the anniversary of the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai and a time for the renewal of the Mosaic Covenant. He asserts that Luke would have been "impressed by the fact it was on the Jewish festival of Pentecost that the Spirit came so dramatically upon the early believers in Jerusalem," and that significance was the contrast of the giving of the Law for Israel with the coming of the Spirit for Christians. Longenecker claims that Luke was more intentional about "when" the Spirit came as opposed to "where." Despite that other commentators suggest that the event occurred at the temple, the Greek grammar for Longenecker suggests the "upper room" as in 1:12-26 as the setting.³

2.1.4 Acts 2:1-4

In verses 2-4, the coming of the Spirit was accompanied by three signs: wind, fire, and tongues, the latter which Longenecker labels "inspired speech." The visible and audible signs signified God's presence.⁴ Longenecker explains that in Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ez. 37:9-14), the wind of God brought new life by the Spirit and was anticipated to occur in the messianic age. Longenecker suggests that Luke's reference to "a *sound* like the blowing of a violent wind" may have had the purpose to echo the giving of the Law at Sinai where God caused a "sound" to arise. Regardless, Longenecker sees Luke's intent is to press home the point that God's Spirit was present among all of them at the house in a more intimate and powerful way than previously experienced.⁵

² Richard N. Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles" in Frank E. Gaebelin (gen.ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version: John and Acts, Vol. 9* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 268.

³ Ibid, 269.

⁴ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-14:28*, Vol.1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012-2013), 800.

⁵ Longenecker, 270.

Longenecker also sees the “fire” as a symbol of God’s presence and reminiscent of the presence of fire in the OT (eg. Ex 3:2-5, 13:21, 24:17, 40:38) and of John the Baptist’s prophecy of the Messiah baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). He makes a distinction between the “tongues of fire” in verse 3 and the “other tongues” of verse 4, suggesting that the “tongues of fire” were “visible representations” of the latter and as a sign of “the overshadowing presence of the Spirit of God”. Longenecker finds significance in Luke’s statement that the tongues of fire “separated and came to rest upon each of them.” In this he sees the distinction between the Old Covenant with Israel and New Covenant that is inaugurated at Pentecost, meaning that rather than upon select leaders in the OT, now at Pentecost, “the Spirit rests upon each believer individually”. He also suggests that from Pentecost onward, the emphasis of the proclamation of the gospel concerns the personal relationship with God, and communal life develops from there.⁶

In verse 4, Luke states, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Longenecker primarily deals with the precedent of prophecy as it relates to the Spirit in Judaism; the character and significance of “tongues,” and the theological and practical significance of the coming of the Spirit as it relates to the Christian church. First, Longenecker affirms the connection between the Spirit’s coming and prophetic speech by individuals in the OT for specific purposes, the cessation of prophecy during the postexilic period, and the anticipation of the restoration of prophecy in the Messianic Age. In Longenecker’s view, 2:4 explicitly is a fulfillment of those OT expectations. Though others have identified “tongues” as ecstatic utterances such as those associated with pagans, Longenecker stresses that “tongues” in Acts 2:4 were Spirit-directed, recognizable languages by those who heard them. Finally, Longenecker comments concerning the significance of the Spirit’s coming both theologically and practically. Was Pentecost the birthday of the Christian church? Longenecker seems to answer yes and no! No, because he sees that the church as the body of Christ existed prior to Pentecost; but yes, if we understand the church as an instrument of service, called to a global mission. In that regard, he connects Jesus’ baptism with the disciples’ experience at Pentecost as an empowering for mission. But he also sees that Luke’s intent is to emphasize the new relationship between the Spirit and each believer that results in intimacy. This relationship fulfills John 14:17 while at the same time constitutes the church as a corporate entity.⁷

2.1.5 Acts 2:5-13

Longenecker asserts, based on the grammar, that the “God-fearing Jews” of verse 5 were “residents of Jerusalem who had returned from Diaspora lands at some earlier time to settle down in the homeland.” They were “in bewilderment” (v.6) because they heard Galileans (v.7-8) speaking in their native languages, when Galileans had difficulty with gutturals and syllables and were considered provincial. Regarding the list of countries Luke records in verses 9-11, Longenecker questions why they and no others are named and why Luke records them in that

⁶ Ibid, 270-271.

⁷ Ibid, 271-272.

order. He suggests that perhaps Luke was “using a literary convention of his day” for illustrative purposes in light of his statement in verse 5 that refers to “every nation under heaven.”⁸ Commenting on verses 12-13, Longenecker points out that the miraculous proclamation in tongues only “amazed and perplexed” those who heard the Galileans praising God and declaring his wonders in their own languages. It did nothing to self- authenticate or supply significance, only speculation. The question, ‘What does this mean?’ provoked mocking and the accusation of drunkenness, yet, such an accusation staged the occasion for “Peter’s sermon, which is the initial proclamation of the gospel message to a prepared people.”⁹

2.1.6 Acts 2:14-21

For Longenecker, Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-41 is divided into three sections: an apologia section, a kerygma section, a call to repentance, and a promise of blessing. For the purposes of this critical evaluation, only the apologia section will be summarized and evaluated. Thus, Peter begins his “sermon” by addressing “fellow Jews” and “all who are in Jerusalem,” and Longenecker suggests that though natives to the city were amazed and perplexed, it was likely the “Diaspora contingent” that required an explanation as to what had transpired. In so doing, Peter is seen as debunking the accusation of drunkenness by noting the early hour of the day and subsequently explains that what they witnessed was the fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32.¹⁰

Longenecker notes that Peter uses a *pesher*: “this is that” emphasizes that what took place is a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy without offering explanation of the details. He also notes Peter’s alterations of Joel’s original prophecy from “afterwards” to “in the last days.” The addition of “God says” signifies the importance of the prophecy as a promise from God. The additional “and they will prophecy” highlights the restoration of prophecy. With regards to verses 19-20, he briefly mentions the debate between realized and inaugurated eschatology, stating that some in the former camp interpret the physical signs of Joel’s prophecy in either a spiritual way or that they occurred during the Lord’s crucifixion. Peter does not offer an explanation for that part of the prophecy, only that he quotes the entire passage because of “its traditional messianic significance and because its final sentence leads logically to the kerygma section of his sermon.” In sum, Peter’s emphasis is that the restoration of prophecy is the sign that the last days, the Messianic Age, has arrived.¹¹

3. Critical Evaluation: A Pentecostal Perspective

3.1. Similarities

3.1.1. The Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1

⁸ Ibid, 272-273.

⁹ Ibid, 273

¹⁰ Ibid, 275.

¹¹ Ibid, 275.

Pentecostal commenters can agree with Longenecker regarding the historical data related to the Day of Pentecost as a harvest festival known as the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:9-10) which occurred at the end of the barley harvest, 50 days after Passover.¹² Warrington, like Longenecker, sees as significant the contrast between the giving of the law for Israel at Sinai with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost for Christians stating, “A new law-giver (the Spirit) and a new covenant established by Jesus and affirmed by the Spirit. A new age was being introduced (the church) and a new patron (the Spirit) were being announced to the world.”¹³ It is also important to note the similarity between Longenecker’s belief that those upon whom the Spirit came, were already believers,¹⁴ a position shared by Pentecostals as they understand that Spirit Baptism is a distinct, post-conversion experience.¹⁵

3.1.2. *Where the Spirit Came: Acts 2:1*

As to the question of “where” the disciples were when the Spirit came, Longenecker finds affirmation in Robert Menzies. Menzies too believes that it was in the “upper room” of a house and prefers this location over the temple due to Luke’s grammar. For Menzies, it was there that the disciples were filled with the Spirit, accompanied by heavenly signs and produced inspired speech.”¹⁶

3.1.3. *Theophanic Signs: Acts 2:2-4*

Longenecker and some Pentecostal commentators¹⁷ find common ground regarding the meaning of the theophanic signs that accompanied the coming of the Spirit. For Longenecker, wind is a sign of God’s Spirit, reminiscent of Ezekiel 37:9-14 where the Spirit brings new life,¹⁸ and ushers in the messianic age. The “sound” echoes the sound at Mount Sinai where God established covenant with national Israel. He also notes that “fire” was a symbol of God’s

¹² Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary* (Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 2001), 60. Keener, *Acts*, 797. Robert P. Menzies, *Empowered for Witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts* (New York, T& T Clark International, 2004), 190. Anthony D. Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Logion Press, 2001), 115. Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers: A Study in Luke’s Charismatic Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 54.

¹³ Keith Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit of Encounter* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 133-134.

¹⁴ Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles”, 268-269.

¹⁵ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 108.

¹⁶ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 176.

¹⁷ See Horton, *Acts*, 54-56; Keener, *Acts*, 798,800.

¹⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 798.

presence, is reminiscent of the consuming fire on Mount Sinai, and echoes John the Baptist's prophecy of a baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Anthony Palma concedes with Longenecker stating that "the wind and fire are sometimes called theophanies- visible manifestations of God." For Palma, "wind" is an emblem of the Holy Spirit (Ezk. 37:9, John 3:8) and "fire" was associated with the Holy Spirit in the OT (Judg. 15:14). Like Longenecker, Palma connects the wind and fire to the giving of the Law at Sinai, and the fire with John the Baptist's prophecy of a baptism with the Holy Spirit. Palma also finds common ground when he states that, "both signs *preceded* the infilling of the Spirit, and were one-time occurrences to mark the full inauguration of a new era in God's dealings with his people."¹⁹ The interpretative questions that remain are the following: (1) was it Luke's intent to press home the point that God was making His Spirit present in a more explicit way, and (2) did the theophany signal that God was inaugurating a new covenant with the Christian community in contrast to the old covenant with Israel at Sinai? To these questions we will later turn.

3.1.4. Tongues as Prophetic Speech: Acts 2:4

On Acts 2:4, Longenecker states that "In OT times prophetic utterances were regularly associated with the Spirit's coming upon persons for special purposes"²⁰ and that Judaism expected, after a time of prophetic cessation, the inauguration of the Messianic Age would reinstate prophecy. He asserts that this is what Luke portrays when "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). Pentecostal expositors such as Stronstad and Tyra agree.²¹ For example, Stronstad tracks OT episodes of the charismatic activity of the Spirit of God, noting transfer, sign, and vocational motifs, concluding that the manifestations such as prophecy and charismatic empowerment served to equip those called to serve God in a specific way.²² Stronstad also highlights a period of the cessation of prophecy during the intertestamental period and the anticipation of the restoration of prophecy, which he sees Luke is reporting after 400 years of silence.²³

Longenecker, like Pentecostal commentators, understands "tongues" as prophetic speech and that "the words spoken at Pentecost under the Spirit's direction were immediately recognized by those who heard them."²⁴ Robert Menzies succinctly states in relation to Acts 2:4 that "the gift of the Spirit [is] the source of prophetic inspiration."²⁵ Palma agrees stating that the word translated

¹⁹ Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 137-139.

²⁰ Longenecker, "Acts of the Apostles", 271.

²¹ Gary Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission: Prophetic Speech and Action in Christian Witness* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 40-50. Tyra does a commendable job to highlight OT references of the Spirit providing prophetic empowerment, prophetic speech, and prophetic action. In so doing, he demonstrates that Pentecostals are not guilty of only leaning on Acts to make their case.

²² Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 16-27. Stronstad concludes his survey stating, "The gift of the Spirit to Israel's leader often has an experiential dimension, such as the manifestation of prophecy, to serve as sign to confirm God's call. Not only is this charismatic activity experiential, but it is functional, for it bestows skills appropriate for this call." 27.

²³ *Ibid*, 31-35.

²⁴ Longenecker, "Acts of the Apostles", 271.

²⁵ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 177; Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission*, 62.

“utterance” (Gk. *apophthengomai*), is used in the Septuagint for supernaturally inspired speech and the content thereof was the glorification of God.²⁶

Second, Longenecker and Pentecostals see tongues as *real languages*.²⁷ Keener states that, “Luke emphasizes tongues because inspired speaking in languages that one has not learned serves as a powerful theological sign and narrative confirmation of empowerment for cross-cultural witness.”²⁸ Amos Yong labels the phenomena in Acts 2:4 as “intercultural or cross-cultural communication,”²⁹ a miracle by the Spirit that reconciles a humanity divided by language. He cogently argues that those present at the Festival of Pentecost were a vastly diverse crowd divided by language, culture, and religious adherence and customs. And though it is exegetically difficult to determine if Luke understood Pentecost as an intercultural event, he suggests “that Luke understood the universality of the gospel...”³⁰

However, Longenecker only accomplishes two interpretive goals in his commentary regarding the significance of tongues. First, he establishes that prophetic speech is now widely reinstated; and second, that tongues, as with the two previous theophanic signs, serve to indicate God’s presence, an idea he shares with Carl Brumback.³¹ Longenecker fails to suggest reasons for tongues beyond implying missiological purposes.³² In contrast, as we will see, Pentecostals have much to say.

3.1.5. Peter’s Sermon at Pentecost: Acts 2:14-21

Longenecker’s commentary covering Acts 2:14-21 shares much in common with Pentecostal perspectives. First, Peter’s explanation of Pentecost by quoting Joel 2:28-32 uses a “*peshet*” interpretation.³³ Secondly, Longenecker notes alterations and additions in Peter’s version of the passage (Acts 2:17, 18, 19), made to emphasize eschatological fulfillment, divine initiative, and the restoration of prophetic revelation and prophecy.³⁴ Althouse, Warrington, and Yong all agree that with the outpouring of the Spirit, the last days have arrived.³⁵ Keener sums it up when he states, “Peter adds to Joel’s text at various points to bring out the implications, especially that this is the eschatological gift of prophecy and hence that the eschatological time

²⁶ Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 148.

²⁷ William W. Menzies and Stanley M. Horton, *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1993), 136; Horton, *Acts*, 62; Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 147, although here Palma even suggests “angelic/heavenly languages”.

²⁸ Keener, *Acts*, 806.

²⁹ Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 197.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 196-197.

³¹ Carl Brumback qtd in Frank Macchia, “Sighs too Deep for Word: Toward a Theology of Glossolalia,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 1992, 49,

³² *Ibid*, 271-272.

³³ Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles”, 275; Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 179.

³⁴ Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 149; Roger Stronstad, “The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke Revisited” in Steven M. Studebaker, *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism* (Eugene; Pickwick, 2008), 109.

³⁵ Althouse, “Ascension, Pentecost, Eschaton”, 226; Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 59; Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 90.

of fulfillment of the promises has come.”³⁶ Third, Longenecker states that the reason why Peter quotes the Joel passage in its entirety, because of it emphasizes the inauguration of the Messianic Age. Numerous Pentecostal scholars agree that the arrival of the Spirit fulfills Joel’s prophecy, marked the arrival of the Messianic Age.³⁷

Finally, in his comments on Acts 2:20-21, Longenecker arrives at the conclusion that Peter may not have known what to make of the cosmic signs when the “sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood.” But he suggests that Peter likely anticipated them to be soon and imminent.³⁸ On this point, Menzies agrees stating “...together with the cosmic portents listed by Joel (vv.19b-20) as ‘signs and wonders’ which mark the end of the age...Luke stresses the *imminence* of the Day of the Lord: the miracles in Luke-Acts are precursors of those cosmic signs which shall signal the Day of the Lord.”³⁹

3.2. Differences

3.2.1 *The Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1*

Longenecker is silent concerning the repeatability or paradigmatic nature of the Pentecost event. Pentecostals not so. For Palma, the Day of Pentecost was unprecedented, unique, historic, and unrepeatable.⁴⁰ Of course, on that point we can concede. However, in terms of Pentecost as programmatic and paradigmatic, the empowering of the Spirit set in motion a Spirit-empowered witness starting in Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, and Luke reports episodes where other believers too received the gift of the Spirit enabling prophetic speech and inspiration.⁴¹ Longenecker was more concerned about “when” the Spirit came than “where” the Spirit came. These are the only two issues to which he comments concerning Acts 2:1 He offers no comments about the believers being “all together in one place,” which speaks to the unity of those gathered that day. Pentecostal authors tend to find this significant, as it highlights the importance of a visible communal life grounded in the unity of God.⁴² Perhaps the unity expressed in Acts 2:1 stands in contrast to a radically individualistic ecclesial life found in North American churches

³⁶ Keener, *Acts*, 875.

³⁷ Simon Chan, “Jesus as Spirit-Baptizer: Its Significance for Pentecostal Ecclesiology” in John Christopher Thomas (ed), *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 141; J. Ramsey Michaels, “Evidences of the Spirit or the Spirit of Evidence” in Gary B. McGee (ed), *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 205; Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 148; Cynthia Long Westfall, “Paul’s Experience and a Pauline Theology of the Spirit” in Steven M. Studebaker, *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism* (Eugene; Pickwick, 2008), 139

³⁸ Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles”, 276.

³⁹ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 186.

⁴⁰ Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 110.

⁴¹ Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 111; Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 64; Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 60-61.

⁴² See Daniela C. Augustine, “The Empowered Church: Ecclesiological Dimensions of the Event of Pentecost” in John Christopher Thomas, *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 158. Simon Chan, “Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology” in *Pneuma: The Journal for the Society of Pentecostal Studies*, 22:2 (2000): 180-181. Stanley M. Horton, *Acts: A Logion Press Commentary*, 54. Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 171. Keith Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit*, 135.

where experiencing the Spirit is viewed as an individual rather than corporate pursuit. Nevertheless, the communal nature and visible unity of the Pentecost narrative serves as a model for the contemporary church regardless of tradition.

3.2.2 *Where the Spirit Came: Acts 2:1*

Although Menzies agrees with Longenecker that the disciples were in the “upper room,” other Pentecostal commentators disagree. For example, Palma, Warrington, and Horton all note that Luke does not explicitly identify the location.⁴³ Horton notes that it may have been in the Court of the Women or one of the porticoes, or roofed colonnades on the edge of the court, which would have explained the crowd that gathered after the Holy Spirit was outpoured, making an easy transition to an open-air market place.⁴⁴ Warrington claims that Luke doesn’t even state they were praying for the Spirit to come.⁴⁵

3.2.3 *Theophanic Signs: Acts 2:2-4*

There is much Longenecker has in common with Pentecostal commentators related to the meaning of the theophanic signs of wind and fire that accompanied the coming of the Spirit. However, how Longenecker understands their significance within the context of Luke’s narrative serves as a departure with Pentecostal perspectives. Longenecker states that when the wind and fire “filled the whole house” (Acts 2:2), it “symbolized...the presence of God’s Spirit among them in a way more intimate, personal, and powerful than they had ever before experienced.”⁴⁶ Further, that when these tongues of fire “separated and came to rest on each of them,” it rightly emphasizes the accessibility of the Spirit for the individual, but he tends to see the theophanic sign(s) as paralleling Sinai, marking the inauguration of a new covenant relationship related to redemption.⁴⁷ Stronstad and Menzies have a different take. While Stronstad connects the dramatic signs of the wind and fire at Pentecost as reminiscent of the theophany at Sinai when the covenant was given to Israel constituting them as God’s covenant people, rather than focusing on law or covenant relationship, he sees the allusion to Sinai serving to contrast the vocation of Israel and the church. In other words, just as “the theophany at Mt. Sinai established Israel as a kingdom of priests the theophany on the day of Pentecost establishes the disciples as a community of prophets.”⁴⁸ Menzies, on the other hand, believes that Luke’s account was not

⁴³ See Horton, Acts, 54; Palma, *The Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Perspective*, 58 and Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit of Encounter*, 131.

⁴⁴ Horton, Acts, 54.

⁴⁵ Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit*, 135.

⁴⁶ Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles”, 270.

⁴⁷ Horton, Acts, 56.

⁴⁸ Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 59.

shaped by the Sinai tradition but rather exclusively on the Spirit as the source of prophetic inspiration.⁴⁹

3.2.4 Tongues: A Pentecostal Perspective: Acts 2:4

Though Longenecker agrees with Pentecostals that tongues in Acts 2:4 is prophetic speech and real languages, he fails to provide the answer as to *why* God used tongues. He may find affinity with Keith Warrington who asserts that Luke doesn't explore the reason for tongues and claims that Luke doesn't ascribe an evidential character to it. Warrington does however believe that tongues function "as the outpouring of the activity of the Spirit in through a person in mission activity to unbelievers, cutting across barriers of language."⁵⁰ His discussion of tongues demonstrates the diverse ways Pentecostals have understood tongues. He notes that tongues are viewed as a sign of the baptism in the Spirit, thought of as a private prayer language, a tool for edification, and that tongues serve as a sign that one is part of a charismatic community and is thus expected to function in charismatic ministry.⁵¹ In what follows are Pentecostal understandings of the significance of tongues in Acts 2:4.

Pentecostals understand tongues to function in the following ways: First, tongues are a sign of *commissioning/ministry inauguration*. Palma suggests that tongues were "a foreshadowing of their commission to go into all the world."⁵² Martin Mittelstadt notes that French Arrington's commentary on Acts sees Acts 2:1-4 as "ministry inauguration" comparable with that of Jesus in Luke 3:21-22.⁵³ Tim Enloe takes a functional approach, seeing tongues as a component of various "*prophetic commissioning*" motifs, reminiscent of such OT prophets as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, where divinely inspired sounds, sights, sensations, and speech served to confirm a commission for prophetic ministry.⁵⁴ Enloe's view is congruent with Stronstad's transfer motif, where he sees Jesus' anointing/commissioning (Luke 3) for prophetic ministry parallels the anointing/commissioning of the disciples.⁵⁵

Second, unlike Longenecker, Pentecostals believe that tongues serve as *the initial evidence of Spirit Baptism*.⁵⁶ Representing this view, Craig Keener states, "I would argue that

⁴⁹ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 201.

⁵⁰ Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 139.

⁵¹ Ibid, 89-90.

⁵² Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 148.

⁵³ Martin William Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition* (Cleveland, CPT Press, 2010), 168-169.

⁵⁴ Tim Enloe, "A Thirty Something Minister Looks at Initial Evidence: A Function Approach to a Sometimes Touchy Subject", *Enrichment Journal*. <http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/201003/2-1003.105thirtysome.cfm>

⁵⁵ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 55; Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 65-66.

