

Noise From Heaven

Acts 2:1-13 NIV

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” And man has been trying to figure this out and explain it ever since.

Over the last 20 years or so, a renewed interest in the “beginning” has fostered more theories on how man thinks man, and his home, came into existence.

Albert Einstein is credited with asking this question: “What choice did God have in creating the universe?” When I read that, a somewhat humorous image came to my mind. Imagine God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit sitting around a table with a cup of Joe, iPads and laptops, discussing how to create all that is. Finally God said, “Awe, just create it out of nothing!” “Brilliant.” “Agreed.”

The problem with all the theories that man comes up with and the reason that they are called theories is no human was around to observe. This is not true, however, for the beginning of the church.

One of the theories of creation is the big bang theory. That sounds noisy, doesn't it? Was there noise with creation? Only Three can answer that question. Maybe some day we can ask.

The beginning of the church could be called the big noise theory. But theory doesn't fit; *fact* would be better. Unlike the creation of the heavens and the earth, where there were no human witnesses, there were plenty who heard the noise and saw the

results, on the day of Pentecost, of the creative work from heaven.

In Acts, chapter 2:1-4 we read:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)

We all know the destructive power of wind, don't we? But this wasn't destructive, but creative. *Like* the sound of violent blowing wind-but nothing was destroyed. God's creative power added to these men what Jesus said was coming.

Along with this sound, that attracted a lot of attention, what looked like tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them, and the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak in recognizable languages-**we hear then declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues (dialects, languages, Acts 2:11)** the observers said.

So, we have an audio/visual with many witnesses. Some say “They” in verse one of chapter 2 refers to the 12, others say “They” include the 120 of 1:15. But 2:7 says, “Utterly amazed, they asked (they here refers to the

crowd that had gathered), “Are not all these *men* who are speaking Galileans?””

We know that the 120 included women- and what are the chances that all 120 were Galileans? Most likely “They” of 2:1 refers to the 12 even though some or all of the 120 could have been present and witnessed this event.

In verse 14, Peter begins to answer the question the observers were asking one another. And, during his answer, we may get a hint as to where this event began.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! (Acts 2:14-15)

We know from the end of Luke's gospel and the first chapter of Acts, that the disciples spent time in two places while waiting, as Jesus had instructed: an upstairs room (Acts 1:13) and the Temple (Luke 24:53). Chances are, at 9 a.m., they were all together in one of the rooms along the wall of the Temple for prayer along with many other devout Jews. This would allow for the large crowd to quickly gather checking out the loud noise.

The preaching may have moved out into the rest of the Temple area and even into the outer areas and the street. But Peter's

explanation likely took place somewhere in the Temple.

As Peter begins to explain the noise from Heaven, he tells the observers that the time of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies has come.

“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ (Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2)

Part of this prophecy came true in the early days of the church; but part is yet to be fulfilled. We are still in the last days. There is still time to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. But those days may end soon.

Peter next reminds his audience of the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus:

“People of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him

to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. (Acts 2:22-24)

Peter follows Jesus’ certification from Heaven with some Messianic prophecies from David, followed by a call to repentance:

“I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope,
²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹ “Brothers and sisters, we all know that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
³⁵ until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”^[E]

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:25-41)

Peter said that this noise from Heaven followed by what had just happened in their hearing and seeing was the beginning of a fulfillment predicted by the prophet Joel. We today recognize this as the beginning of the Church.

Well, this is a lot of scripture and many sermons could be, and have been, preached from these passages. One sermon site, when I searched Acts 2:14-41 listed 651 sermons. And that is just one sermon site.

I want to conclude with a general blessing that began on that day, followed by a more personal observation.

Peter said that the promise is **for you and your children and for all who are far off:**

Listen to this illustration called; What is the church?

Russ Blowers was a minister who was active in his local Indianapolis Rotary club. At club meetings each week a member would give a brief statement about his job. When it was his turn, Russ said: "I'm with a global enterprise. We have branches in every country in the world. We have our representatives in nearly every parliament and boardroom on earth. We're into motivation and behavior alteration.

We run hospitals, feeding stations, crisis pregnancy centers, universities, publishing houses, and nursing homes. We care for our clients from birth to death.

We are into life insurance and fire insurance. We perform spiritual heart transplants. Our original Organizer owns all the real estate on earth plus an assortment of galaxies and constellations. He knows everything and lives everywhere. Our product is free for the asking. (There's not enough money to buy it.)

Our CEO was born in a hick town, worked as a carpenter, didn't own a home, was misunderstood by his family, hated by enemies, walked on water, was condemned to death without a trial, and arose from the dead-I talk with him everyday."

Isn't that a great description of the Church lived out every day for those Peter described as far off?

Now for my personal observations concerning this passage:

I have heard it said many times by different people when talking to them about church and their salvation, "I don't think that

the Lord could forgive me for what I have done." Have you ever heard that excuse?

Don't you buy that excuse from anyone. Take them to Acts 2 and explain to them that some in the crowd that day, hearing the wonders of God in their native dialect, may have been in the crowd a few weeks earlier shouting Crucify Him! That is amazing grace; and it was for them, their children and for all who are far off.

Jesus meant it when he said to love your enemies and do good for those who hate you. Anytime you hear someone use the excuse that God could not forgive them for what they have done, you remind them that some of the very first church members were Messiah murderers. And God forgave them, and accepted; adopted them as his children.

My next personal observation is on the age old controversy of baptism. I grew up in the Freewill Baptist Church and remember baptisms taking place in the creek about a hundred yards from the church building. I also remember the discussion that I had with that preacher after he found out that I was baptized in the Church of Christ.

Who is right and who is wrong? Is it a matter of legalism? Can you go into the water and just come up out of the water a wet sinner? Are we saved by faith alone? I have a list that a friend sent me with 26 different items that save or justify. Baptism along with faith, grace, repentance, and even works are part of the list. One in particular, found in 1 Cor. 15:2 and Matthew 10:22 led him to the conclusion that salvation is progressive; that is, it happens in the past, present, and in the future: Remain faithful...

Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

² By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:2)

Jesus told his disciples:

²² Everyone will hate you because of me, but those who stand firm to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:22)

And the debate goes on and on. But, in my own mind I have made it real simple.

Jesus may have walked thirty miles to be baptized by John. Jesus, who knew no sin, was immersed in the Jordan River. Matthew records that John hesitated to baptize Jesus. But Jesus responded:

"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:15-17)

Noise from Heaven-God speaking; the Spirit descending like a dove. I think that the parallel between Jesus baptism and what happened to disciples on the day of Pentecost is quite interesting.

If Jesus, who knew no sin, was immersed to fulfill all righteousness, this old sinner had

better take the plunge. In my mind, it's a matter of obedience, not debate.

If I claim God as my loving Heavenly Father, why would I not want every good and perfect gift he had to offer me? Receiving the Holy Spirit is an awesome gift from God.

It's is **for you and your children and for all who are far off:**