⁵⁶ See J.L. Hall, "A Oneness Pentecostal Looks at Initial Evidence" in Gary B. McGee (ed), *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 182-183; Horton, *Acts*, 58; Keener, *Acts*, 803; J. Ramsey Michaels, "Evidences of the Spirit, or the Spirit of Evidence" in Gary B. McGee (ed), *Initial Evidence: Historical and Biblical Perspectives on the Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit Baptism* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1991), 203; Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers*, 63; Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 83-84, 157, 295.

Luke does in fact use tongues as evidence of baptism in the Spirit and in one sense would argue this more strongly than most traditional Pentecostals: tongues is not an arbitrary evidence but is highlighted because it is intrinsically related to the point of what Luke means by baptism in the Spirit.”⁵⁷

Third, speaking in tongues for Pentecostals is seen as *essential for being filled with the Spirit*. While Longenecker is silent on the relationship between being filled with the Spirit and speaking in tongues, Pentecostals confidently assert that “The phenomenon of speaking in tongues, unlike the wind and fire, is integral to the disciples’ being filled with the Spirit.”⁵⁸

3.2.5 Pentecost: The Birthday of the Church?

As stated above, Longenecker on the one hand views the church as already existing prior to Pentecost, since those who received the gift of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost were disciples of Jesus. On the other hand, he makes room for Pentecost as the church’s birthday because he sees Pentecost as “a new model of divine redemption...incorporating both the individual and corporate” and because Luke portrays the church as an instrument of service called into mission.⁵⁹ On the issue of whether or not Pentecost is the “birthday of the Church,” it appears some Pentecostals are divided. Warrington asserts that Acts begins with the birth of the church and that the church didn’t exist until the Spirit came.⁶⁰ Peter Althouse seems to agree when he states that, “The gift of the Spirit promised in the ascension of Christ and fulfilled in the Spirit’s descent, *inaugurated the Church as the people of God* under the eschatological reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶¹

3.2.6 “Filled with the Spirit”: Acts 2:4

Longenecker fails to give any commentary as to what Luke meant by “*filled with the Holy Spirit*.” Perhaps it is because as Warrington suggests, Luke provides no immediate connection with any function on the part of the believer. However, Warrington goes on to say that “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” is synonymous with being clothed with power (Lk. 24:49), baptized with the Holy Spirit⁶² (Lk 3:16; Acts 1:5), receiving the Spirit (Acts 2:28; 10:45) and the pouring out of the Spirit (Acts 2:17; 10:45).⁶³ Keener adds to Warrington’s list that it is an experience that

⁵⁷ Keener, *Acts*, 828.

⁵⁸ Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 141; Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 126.

⁵⁹ Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles”, 271.

⁶⁰ Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit*, 131

⁶¹ Peter Althouse, “Ascension-Pentecost-Eschaton: A Theological Framework for Pentecostal Ecclesiology” in John Christopher Thomas, *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 225.

⁶² Menzies and Horton, *Bible Doctrines*, 125.

⁶³ Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit*, 135.

enables prophets and prophetic inspiration, power for proclamation,⁶⁴ and that Luke indicates subsequent fillings but restricts “Spirit baptism” to the initial experience.⁶⁵ Stronstad argues from the Lukan data that “filled with the Spirit”, with the exception of Ephesians 5:18, is uniquely a Lukan term (9 times in Luke-Acts) meant to describe a corporate or individual experience that enables prophetic inspiration in the forms of prophecy and worship.⁶⁶

3.2.7 *The Significance of their Prophetic Witness: Acts 2:5-11*

As noted in my summary of Longenecker’s commentary covering Acts 2:5-11, the information he provides offers help to answer the question as to *who* it was that was gathered in Jerusalem (God-fearing Greeks, Diaspora Jews, “every nation under heaven) and *what* occurred, but his commentary is thin in terms of offering the *significance* of what was occurring. However, by mining Pentecostal thinkers, many suggestions emerge.

The first is *missiological*. Menzies offers that in Acts 2:5, the gift of the Spirit enabled the disciples to communicate with people “from every nation under heaven.”⁶⁷ Secondly, it demonstrates the *hospitality of God* in welcoming all nations under heaven as the disciples glorify God in their own languages.⁶⁸ Third, is the universal appeal of the gospel that serves as a prophetic and *powerful political alternative* to Roman ideology.⁶⁹ Finally, Yong sees in Luke’s narrative a powerful depiction of *racial reconciliation* where “the ethnicities and languages brought together at Pentecost” constitute a new people of God that includes Jews, Africans, and Arabs in anticipation of the eschatological gathering of all peoples in the Kingdom of God.⁷⁰

3.2.8 *Peter’s Pentecost Interpretation: Acts 2:14-21*

While the Pentecostal perspective on Acts 2:14-21 shares much with Longenecker’s, there are a few significant differences. First, Longenecker uses the word “sermon” to describe Peter’s address to the bewildered and accusative crowd that demanded an explanation. But a “sermon” is a prepared speech, and Peter’s was clearly extemporaneous. Because Peter was among those “filled with the Spirit,” and because the same word for “utterance” (*apophthengomai*) is used in Acts 2:14 as was used in Acts 2:4, Peter’s “sermon” is better understood to be prophetic speech.⁷¹

⁶⁴ See Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 162. Yong states, “Note prevalence of kerygmatic activity, emboldened speech, and widespread impact of the word of God following movements of the Spirit in Acts.”

⁶⁵ Keener, *Acts*, 805-806.

⁶⁶ Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, 59-61.

⁶⁷ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 177.

⁶⁸ Augustine, “The Empowered Church: Ecclesiological Dimensions of the Event of Pentecost” in *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology*, 172; Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission*, 62, 83.

⁶⁹ Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition*, 154-155.

⁷⁰ Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 94.

⁷¹ Horton, *Acts*, 65; Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 177; Palma, *The Holy Spirit*, 148; Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission*, 63;

Second, though Longenecker agrees with Pentecostals that Peter's explanation of Pentecost by the use of Joel 2:28-32 validates the reinstatement of prophecy and the last days of God's redemptive plan, he asserts that it will be through "the apostle's proclamation there will go out from Jerusalem a prophetic message of salvation and call for repentance."⁷² While it is true that the apostles preached the gospel, Longenecker's statement implies an exclusively apostolic mission. Pentecostals, rather, understand prophetic inspiration to be universally inclusive. The potential is that all believers can have the capacity regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, race, culture, language, or nationality to prophetically speak and act. The outpouring of the Spirit of prophecy on "all flesh" provides the ability to receive direct revelation and inspiration necessary to participate in the witness of the charismatic-prophetic community.⁷³ As such, Pentecostal interpreters see themes such as an emphasis on diversity, class and gender equality/reconciliation, social equality, inclusivity,⁷⁴ what Augustine calls the "radical hospitality of God to humanity and the rest of creation",⁷⁵ all because "the charismatic community proclaims a renewed social structure with visible sign posts of the future kingdom age."⁷⁶

Third, Longenecker understands Peter's quote of Joel 2:28-32 as important because of its "traditional messianic significance", meaning that Peter is emphasizing the inauguration of the Messianic Age.⁷⁷ And despite many Pentecostal scholars agreeing, Menzies dissents arguing that for Luke, the miraculous event of the birth of Jesus and the prophetically charged events surrounding the birth narratives was the time of messianic fulfillment. Jesus' ministry was carried out in the last days and therefore, Pentecost did not mark the beginning of the last days.⁷⁸

Finally, Longenecker doesn't see a message of salvation until Acts 2:22-36, a section he calls the kerygma. But Amos Yong does. In Acts 2:19-20 he sees Luke referring to cosmic salvation, or the redemption of all things.⁷⁹ He writes, "...this is metaphorical language functioning as apocalyptic discourse that calls attention to the cataclysmic events attending the arrival of the Day of the Lord and the salvation and vindication of the people of God."⁸⁰

4. Affirmations of Pentecostal Theology

In Longenecker's introductory comments to his commentary on Acts 2:1-21, and throughout, there are places where he is seen lending support for Pentecostal theology. First, while he sees the coming of the Spirit as inaugurating the church and a new covenant, he connects the coming of the Spirit to the mission of the church. Second, he recognizes that those who received the gift

⁷² Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles", 275-276.

⁷³ Augustine, "The Empowered Church", 178; Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 218; Tyra, *The Holy Spirit in Mission*, 64; Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 141;

⁷⁴ Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition*, 103; Horton, *Acts*, 68; Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 94-95, 173-174, 193.

⁷⁵ Augustine, "The Empowered Church", 178.

⁷⁶ Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition*, 117.

⁷⁷ Longenecker, "The Acts of the Apostles", 276.

⁷⁸ Menzies, *Empowered for Witness*, 180.

⁷⁹ Yong, *The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh*, 95.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 268.

of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost were already believers. In other words, this was a distinct and subsequent experience of the Spirit to the disciples' previous conversion. Third, he notices the parallel of Jesus' baptism and the Pentecost event as programmatic for both Jesus' ministry and the disciple's mission. Fourth, he, like Pentecostals, agree that tongues are both prophetic speech and real languages that served a missiological purpose. Finally, by suggesting that Peter's eschatological expectation was that the Day of the Lord was imminent, it lends credibility to the doctrine of imminent return of Christ long held among Pentecostals. These points serve to lend validity to Pentecostal theology and interpretations of the meaning of the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost as empowerment for a charismatic-prophetic mission.

5. Conclusion

Following a summary of Longenecker's commentary on Acts 2:1-21, comparing his exposition with that of Pentecostal commentators and scholars, I found that Longenecker offers the reader a basic exposition of the passage. He focuses more on answering the who, what, where, and when questions of the text, rather than fleshing out the *why*; though at points, he offers modest suggestions. To be fair, his commentary was afforded limited space, and therefore, he was forced to be selective in his comments. This of course, revealed what he believed was most pertinent to explain. The questions he left unanswered required other sources to fill in the details and to offer stimulating implications and applications.

Though I found instances of common ground between Longenecker and modern Pentecostal scholarship, in the final analysis, there were significant points of departure. (1) Longenecker is silent concerning the repeatability or paradigmatic nature of the Pentecost event. Such silence could imply that he reads Pentecost as merely an unrepeatable/historical event. (2) For Longenecker, the theophanic signs parallel Sinai and mark the inauguration of a new covenant related to *redemption* rather than instituting the church as a prophetic community. (3) He also fails to address the multifaceted significance of tongues outlined by numerous Pentecostal voices, most significantly, their evidential nature as it relates to Spirit Baptism. (4) Longenecker fails to explain the Lukan phrase *filled with the Holy Spirit*, whereas Pentecostals see it as synonymous to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and an experience that enables prophetic inspiration, prophetic speech, and power for gospel proclamation as was the character of Peter's Pentecost speech. Based on my analysis, I conclude that while Longenecker's commentary supplies an informative albeit a basic exposition of the passage under review, I found the commentary thin for adequately supporting the theological perspectives and identity of contemporary Pentecostals.

Spirit-Empowered Ministry

- The following section will present articles that provide guidance in modern-day, Pentecostal ministry and ethical topics.
 - The biblical text, historical concerns, and Pentecostal doctrines are relied on to make decisions regarding ministry and ethics.
 - The emphasis in this section is on application of the biblical principles to Pentecostal ministry.

FORGIVENESS IN FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

Gary L. Pickens, D.Min.

“If a born again, Spirit filled Christian refuses to forgive a person and dies, in an unforgiving state, will that person lose their eternal salvation?”

Forgiveness goes to the heart of Jewish and Christian teachings. God created humanity perfect in His image, but in the Garden of Eden, Satan enticed God’s perfect creation leading humanity into sin (Gen. 3:1-7). God being omniscient, knew humans would sin against him. The first messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15 promised that a redeemer, the Messiah, would be crucified and make atonement for the sins of the whole world. The Prophet Isaiah foretold of the coming Messiah as the King of Kings to redeem the world in the millennium, but first he came as a suffering servant to Israel, who died for humanity’s sins. In order to live eternally in heaven, God requires humanity to believe and trust in the Messiah; therefore, forgiveness by God would be the key to humanity’s future.

“Forgiveness in the Bible is primarily the act of God by which he graciously takes away the obstacles or barriers which separate man from his presence, thus opening the way to reconciliation and fellowship. It is secondarily man’s forgiveness of his neighbor, an aspect which becomes especially prominent in the teaching of Jesus.”¹

This essay has two parts: Part One details first century Jewish teachings about forgiveness. Part Two will deal with New Testament teachings about forgiveness and current theological teachings. The second part, a later article, will focus mainly on the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 and the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18.

Part One

How Forgiveness was taught in First Century Judaism

“The ancient world was a constant struggle for survival with individual interest as a primary concern. Any threat to personal well-being was serious, so crimes committed against individuals or groups were dealt with according to current concepts of justice.”²

Among the Hebrews a person’s forgiveness of his fellow is only mentioned infrequently, and in each instance the one requesting pardon is in a position of subservience, and is petitioning for that to which he has a natural right (Gen 50:17; Ex.10:17; I Samuel 15:25; 25:2. Otherwise forgiveness is spoken of in relation to sin against God, where divine pardon is sought (Nu.14:19; I Kings 8:34: Am. 7:2).³

¹ George Arthur Buttrick, ed, Thomas Samuel Keller, John Knox, Herbert Gordon May, Samuel Terrien, Emory Stevens, Editors. *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol E-J. “Forgiveness,” 314-5.

² *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, “Forgiveness” Contributors: Everett F. Harrison – Associate Editor, Geoffery W. Bromiley – Editor, Roland K. Harrison – Editor, William Sanford Lasor – Editor, Lawrence T. Geraty- Editor, Edgar W. Smith Jr, - Editor (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1979), 349.

³ “Forgiveness” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2(Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 349.

Forgiveness is a cure for wrongs both personal and against God. God's forgiveness leads to eternal salvation, and the personal forgiveness provides both mental and physical health. Much has been written about the physical and mental benefits of forgiveness. Failure to forgive a person can cause mental anguish, physical well-being issues, and spiritual disaster.

When the early church emerged, Jewish literature concerning forgiveness included the Hebrew Bible, Midrash collections, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Sirach writings. These resources will be compared to Christian literature of that time. "The Gospel of Matthew was set in the first-century CE, when some of Christianity's fundamental claims about forgiveness came to be articulated and perhaps slowly differentiated from those of Judaism."⁴

Matthew's Gospel where Jesus' statements on forgiveness place pivotal importance on interpersonal forgiveness, interpersonal forgiveness is virtually absent from the Old Testament... Notions of death and judgement sharpen the consideration of divine forgiveness (in the Old Testament). In Sirach 28:1-2, this combination of traditional concepts (death as punishment for sin, obedience to the commandments of the law and loyalty to the covenant) produces the conclusion that divine judgment can be influenced by human activity.⁵

"Regarding eternal salvation the rabbis taught that the condition for having a portion in the world to come was obedience to the Law. However, they also believed in grace. They taught that God would forgive disobedience if one truly turned from his sins and made restitution where necessary."⁶

Today people think of forgiveness as either judicial or God's forgiveness as related in the Bible. God gave the Ten Commandments; Israel broke them, and God punished them. When they repented, God forgave them. Ancient Judaism defined forgiveness in various ways: "First, forgiveness is one of a cluster of related concepts – law, sin, sacrifice, justice, mercy, or compassion, repentance, atonement, purification, pardon and forgiveness. Second, the primary 'victim' of wrong, so to speak- is the one who is wronged and the one with whom a relationship has been breached by the wrong is God."⁷ Therefore, when a person, who is in divine-human relationship, has wronged God, the responsibility for repentance resides with that person.

The God of the Hebrew Scriptures gave the law. Sin (עֲשָׂה - *pesha*)⁸ transgresses against the divine law; "It is disobedience to a divine commandment an act of rebellion. The Normative response, of God to sin is anger and retribution."⁹ God is just, but also, he is a God of compassion and mercy. Many people see God as a God of anger, especially in the Hebrew

⁴ Isaac Kahwa Mbabazi, "The Jewish Background to Interpersonal Forgiveness in Matthew," *African Journal of Evangelical Theology*, vol 30 (1, 2011): 15-6.

⁵ Ibid., 16.

⁶ Robert N. Wilkin, *The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament* (Denton, TX: GES publisher, 2004), 8.

⁷ Charles L. Griswold and David Knonstan, *Ancient Forgiveness: Classical, Judaic, and Christian* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 138.

⁸ The Hebrew word *pesha* means rebellion; see Petuchowski, "The Concept of Teshubhah in the Bible and Talmud," *Studies of Modern Theology and Prayer* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publishing Society, 1998), 15.

⁹ Griswold, and Knonstan, 138.

Scriptures. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel sinned against God and his anger bought punishment through oppression and natural disasters. After Israel's repentance God would forgive and remove the object of punishment. Truly, God is a God of mercy, even in the Old Testament.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures the divine-human relationship manifests itself. When Israel sinned, God's anger produced oppression and curses as promised in Deuteronomy 27, but if Israel repented from its sins, God provided blessings. The Book of Judges exemplifies this cycle of disobedience, punishment, cries for God's relief, and then deliverance. Because of disobedience to God's Law, every generation experienced cycles of blessings and cursings. God gave Moses His special revelation (*Torah* - תּוֹרָה) to the nation of Israel. This special revelation contained 613 laws. These laws/regulations became the contract by which God and Israel's divine-human relationship was established.

Exodus 19-34 details the account of God (*Yahweh-Elohim*) formalizing His covenant with Israel. The stone tablet, Ten Commandments, memorialized God's relationship with Israel. On Mount Sinai God revealed himself to Moses for forty days and nights. The people grew weary waiting for Moses' return and entreated Aaron, the priest, to make a god, an idol that would lead them through the desert to the promised land. Amazingly Aaron, who with Moses, observed God's power over Pharaoh, saw God's authority over the Egyptian gods, and experienced His deliverance of the people thorough the Red Sea would now capitulate to the people's demand to make a golden calf. Their actions clearly broke God's first commandment of the Law, "You shall have no other gods before Me" (NASV Ex. 20:3). God informed Moses of Israel's rebellion and told Moses:

Now then let me alone, that my anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them...then Moses entreated (interceded before) the Lord, and said, 'O Lord, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou has brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand?... Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind... So, the Lord changed his mind about the harm which He said He would to do to his people (NASV Ex. 32:10-14).

When Moses came down from the mountain and saw the people dancing before the golden calf, full of anger against the Israelites, he broke the stone tablets into pieces.

Moses returned to the Lord and interceded for the people, asking God to please forgive them and if not to take his name out of the book that God had written (Ex. 32:31-32) Then God instructed Moses to make two stone tablets and rewrite the commandments upon the stones (Ex. 34:1ff). Then God said:

The Lord God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; Yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children, and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generation" (NASV Ex. 34:6-7).

Therefore, if they repented, God would forgive their sin; but, the ones who refused to repent, their legacy of sin would continue into future generations.

God responded by renewing the covenant, “Then God said, Behold I am going to make a covenant before all your people. I will perform miracles which have not been produced on all the earth, nor among any of the nations (NASV Ex. 34:10).” God expressed divine mercy through a pardon. This pardon required God to atone or cover over their sins (כַּפַּר - *kaphar* Dt. 32:43) in order to remove his anger.

Jeremiah provided the next example where God compared the Northern Kingdom of Israel with the Southern Kingdom of Judah, both committing adultery with false gods. God said to Jeremiah:

Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. Go and proclaim these words toward the North and said, return faithless Israel; declares the Lord; I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God...Return, O faithless sons, declares the Lord; And I will bring you to Zion (Jerusalem) (NASV Jer. 3:11-14).

In this narrative God pursued Israel instructing them to repent and be forgiven and, in a sense, welcoming them back home to where they always belonged.

This cycle repeats throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Israel sinned, God brought impending destruction, but if Israel repented, God would turn away his wrath and forgive them (Ez. 18:21-23; I Kings 21:27-28; I Kings 7:46-52. When the people acknowledged their sin and return to him, God granted mercy and withdrew his anger.

When a nation or individual violates God’s commandments, God responded with either punishment (no repentance) or forgiveness (after repentance). The Book of Jonah provides a great example. The prophet, Jonah prophesied to the Ninevites that if they did not repent, God would punish them for their sin by allowing their city to be destroyed. The people of Nineveh believed in God, called a fast, and the king issued a proclamation and said,

Let men call on God earnestly, that each may turn from his wicked way and from violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish. When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it (NASV Jonah 3:8b-10).

Forgiving in this case neither excuses the Ninevite’s sin nor condones it. God’s wrath kindled against Ninevite’s sins, but when they repented, he had compassion on them. God reversed his wrath and did not bring the deserved destruction. Again, one can see God as a merciful, loving, and compassionate God in the divine-human relationship.

“Relatively speaking, (in the Bible) there is very little attention paid to interpersonal wrongdoing and forgiveness. But the Bible does relate a few instances that involve interpersonal injury, repentance and forgiveness.”¹⁰ One such case involves the story of Jacob and Esau.

In the narrative of Jacob and Esau, Jacob tricked Esau into giving up his birthright and blessing (Gen. 25:33-34; 27:23). Years later, Jacob, fearing retribution for his treachery, sent his servants to Esau hoping to find favor with his brother. Jacob, fearing Esau would attack him, divided his family into two groups; Leah the wife he loved less, was placed first in line and Rachel his favorite wife, was placed last in line with Jacob. So, if Esau attacked Leah, his less favored wife, she would be captured, and Jacob and Rachel would escape. That night Jacob prayed to God to save him from his brother and he had an encounter with an angel, or theophany (a man representing God). “Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, it is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” (Gen.32:3, 6-7, 9-12, 22-32 NIV). This encounter with God changed Jacob’s life.

Jacob and Esau met along the road with Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel and all their servants and flocks. Jacob, the sinner, the perpetrator, bowed down before Esau seeking mercy. Esau completely surprised Jacob by running toward him, kissing him and they embraced, and wept. Jacob then offered Esau an appeasement or a gift of animals for stealing his birthright and blessing, but Esau refused as he had plenty. However, Jacob insisted saying, “If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift or (appeasement) from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God” (NIV Gen.33:10).

Esau, the one who was sinned against, the victim, had already changed his heart and attitude towards Jacob. Esau made the first move of reconciliation by kissing Jacob, in a sense forgiving him. Jacob also had a change of attitude towards Esau, no longer fearing him. Previously at Peniel, Jacob wrestled with a man, a visual manifestation of God. Jacob had seen the face of God, changing him into a new person. That encounter with God caused Jacob to have a change of heart towards Esau. Perhaps Esau’s reaction towards Jacob resulted from the fact that Jacob’s deceptions against him had failed. Jacob fled to Haram and did not inherit any of Isaac’s wealth and as far as Esau’s perception, he had received God’s blessing because of his material wealth.

Another case would be Joseph’s reconciliation with his brothers in Egypt (Gen.37:12-28). Joseph’s brothers harbored jealousy towards him and sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt. God used Joseph to interpret Pharaoh’s dream of a coming famine. As a result of this divine revelation, Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge of famine planning and preparations. Joseph administered the food distribution for Pharaoh’s government. This position of authority enabled Joseph to help his brothers and his father during the food crisis. Jacob relocated to Egypt at the request of Joseph to escape the desperate food shortage in Canaan. Joseph had every right to be angry with his brothers as they had sinned against him, selling him into slavery. In this narrative Joseph made no direct request for forgiveness. However, the victim, Joseph, had a change of heart and attitude towards his brothers. He knew that God had ordained the events that culminated with his position in Egypt (Gen.45:5). His position enabled him to rescue his family

¹⁰ Griswold, and Knonstan, 142.

in a time of famine. “Neither he nor his brothers were free agents they were all instruments of the divine will.”¹¹

The Hebrew Scriptures seem to lack statutes that command forgiveness, but one passage related to forgiveness occurs in Leviticus:

Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Lev.19:17,18 NIV).

Similar to the passage in Leviticus, Sirach, states in 28:2 “Forgive your neighbor a wrong, and then when you pray, yours sins will be forgiven.”¹²

I Samuel 21:1-14 concerns King David and the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites had heard that God had given Israel the land and Moses had commanded Joshua to wipe out all the inhabitants. They knew that Joshua had conquered Jericho (Joshua 9:3), so they feared their coming destruction. The Gibeonites devised a plan to trick Joshua into making a covenant with them (Josh. 9:22). God had made a covenant with Abraham and then with Moses through the Law. Scott J. Hafemann, in his work, *Central Themes in Biblical Theology* presented a very thorough analysis of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel:

The life of Abraham is the patriarchal, and hence foundational, a model of what it means to live in a covenant relationship with the “God of our fathers” (Deut.26:7; I Chr.12:17; 20:6; Acts 3:13; 5:30; cf. Rom 4; Gal 3). In an act of undeserved mercy designed to redeem humanity after the judgment of the tower of Babel (Gen.11:7-9), God appeared to Abraham when he was an idolater in Ur and called him to go to Canaan (Gen 11:31-32; 15:7; Joshua 24:2-3; Acts 7:2. Once in Canaan, he would inherit the land and become the father of a great nation through whose blessings from God the other the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3).¹³

The Israelites lived by their covenant with God and to make a covenant was to keep a promise. Joshua unwittingly made a covenant with the Gibeonites allowing them to live (Josh.9:3-15). During King David’s reign a famine gripped the land. David inquired of the Lord the reason for the famine. God responded that Saul had violated the Joshua/Gibeonite covenant. King Saul had put the Gibeonites to death which violated that covenant. This massacre of the Gibeonites, by Saul, was not recorded in 1 Samuel.

David went to the Gibeonites, whom Saul had victimized, asking what he could do to atone for the death of their people. The Gibeonites said that they could not accept silver or gold, as an appeasement from Saul’s family. Instead they requested that seven of Saul’s relatives to be executed, for retribution of the Gibeonites murdered by Saul. As per the Gibeonites request,

¹¹ Griswold and Knonstan, 143.

¹² Sirach is a second century book of wisdom of Yeshua ben Sira, commonly called the *Wisdom of Sirach*, and is also known as the book of *Ecclesiasticus of Ben Sira*, a work of ethical proverbs, 200-175 BCE.

¹³ Scott J. Hafemann, “The Covenant Relationship.” *Central Themes in Biblical theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity*, eds, Scott J. Hafemann, Paul R. House (Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 22.

David handed over the seven relatives, but he spared Mephibosheth, son of Jonathon because of an oath between David and Jonathon protecting Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 1-9).

The rabbis said, “David agreed but only reluctantly, first because he did not think that sons should be punished for the sins of their fathers and second, because he thought the Gibeonites should have acted out of mercy and not justice.”¹⁴

Why did David hand over Saul’s relatives? In order that the covenant that Joshua had made with the Gibeonites would be honored. One can see the importance of keeping the covenants, from Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David throughout the Bible.

The implication of the Talmudic commentary, then, is that David was torn between honoring the old covenant and showing respect for the stranger (victim), on the one hand, and forgiving a crime (i.e., Saul’s crime against the Gibeonites), on the other. Had David been the victim of wrongdoing, he would have pardoned his enemy and not exacted just retribution.¹⁵

The Gibeonites were not like David but, “The Gibeonites seemed to show no anger or resentment; they do not come to David, but he comes to them. They were simply responding to his request for a means of expiation, their failure to forgive is in fact the expression of a firm sense of justice and fairness.”¹⁶ David was acting between the perpetrator, sinner, King Saul and the victims, the Gibeonites. David did not want to hand over his best friend’s son and six more of Saul’s sons, but in order to honor the covenant made by Joshua, he had no choice. The handing over seven relatives of Saul made appeasement to the Gibeonites for the sin of Saul against them.

The narrative between Abraham and Abimelech in Genesis 20 seems to come close to forgiveness as a change of heart. When Abraham and Sarah resided in Gerar, Abraham told King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister because he thought that the king would kill him and take Sarah for his wife. Then God came to the king in a dream and told him Sarah was Abraham’s wife and if he touched her that he would die. Abimelech had not touched her, and God reassured him in another dream that He had kept him from sinning. God then told Abimelech to return Sarah to Abraham, for Abraham was a prophet and would pray for him. The king asked Abraham how he had wronged him and brought guilt on his kingdom. Abraham answered Abimelech that he felt there was no fear of God in Gerar, and he was afraid that Abimelech would kill him and take Sarah as his wife. Abraham assured the king that he had not lied about Sarah, she was his wife but also his half-sister. Then King Abimelech gave Abraham sheep and goats and money as an appeasement.

King Abimelech, the perpetrator, gave Abraham, the victim, appeasement of sheep, cattle, and money. But he was not forgiven until he requested forgiveness from Abraham, whom he insulted (Gen.20:14-17). This understanding occurs in the Babylonian Talmud, at Mishnah Baba Kamma 8:7:

¹⁴ Griswold, and Knonstan, 144.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Commentators regularly cite this Mishnaic passage as evidence for forgiveness that is more than a merciful or compassionate pardon or mitigating of punishment. Here we are told that forgiveness does not excuse the sin or cancel the punishment, that what elicits the forgiveness from the victim (and from God) is a request for forgiveness...and finally the victim should not withhold forgiveness once it is requested.¹⁷

Abraham prayed for the king and God forgave him and opened up the wombs of his wife and slave girls so they could have children (Gen. 20:17). Abraham, the human victim, acted as a mediator between the sinner, Abimelech, and God.

In the Hebrew Scriptures and ancient Judaism, repentance focused on the Day of Atonement, (Yom Kippur), with fasting, prayer, sacrifices, and cleansing (Leviticus 16; Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 23:27-31; 25:9; Numbers 29:7-11).

For transgressions done between a person and God, the Day of Atonement atones (provides purification; i.e., seals the reconciliation). For transgressions between one person and another, the Day of Atonement atones, only if the first one appeases (*y'ratzeh*, compensates) the other.¹⁸

The Day of Atonement features the victim as the target of wrongdoing. The victim must be compensated by the perpetrator, sinner before he can repent. If the sinner repents, he may be forgiven by God, if it happens before the Day of Atonement.

The Gemara records an incident that notes the seriousness of one's obligation to seek forgiveness and to repent. The context is in the Mishnah's requirement that before Yom Kippur, one must compensate the victim of sin and seek forgiveness from him.¹⁹

Rav had been offended by a butcher. But during the year the butcher had not approached Rav to seek his forgiveness. With the Day of Atonement drawing near, Rav decided to approach the butcher to confront him about his sin. Rav approached the butcher and he got very angry and told Rav to leave him alone. As the butcher was cutting some meat, a bone flew up and stuck in the butcher's throat, killing him. Rav's reason for going to the butcher was to try to get him to confess his sin so that he could be forgiven by God on the Day of Atonement.²⁰

The story makes clear that the fundamental relationship of interest to the rabbis was between the sinner and God not that between the sinner and his human victim. The Talmud is concerned with human indignation, anger, and such emotions; it clearly wants human beings to eliminate such feelings. But the person of interest in this regard is not the victim of harm (Rav) but rather its perpetrator (the butcher)."²¹

Conclusion

¹⁷ Ibid., 144-5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 148.

¹⁹ Ibid., 150.

²⁰ Ibid., 149-51.

²¹ Ibid., 150-1.

Early first century Judaism seems to conclude that in the personal injury category, the sinner and perpetrator of the wrongful act must make appeasement restitution to the victim before they can be forgiven by God and this must take place before the Day of Atonement. Examples of these personal wrongful acts seemed to be rare in the Old Testament.

Most of the transgressions listed in the Old Testament describe individuals or groups who transgress against God and in early Judaism literature discuss the perpetrator/sinner and God. The offended person is God. The sinner must repent of their sins before the Day of Atonement so that they will be forgiven by God.

In the Jewish teaching of forgiveness, the victim must make the first move. The perpetrator or the sinner sins against the victim by committing an offence against the victim. The victim, out of his/her love for God, does not retaliate or hate the sinner but has a change of attitude about them and intercedes with prayer to God for the sinner. The rabbinic teachings suggest that truly to forgive someone requires removal of all hostility towards the sinner. No one single act can define the character or nature of that person. The change of attitude of the victim toward the sinner causes the sinner to repent and because of the victims change of mind and love for the sinner, God relents the punishment that was due the sinner and forgives the sinner or perpetrator for their sin.

This essay, in part one, has sought to investigate forgiveness in first century Judaism and how it would apply to Jesus' instruction on forgiveness from the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:14-15 and the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18. Jesus said, "if you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven," which was based on one's relationship to God and one's neighbor.

Part Two of this essay will investigate the conditionality of forgiveness in Jesus' teaching. Are we forgiven only as we forgive others? This question will be addressed in a later journal article.

WIND IN THE FIRE

David L. Craun, M.R.E, Ed.D. (ABD)

As a second-generation Pentecostal (my Mom received the Baptism in the Holy “Ghost” - as it was called then - and later, my Father was baptized when I was too young to remember) I grew up in the 1950's experiencing a Pentecostal revival with many miraculous signs being manifested. I personally received the Baptism at the age of 12, having accepted Christ as my savior at the age of 5. Both of my parents were from traditional Christian denominations – one Baptist and the other Episcopalian. At that time, neither local denomination validated this experience as being authentic for modern times. The current idea at the time was that this type of manifestation ended with the early church. When my Mom told her pastor what she had experienced as she was worshipping the Lord while washing dishes at home, he told her that this was not from God. The area of the country where I grew up was very traditional and had not yet been exposed to the Pentecostal¹ and the later Charismatic² movements.³ People viewed us as a “cult” that was doing “weird things down there at that church.” We were called “holy rollers” and other disparaging terms. All we knew is that this experience gave us the strength to live for God in a better way and drew us closer to our Lord. We were going more on experience than Biblical knowledge. Yes, we knew the scriptures in the book of Acts, and we knew of the accounts about the early disciples and others who had received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, this was the extent of our foundation for what was taking place: what we were experiencing and what the book of Acts had recorded. We were and are Pentecostals – associating the account of what took place on the day of Pentecost with present-day experiences.

It was my delight and privilege to introduce others to this experience. While in high school, I became president of our local Youth for Christ school club. Once a week after school, we met in the home of my geometry teacher, the faculty sponsor of the club, who was a Episcopalian married to a Presbyterian. They both were hungry for more of God in their life and had, by that time, heard about others in their denominations receiving this experience. My teacher received the Baptism with the Holy Spirit first during her morning devotions and shared what had happened with me. Her husband was still "seeking" the Baptism. He took me with

¹ "Pentecostalism, charismatic religious movement that gave rise to several Protestant churches in the United States in the 20th century and that is unique in its belief that all Christians should seek a post-conversion religious experience called baptism with the Holy Spirit."

[Http://www.britannica.com/topic/Pentecostalism](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Pentecostalism), accessed May 8, 2020.

² Charismatic movement: On the web site [https:// history.stackexchange.com](https://history.stackexchange.com), it states that "The Charismatic movement began on April 3, 1960, when an Episcopalian priest, Dennis J. Bennett, told his congregation that he had experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. His sermon sparked a new Pentecostal revival and led to many churches adopting some of the beliefs and practices of Pentecostal Christians. <http://www.christianfallacies.com/articles/forsyth/historyOfCharismaticMovement.html>, accessed May 8, 2020.

³ For a good summary of the development of the Pentecostal movement, see an interview on CBN.com that Dr. Craig von Buseck did with Dr. Vinson Synan in his book *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal*. The title of the interview is “The Early Days of the Pentecostal Movement.” https://www.cbn.com/spirituallife/biblestudyandtheology/theholyspirit/the_early_days_of_the_pentecostal_movement.aspx?, accessed April 22, 2020.

him going to Full Gospel Businessmen⁴ meetings all over the area. He was somewhat put out with God that his wife had received the Baptism before he did. About a year later, he was filled with the Holy Spirit after being humbled by the Lord. As a prominent businessman in our community, he was embarrassed to be seen coming to our little Pentecostal church (Assemblies of God). However, he became so hungry for a closer walk with God that he was willing to put aside his feelings. They became a prominent, influential source for spreading and advancing the Charismatic movement in our community during the 60's.

Over the years, I have heard many different sermons on the Pentecostal experience and receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Even after a Bible College degree in a traditional Pentecostal institution, I had never heard anyone address the meaning of the two signs that ushered in the day of Pentecost – “a mighty, rushing wind,” and “divided tongues as of fire⁵.” In fact, it was almost 50 years after my personal experience of receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit that I began to investigate for myself the significance of these two signs. It was only after making the association through my amateur blacksmithing experience that I realized the connection between wind and fire. When preparing to make a traditional fire using coal or charcoal to do blacksmithing, it is necessary to add air (oxygen) to the fire to make it hot enough to be effective. Having this understanding, I further noticed that the stages of preparation to do metalwork through blacksmithing were also types of the Holy Spirit found in Scripture: fire, wind, oil, and water.⁶ With this realization, I began to ask the questions that have led me to do further research on that connection and the ensuing results, both in the natural process of blacksmithing, and the spiritual process of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

In doing research for this article, I checked about 20 popular commentaries to see if any of them ventured into the reason for the signs of “sound of a mighty rushing wind,” and “divided tongues as of fire.” I found a variety of comments which help support the Old Testament references for wind and fire, but none went behind the scene to ask the question, “why these two signs?” This research further enhanced my theory that popular commentaries have not addressed my questioning. To be sure, my search was not exhaustive. I welcome to hear from anyone who can advise me to the contrary.

For those of us who have the experience of being filled (baptized) with the Holy Spirit in modern times, we can look back to what has been recorded in the New Testament as our reference. However, those early disciples who were being obedient to the instruction the Lord gave them to go back to Jerusalem and wait to receive power⁷ had⁸ only their scriptures: the law,

⁴ Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International was founded in 1953 and is currently in 85 nations. The U.S. headquarters is currently in Irvine, California. Wikipedia states that its theological roots are founded in Pentecostalism. See J. R. Zeigler, “Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International” in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, revised and expanded edition, ed. Stanley M. Burgess, associate editor Eduard M. Van der Maas (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), 653–54.

⁵ See Acts 2:2-3 (NKJV).

⁶ Charles S. Morton, *Manual of Blacksmithing*, (Chicago, The Gerlotte Publishing Co, 1902)

⁷ Acts 1:8 NKJV

⁸ Greek: *dunamis* (δύναμις) meaning force, specifically miraculous power – ability, abundance, might. power, strength, violence, mighty work. James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Greek and Hebrew Dictionary*, (Nashville, Tenn: Regal Publishers, Inc., date unavailable in the printed edition), 24.

prophets, poetic books, and historical books.⁹ Along with that, they had the teachings of Jesus and knowledge that he was indeed the Son of God who was born as a man, lived among them as a servant, died on the cross just a few weeks earlier, and rose from the dead three days later. Just ten days earlier, they saw him ascend back to heaven leaving them the instruction that there was more to come. He was not going to leave them without a comforter, without power to continue his work, without the assurance that they would not fail to further the message that faith in Jesus was the path to eternal life. They were waiting --- but for what? What was going to take place? How would they know it when it did happen? What would happen to them that would be the answer to the promise Jesus gave them?

These questions are some of the same questions that were being asked at the turn of the 20th century. Historically, the Pentecostal movement came out of what was known at the time as “Holiness.”¹⁰ My¹¹ home church emphasized maintaining holiness by outward manifestations such as type of dress and outward adornments along with spiritual practices that indicated one’s dedication to the Lord. These preferences were hold-overs from the Holiness Movement. Some of the customs that were handed down to me were biblical; however, others were based more on social norms that were acceptable earlier in our country's history. Wanting to explore what the Bible did say, I began to search the Scriptures (like the Bereans)¹² to see what was based on the Word of God and what was based on customs and preferences. This on-going search has led me to explore the two signs that occurred on the Day of Pentecost more fully. Was the Baptism with the Holy Spirit primarily an emotional experience? Or does it have foundation in the Old Testament as well as New Testament scripture? It was my involvement with learning blacksmith skills to teach boys I was mentoring that brought me to a fuller understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit and the Old Testament signs of the presence of God in the affairs of mankind. Jesus had promised that he would not leave his disciples without a comforter.¹³ Now they were waiting for the Promise and waiting together in one place, in one accord.¹⁴ After waiting for ten days, Acts chapter 2 records what happened:

⁹ The web site Torah.org provides a list of the 24 Books of the Hebrew Bible being divided into three groups: the five books of Moses (*Torah*), eight books of the Prophets (*Neviim*), and the Eleven Books of the Writings (*Ketuvim*). The *Ketuvim* contain the book of Psalms (*Tehilim*) which will be our reference used here connecting the events on the Day of Pentecost with the Hebrew scriptures known by the disciples. See Torah.org, <https://torah.org/learning/basics-primer-torah-bible/>, accessed April 22, 2020

¹⁰ Christianity Today, in its shortlist category states in “Phoebe Palmer: Mother of Holiness Movement” that the holiness movement was between 1824 and 1923 lasting almost a century. They state under origins that the movement began with Sarah Worrall Lankford in 1836. Timothy Merritt founded the *Guide to Christian Perfection*, later called *Guide to Holiness*, in 1837. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-82/holiness-movement-timeline.html>, accessed May 8, 2020.

¹¹ Britannica describes this movement as the following, “Holiness movement, a religious movement that arose in the 19th century among Protestant churches in the United States, characterized by a doctrine of sanctification centering on a post-conversion experience. The numerous Holiness churches that arose during this period vary from quasi-Methodist sects to groups that are similar to Pentecostal churches.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, editors, updated February 18, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Holiness-movement>, accessed April 8, 2020.

¹² See Acts 17:10-15.

¹³ John 14:16, 26, and John 15:26. Comforter: from the Greek *parakletos* (παράκλητος) meaning an intercessor, consoler: - advocate, comforter; Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, 55

¹⁴ Accord: Greek *homothumadon* meaning unanimously: - with one accord. Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, 51.

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 mighty rushing 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. Moreover, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4 NKJV).

These verses have become the foundation of the modern-day Pentecostal Movement, along with other references in the Book of Acts; but this was the first, the beginning that became the test later for whether Gentiles could be part of the church. It was Peter's observation that God had given the Gentiles the same gift that they had received. He observed that "the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 11:15-16 NKJV). We are not told if the same signs of a sound as a mighty rushing wind and divided flames of fire took place, but the result of "speaking in tongues" was evident to Peter – enough evidence for him to defend what took place among the Gentiles to his Jewish brethren. In fact, it is never mentioned again that the sound of rushing wind and divided flames of fire ever took place when people were baptized with the Holy Spirit, but speaking with tongues is mentioned as a gift of the Holy Spirit multiple times in the New Testament.¹⁵ It was this initial occurrence on the Day of Pentecost that these two signs accompanied the giving of the promised Holy Spirit. But why? What was the significance? What did wind and fire have anything to do with the Holy Spirit coming as promised?

To investigate a plausible answer, I began the search for the connection between "wind" and "fire" that was mentioned in the Book of Acts, the Old Testament scriptures, and the Gospels. My search took me to various references in the Law and the Prophets, but it was in the Psalms, that sparked the most interest and was comparable to Acts. Looking through the lens of blacksmithing, and knowing how important the blowing of air (wind) is to make the fire capable of changing cold, hard iron into a form ready to be molded into useful instruments, I could see what took place on the Day of Pentecost. Receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit does to mankind what the wind in the fire does to iron – makes us ready to be shaped into useful instruments. Let's look more closely at what these signs may have meant in the minds of the disciples as they were expecting an answer from heaven.

It has been noted that the first sign was a "sound." It sounded like a strong, blowing wind coming down from heaven – not blowing across them horizontally as in a natural storm, but coming down on them. It sounded like blowing wind. When I am teaching blacksmithing skills to young people, I emphasize the importance of building a fire correctly and getting it to the point that one can hear the air blowing up through the coal, similar to a blast furnace. Over the 40 some years that I have been doing this, I realized that it is almost useless to try to heat the iron unless first I hear the wind blowing in the flames. It is like the type of Coleman lanterns that used liquid fuel that had to have air pumped into the tank. Until there was enough heat for the flame to "generate," the light would be very dim. One knows that the point of "generation" is reached

¹⁵ See Acts 10, Acts 19:1-6, and 1 Corinthians 14.

when one hears the “sound of the wind” in the lantern – similar to a swooshing sound.¹⁶ As a blacksmith who is also a Spirit-filled minister of the Gospel, I can make the connection of how the sound of the wind in the fire prepares the metal to become pliable enough to be shaped into useful instruments. It was the sound of a mighty wind that initiated the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8).

But what is the significance of this sign – the sound of a mighty, rushing wind? Albert Barnes cites a good explanation for the significance of wind by his commentary on Acts 2:2 in his *Notes on the Whole Bible*:

As of a rushing mighty wind - Literally, “as of a violent blast borne along” - φερομένης (*pheromenēs*) rushing along like a tempest. Such a wind sometimes borne along so violently, and with such a noise, as to make it difficult even to hear the thunder in the gale. Such appears to have been the sound of this remarkable phenomenon. It does not appear that there was any wind, but the sudden sound was like such a sweeping tempest. It may be remarked, however, that the wind in the sacred Scriptures is often put as an emblem of a divine influence. See John 3:8. It is invisible, yet mighty, and thus represents the agency of the Holy Spirit. The same word in Hebrew רוּחַ *ruwachand* [*ruach*] in Greek πνεῦμα *pneumais* [*pneuma*] used to denote both. The mighty power of God may be denoted also by the violence of a tempest, 1 Kings 19:11; Psalm 29:1-11; Psalm 104:3; Psalm 18:10. In this place the sound as of a gale was emblematic of the mighty power of the Spirit, and of the effects which his coming would accomplish among people.¹⁷

Barnes cites two Old Testament Psalms that give illustrations of how wind represents the presence of God – Psalm 29:1-11 and Psalm 104:3 along with other references. I want to come back to these references and take a further look at them. Further comments have been made, as expressed in the *Expositor's Dictionary of Texts* by William Robertson Nicoll:

But the wind has got at least two functions. (1) One of the Psalmists speaks about God bringing the wind out of His treasures. That must be the wind that bloweth healthily our sicknesses to heal; whose every kiss is tonic, whose very rude and wild embrace is strength. Its very buffetings are healthy. Now that is what God's Spirit is to the spirit of a man. It is life and health and peace. But He also comes as a mighty rushing wind, as He came of old, and then He comes with great and stirring power. (2) But there is another function of the wind. It is sometimes a winnowing wind, separating chaff from grain, the false from the true; or it sometimes comes as a blight.¹⁸

¹⁶ "Tool Dude Tony" has a YouTube video called "Coleman Premium Dual Fuel Lantern – What not to do!" that is an entertaining look at starting a liquid fuel Coleman lantern. By making common mistakes lighting a liquid fuel lantern, he demonstrates the brightness of the light. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjFUvgw4_TA, accessed May 8, 2020. "Tentworld – The Camping Experience" also has a video that demonstrates lighting the lantern. In both videos, when the lantern is lit and begins to heat the "generator," one can hear the sound of the air flowing from the tank up the generator tube to the fire in the mantles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfsYqNCowJw>, accessed May 8, 2020.

¹⁷ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-2.html>, accessed May 12, 2020.

¹⁸ D.L. Ritchie, *Peace the Umpire and other Sermons*, 123.

Ellicott's *Commentary for English Readers* comments on Acts 2:2 with the following remarks:

A rushing mighty wind.—Better, a mighty breath borne onwards, so as to connect the English, as the Greek is connected, with St. Peter's words that, "holy men of old spake as they were moved (literally, borne on) by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The Greek word for "wind" is not that commonly so translated (*anemos*), but one from the same root as the Greek for "Spirit" (*Pnoè* and *Pneuma*—both from *Pneô*, "I breathe"), and rendered "breath" in Acts 17:25. It is obviously chosen here as being better fitted than the more common word for the supernatural inbreathing of which they were conscious, and which to many must have recalled the moment when their Lord had "breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). Now, once more, they felt that light yet awful breathing which wrought every nerve to ecstasy; and it filled "the whole house," as if in token of the wide range over which the new spiritual power was to extend its working, even unto the whole Church, which is the House of God (1 Tim. 3:15), and to the uttermost parts of the earth.¹⁹

Thus, "wind" in the scriptures signifies a purifying process like that described in Psalms 1:4, "...but are like the chaff which the wind drives away." Jesus added more insight and analogy: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8 NKJV). These references seem to indicate that there was an idea in the disciples' minds that the Spirit functions like the wind – even though you cannot see it, you can hear and feel the effects of it. On the Day of Pentecost, they certainly did hear the sound of it like it as a mighty and rushing wind.

Psalm 104:3-4 seems to be an Old Testament link between the sign of the wind and the sign that resembled a flame of fire dividing up and setting on top of each person.²⁰ In very descriptive language these metaphors are used to help describe the activity of God: "beams of His upper chambers in the waters," "clouds are his chariot," "He walks on the wings of the wind," "He makes his angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire." Very seldom in Scripture are the two images of wind and fire used in close conjunction with one another. However, this is the case in both Psalm 104:3-4 and Acts 2:2-3. I conjecture that when the disciples were experiencing these two phenomena, their minds may have flashed back to this Psalm as a validation that God's presence was indeed among them. Was it the intent of this Psalm to be, in fact, prophesying – foretelling - what was going to be taking place in this upper room?²¹ All we can know is the

¹⁹ <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/ebc/acts-2.html>, accessed April 22, 2020.

²⁰ The New King James uses the phrase "divided tongues as of fire," whereas the King James Version uses the phrase "cloven tongues like as of fire." The Amplified Bible says, "tongues resembling fire." In each case, the image that is being described coming, after hearing the wind, was something that resembled fire that divided (split) up and came over the top of each of them. The Greek word used here is "*diamerizo*" (*διαμερίζω*) meaning to partition thoroughly (literally distribution). Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Greek Dictionary, 22. The root word "*merizo*" means "to part, to apportion, share, distribute, or give parts." The Greek word used here for "tongue" is "*glossa*" (*γλῶσσα*) meaning "the tongue" and by implication a language. Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Greek Dictionary, 20.

²¹ It is interesting that the Book of Acts makes a note that the disciples were staying in an "upper room" (Acts 1:13). This is a description of a chamber built on top of the flat roof of houses constructed at this time in history. The same imagery is used in Psalm 104:3&4 "He lays the beams of His **upper chambers** in the waters ... who walks on the wings of the wind, who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire." Perhaps this is coincidental, but

metaphors used in Psalm 104 were also being described in Acts 2 – the sound as of wind, and pointed objects (tongues) that looked like flames setting over each of them. In Psalm 104, it is clear that these metaphors are descriptive of the presence of God and how God manifests Himself.

I would be remiss to infer that this is the only reference that describes the presence of God like wind and fire in the Old Testament. Just to recount a few cases, I will mention Exodus 3:2, where the “Angel of the Lord” appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in the burning bush that attracted His curiosity to the point that he came to investigate it. Later, when Moses was leading Israel out of Egypt, God’s presence was demonstrated as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, both separating the Egyptians from the Israelites. Likewise, the cloud hovered over their camp in the day to protect from the intense heat, and the pillar of fire hovered over them at night to protect from the desert cold (Ex. 13:21). Moses later wrote in Deuteronomy 4:24, “The Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” The account of Elijah being taken up in a chariot of fire in a whirlwind (2 Kgs. 2:11) is another reference where wind and fire appear as images that represent the presence of the Lord. Thus, the image of both wind and fire is established as Old Testament images to describe the presence of God among men.

Faithful Jews were those who were assembled together in the upper chamber on that Day of Pentecost. They had made it a practice to attend the synagogue faithfully, as did Jesus their Master and Teacher.²² It is presumed that they would have had a knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures to the point that they would have made the association of these supernatural manifestations of wind and fire with confirmation that God’s presence was among them.

Wind and fire are specific references in the Old Testament to the presence of the Lord. As we have already noted, “wind” in Acts is also translated “breath” in other passages. The choice of using “pneuma” (πνεῦμα) to describe this wind was intentional. Luke obviously wanted to make the connection that a supernatural breath was coming down on those who were in the upper chamber. God was breathing on them just as Jesus did earlier when He said: “Receive the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22 NKJV). Just as God “breathed” life into Adam, so now He was once again “breathing” life into what would become His church.

perhaps this is the Holy Spirit's way of also linking what was taking place in Acts to the prophetic proclamation being uttered in Psalm 104. Was Psalm 104 more than a poetic exaltation of the majesty of God? Is it also looking forward to the Day of Pentecost and giving a hint of how God was going to send His Spirit to infill faithful followers (Emphasis is mine)? <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/psalms/104.htm>, accessed May 8, 2020.

²² Bible Odyssey has an interesting article on first-century synagogues written by Chad Spigel assistant professor of religion at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. He states that Jesus taught in synagogues, one being in Capernaum (Mark 1:21:28), as did Paul the apostle (Acts 17:1-2). Spigel states that the word "synagogue" literally means "a gathering of people but also the place of assembly." They were used as schools, for communal meals, as hostels, as courts, and as a place to collect and distribute charity as well as political meetings. Spigel noted that worship also took place in first-century synagogues, but the main focus for worship in the time of Jesus was the temple in Jerusalem. It was in the synagogue that Jesus read from Isaiah and declared that the reading was being fulfilled in their time. Not only at synagogue, but in every devout Jewish home, the practice of reading Scripture was performed. <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/related-articles/first-century-synagogues>, accessed May 8, 2020.

As this “breath” was coming down rapidly and with force, another phenomenon also occurred – something described as a tongue of fire²³ that divided and sat on top of each person there.

What is the significance of fire dividing and sitting on each person? I have noted already from my references to Old Testament scriptures that fire was often a supernatural sign of the presence of God. I would like to take a further look at Psalm 29:7, “The voice of the Lord divides the flames of fire.” Albert Barnes comments on Acts 2:3 thus:

The unique appearance that of tongues was an emblem of the diversity of languages which they were about to be able to utter. Any form of fire would have denoted the presence and power of God, but a form was adopted expressive of “what was to occur.” Thus, “any divine appearance” or “manifestation” at the Baptism of Jesus might have denoted the presence and approbation of God; but the form chosen was that of a dove descending - expressive of the mild and gentle virtues with which he was to be imbued. So in Ezekiel 1:4, any form of flame might have denoted the presence of God; but the appearance actually chosen was one that was strikingly emblematical of his providence. In the same way, the appearance here symbolized their special endowments for entering on their great work - the ability to speak with new tongues.²⁴

Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible makes the connection between Psalm 29:7 and Acts 2:3 in the following quote:

The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. Or “cutteth with flames of fire” (e); that is, the thunder breaks through the clouds with flames of fire, or lightning, as that is sometimes called, Psalm 105:32; and with which it cleaves asunder trees and masts of ships, cuts and hews them down, and divides them into a thousand shivers. Some refer this, in the figurative and mystical sense, to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (f), on which the Lord descended in fire, and from his right hand went a fiery law; **but rather this may be applied to the cloven or divided tongues of fire which sat upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, as an emblem of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit bestowed on them;** though it seems best of all, as before, to understand this of the voice of Christ in the Gospel, which cuts and hews down all the goodness of men, and lays them to the ground, Hosea 6:5; and is of a dividing nature, and lays open all the secrets of the heart, Hebrews 4:12; and, through the corruption or human nature, is the occasion of dividing one friend from another, Luke 12:51; and like flames of fire it has both light and heat in it; it is the means of enlightening men's eyes to see their sad estate, and their need of Christ, and salvation by him; and of warming their souls with its

²³ The phrase “tongue of fire” occurs once, and once only, in the Old Testament Isaiah 5:24, “Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble (Hebrew: tongue of fire), and the flame consumeth.” In this place, the name tongue is given from the resemblance of a pointed flame to the human tongue. Anything long, narrow, and tending to a point is thus in the Hebrew called “a tongue.” The word here means, therefore, “slender and pointed appearances” of flame, perhaps at first moving irregularly around the room. Taken from Albert Barnes’ *Notes on the Whole Bible – Acts 2:3*. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/acts/2.htm>, accessed May 12, 2020.

²⁴ <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bnb/acts-2.html>, accessed May 8, 2020.

refreshing truths and promises, and of inflaming their love to God and Christ, and of setting their affections on things above, and of causing their hearts to burn within them (Emphasis mine).²⁵

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers reveals some interesting insights in the following quote:

The voice. .—Literally, *the voice of Jehovah cleaving flames of fire*. The word is used of hewing stone and wood²⁶ (Is. 10:15). The reference to lightning in this verse is universally admitted. But the most various explanations are given of the image employed. But the comparison with Isaiah 51:9, and Hosea 6:5, where the same verb is used of God's "judgments," makes it possible that the lightnings here are regarded as "**thought-executing fires**," and if language would allow, we might translate "hewing with flames of fire," (Emphasis mine).²⁷

These commentators confirm what I suspected – that Psalm 29:7 is speaking about more than how God speaks like a thunderstorm – thunder and lightning flashes in nature. It seems that there is a double meaning – not only does lightning demonstrate the power of God, but the way this Psalm describes various metaphors that are like the voice of the Lord leads me to conjecture that the reference to "divides the flames of fire" signifies more than a comparison to a thunderstorm. The connection to Psalm 104 is in verse 4: "Who makes his angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire" (NKJV)²⁸. This "fire" is a supernatural reference, and the metaphors represented in both Psalm 29 and 104 lead to an understanding that what was taking place on the Day of Pentecost was foretold in these Psalms. Both wind and fire are seen as supernatural manifestations of God's presence. The wind signified God "breathing" on them as Jesus did, and the fire represented God's speaking to and through them. When they saw that the fire was being hewn apart (divided) and resting over each of them, most likely, they understood that what was about to take place was indeed the work of Jesus fulfilling His promise to endue them with power as He baptized them with His Holy Spirit. If they had knowledge of the Psalms I have been referencing, then they would have understood the meaning of the wind and the dividing flame of fire – the breath of God was blowing into them.

Acts 2:4 gives us the response from these disciples: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (NKJV). Even though verse 4 goes beyond the scope of this article, let it suffice to say that I take this passage at face value: the disciples did the speaking – they used their voice, lips, and tongue to form the

²⁵ <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/psalms/29.htm> May 12, 2020

²⁶ Benson Commentary - Divideth the flames of fire: Hebrew, חָצַב, *chatzeb*, hews, or cuts up, divides, or distributes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/benson/psalms/29.htm>, accessed May 12, 2020.

²⁷ <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/psalms/29.htm> May 12, 2020

²⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* comments on Psalm 104:4: (1) If the construction of the A.V. and LXX is retained, and it is the most natural construction of the Heb. words, we may render, Who maketh his angels winds, His ministers a flaming fire, (2) Most commentators, however, think that the context demands the rendering, Who maketh winds his messengers, Flaming fire his ministers.....Jehovah forms His messengers and ministers out of winds and lightnings; He uses these natural agents for the execution of His purposes. See <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/psalms/104.htm>, accessed April 22, 2020.

sounds (utterance) the Holy Spirit was giving them. They spoke with “other tongues – languages” that were understood by the crowd assembling outside from many parts of the known world. This supernatural utterance became the evidence that they indeed were being filled with the Holy Spirit.

I personally experienced a modern-day example of hearing in my language (English) what was being spoken in tongues by a Welch young person who had not learned English in school. It was during the first Royal Rangers Euro Camp held in Switzerland in the early 90’s. There were youth from about 20 different nationalities. We were meeting in a large horse arena with sawdust on the floor. The platform speakers spoke either in English or German. Whichever language was not spoken (English or German), the other language would be interpreted from the platform. All those who did not understand either language would have a third translator in the audience who would translate into the language spoken by the youth in their group. After the platform speakers finished, there was an invitation to come down to the center area for prayer. While praying with many that I could not understand, I finally heard someone speaking in English – praying and praising the Lord. I had met the national leader from England several years prior. He was there with his wife. They were close by where I was hearing the youth speaking in English. I remarked how nice it was hearing someone praying in English. The British leaders explained that the young person was praying in tongues. In Wales, they did not learn English until they were much older and in a higher grade. I was experiencing my personal “Day of Pentecost” from the viewpoint of hearing the praising of God in my language spoken supernaturally by someone who had not learned it. I had heard about this from others, but now I was experiencing what it was like for those visitors in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when they heard the apostles speaking in their foreign language.

God chooses to reveal himself to us in ways that we are capable of understanding. He is omniscient as well as omnipotent. He knows what metaphors and analogies to use to relate supernatural truth to us. Jesus illustrated this when he used parables to help his disciples understand what his kingdom was like: “The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner” (Matt. 20:1 NKJV). Thus, the choice to send a sound like the wind (breath) and to send fire that split up in the shape of a tongue to sit over each of those present is not coincidental – it was intentional. God selected these two phenomena because of what it would evoke in the hearts and minds of those who were experiencing them. Not only would they realize from the sound of wind and the presence of supernatural fire in the room that God was manifesting Himself to them, but when the fire divided up (hewn apart into the shape of tongues) they would recognize that the sounds they were uttering were indeed coming from (breathed by) the Holy Spirit as “the voice of the Lord” –they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. God used the scriptures that they had available to them to validate the experience that was happening to them – Psalms 104 and Psalms 29.²⁹

²⁹ The first time I personally experienced supernatural fire was when I was five years old – the year I accepted Christ as my savior. My parents had traveled from northern Virginia to attend a tent revival in another state. As I recall they knew the evangelist Rev. Gallor (not sure of the spelling). He invited my sister (4 years old) and I to come to the platform and sing the song “Jesus Loves Me this I Know.” While we were singing there was a commotion going on outside. My parents were told later that at the same time we were singing, there were balls of fire on top of the tent going from pole to pole. Yet, it was clear weather. That supernatural phenomenon brought a mighty revival that lasted for some time.

I would like once again to bring the reader to the point that I came to understand the relationship between wind and fire better. Most of us know from personal experience that when we blow on fire, it helps to increase the intensity. That is precisely what must happen in the process of blacksmithing in order to successfully heat cold, hard iron into a state that makes it possible to be shaped into useful instruments. Together, wind and fire work to make the metal ready for transformation. So together, the “sound as a mighty, rushing wind” worked with “tongues as of fire” to transform the disciples into useful instruments to fulfill the Great Commission given to them just days before. The "breath of God" came together to work with the “voice of the Lord” that was dividing those flames of fire. The Holy Spirit gave the disciples not only utterance of new languages they had not learned, but the power that Jesus had promised. Those same disciples who had been hiding and cowering out of sight for weeks since the death of Jesus were now emboldened with the ability to stand up publicly and proclaim, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14-16 NKJV). They also proclaimed, “This Jesus God has raised, of which we are all witnesses. 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” (Acts 2: 32-33 NKJV). These followers of Jesus were now useful instruments that had been shaped (forged) in the wind and fire.

I conclude with a personal testimony. As I mentioned earlier, I received my personal Baptism with the Holy Spirit when I was 12 years old. It also transformed me into a person more useful to the Lord because of the power I received. Prior to my Baptism, I was a very shy, bashful boy. So bashful that when my own relatives would come to our house to visit, I would hide outside and play with our cats to avoid them. But my hunger for more – more of the Lord in my life – brought me to the place to personally seek the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I had seen how it had transformed some of my relatives and gave them the ability to overcome bad habits and sinful practices.

I still can recall that morning some sixty-one years ago. Hidden in between the first and second pews while most were praying at an old fashioned altar (yes, we had wooden benches between the front pew and the platform that were called altars), I was praying for more of the Lord in my life to be a better witness for him. With tears of contrition in my eyes and a broken spirit in my heart, I was transformed when the Holy Spirit gave me one sound (utterance), that by faith, I spoke out loud (even though it was softly). That one syllable spoken by faith in my heavenly Father, who gives good gifts to his children, has now been exercised and developed into many different languages. How many I do not know, but I do know just as I heard a Welch young person speaking in tongues that I understood as English, so I have spoken in Hebrew that was understood by a Jewish lady who was a machine gunner in the Six-Day War. While I was praying in tongues softly standing next to her in a neighborhood Bible study during closing "circle prayers" being given by those present, she heard my whispers. After everyone finished praying, she whirled around to face me and said, "Where did you learn Hebrew? I've studied it for years and cannot speak it as well as you did." Then she told me what I was praying. I told her that I did not know Hebrew and that it was a gift Jesus gives believers. Just like the Day of Pentecost, a stranger at the time heard me speaking in a supernatural language that became the means for her and her family to find Christ as their personal savior.

Yes, you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes on you – I did. I was transformed that day from a shy, bashful child to an emboldened youth that became a leader for Christ in my high school and the leader of our church youth program.³⁰ Now, years later I have a better understanding what happened that first Day of Pentecost: they heard the sound of the wind (breath) and saw the split fire (tongues) of the voice of the Lord, knowing that indeed Jesus was fulfilling his promise to give them the power to be his witnesses.

³⁰ Our church had a Christ Ambassador Youth group that met prior to Sunday night worship service while the adults had fellowship together. I was asked by my pastor to become the student leader. It was after one of those pre-church meetings that my pastor asked me to “testify” to start off the evening service (Yes, we had Sunday evening church – and was it church! Many powerful manifestations of the power of God took place in those night services. And yes, we had “testimonies” - a time when individuals shared how God was working in their lives). I stood beside the pulpit to testify when the Spirit's anointing came on me in a powerful way. Twenty minutes later, when I finished speaking, my pastor said, “David, I think you have a calling to preach on your life.” He confirmed what God was preparing me to be and do. This was four years after my personal experience of receiving the Baptism with the Holy Spirit.