

Understanding Pentecost (LITS #1)

(2 = Profile; 3 = Corporate anointing; 4 = Gifts of; 5 = Baptism in)

Acts 2:1–4 ¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Background: On the night of the last supper, Jesus told His disciples that He would die and then ascend to heaven...but then He promised He would not leave them alone.

John 14:15–18 ¹⁵ “If you love Me, keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will pray the Father, and He will give you **another Helper**, that He may abide with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He **dwells with you and will be in you**. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

After He died and rose, Jesus gave His Great Commission to go to the ends of the earth, ending by adding a reminder that He would be with them in the form of Holy Spirit always.

Pentecost was the fulfillment of that promise and His disciples immediately began to live out the Commission to make disciples of all nations. Understanding Pentecost begins by understanding that Jesus keeps His promise to be with us every day until the end of this present age.

Acts 2 must be interpreted in light of Acts 1:4-8, where the risen Lord instructed the disciples to wait for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit. He explained they would “be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” and they would receive power to be His “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth”.

Just as the ministry of Jesus depended on Holy Spirit descending on Him at His baptism, the ministry of the disciples would depend on them receiving Holy Spirit and relying on His power. He had come to dwell in them permanently to empower for witness to all the nations so that God will be glorified among those nations.

The point of Pentecost is mission, and the goal of mission is: **Habakkuk 2:14** ¹⁴ For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

Note: God’s plan for being glorified among the nations was to form the church. The scope of God’s plan is all the nations. The necessary power for fulfilling God’s plan is His Holy Spirit.

In Acts 8, the Spirit was poured out on the Samaritans making them members of the body of Christ. The same thing happened with the Gentiles in Acts 10. The nations were coming in.

The initial outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was marked by three symbolic phenomena. First, there was the sound of a violent rushing wind that filled the house. Then, there was the visible sign of tongues of fire resting on each person. Finally, there was the miraculous speaking in foreign languages which none had previously learned.

The sound of the violent rushing wind was a picture of invisible power. Both Hebrew and Greek words for wind and spirit are the same. In Ezekiel 37, God’s Spirit brought dead men to life.

The second phenomenon was the appearance of tongues of fire resting on each person. In the Bible, fire symbolizes God’s holy presence: Moses in the wilderness saw the bush that was burning and yet not consumed; Israel in the wilderness was guided and protected by the pillar of fire; Hebrews 12:29 says that our God is a consuming fire.

Fire brings heat and light. The heat consumes the dross, purifying anything in contact with it. It also pictures the zeal that should mark believers, who are to be hot, not lukewarm, in their devotion to Christ. The fire appearing in the form of tongues also symbolizes God's holy power through the proclamation of His Word.

The light pictures the illumination God brings to those in spiritual darkness. Jesus told his disciples, "You are the light of the world" and also said, "I am the light of the world." The picture is of a single flame that separates and rests on each of them. This shows that disciples will do and be what Jesus did and was.

The point of the many languages is that it broke down barriers between people. In Gen 11, when the people built the Tower of Babel, God confused their language so they couldn't understand each other. At Pentecost, Babel confusion is reversed.

Note again: The goal of God's plan is that He will be glorified among the nations. Pentecost refers to the "fiftieth day", a Jewish holiday known as the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot in Heb). Originally a harvest festival, in time it was a day to commemorate the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. Now, the New Covenant, replacing the law, would set God's world harvest in motion.

Ask yourself these questions as you think about this purpose:

- (1) Is my focus on God's glory in all things? Did I even think about that as I went through my week? Did it determine how I resisted temptation or how I spoke to others, or how I planned?
- (2) Is my passion that the nations would glorify God through the gospel? If my heart is not on world missions, is it out of sync with God's heart?
- (3) Is my daily life consciously dependent on Holy Spirit? Would I have missed Him if He had withdrawn from me this past week? Do I lean on Him for purity of life and power to obey God?
- (4) Is my daily desire to bear witness of Christ to those who are lost and perishing? The power of the Spirit isn't given just to make me happy. It is given to make me holy so that my life and words bring glory to God as I bear witness to His saving grace.

That should be the meaning of Pentecost for you and me. The same Spirit present at the foundations of the earth, by whom our Savior was conceived, that was with Jesus every day of His life, came and made His dwelling place with the sons of men... with us!

In that gift of Holy Spirit, the church was born. 120, 3000, 5000 more... Pentecostals used to be a small segment of Protestantism, but today it is the fastest growing form of Christianity globally (Azuza St, 1906).

Consider: Holy Spirit gave Peter the boldness, authority and truth he didn't possess on his own. If the Spirit can do that in a day, imagine the results in one who lives every day obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit – total transformation.

We are meant to live in the presence and power of the Spirit of God who helps us to confess Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 12:3), empowers us to serve God with supernatural power (1 Cor 12:4-11), binds us together as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13), helps us to pray (Rom 8:26), who intercedes for us (Rom 8:27), guides us (Gal 5:25), and helps us to live like Jesus (Gal 5:22-23).

Holy Spirit leads us to freedom from sin, to partaking of divine nature, to power in our spirits, to becoming established in Christ as brothers and heirs with Christ for eternity.

What happened on the first Pentecost continues to happen to Christians throughout the world today. God pours out the Spirit upon all who ask.

Consider how we are living each day. Are we relying on the power of God's Spirit? Are we an open channel for the Spirit's gifts? Are we attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Is the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc.) growing in our lives?

Many Christians have been influenced by the individualism of American culture and live as if the church is useful but unnecessary. They seem to believe that as long as they have a personal relationship with God, everything else is secondary. But Pentecost shows us that community of God's people is central to God's work in the world.

As Holy Spirit empowered believers to praise God in many languages, the miracle released the multilingual, multicultural, multiracial mission of the church. We are a community drawn together by God's love...

After Holy Spirit fell, Peter preached a sermon to help folks understand what had just happened. In this sermon he cited a prophecy from Joel:

Acts 2:17–18 ¹⁷ *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.*

Later, he explained that the Spirit would be given to all who turn from their sin to God.

Acts 2:38 ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This was a momentous, watershed event. For the first time in history, God began to empower all sorts of people for ministry. In the OT the Spirit was poured out almost exclusively on prophets, priests, and kings; in the NT the Spirit would be given to "all people" regardless of their position.

The church would be a place where every single person matters and where every member contributes to the health and mission of the church (see Eph 4:11-16).

Each Christian needs to ask: Am I serving God through the power of the Spirit? Am I exercising the gifts of the Spirit in my life, both in the gathered church and as I live for God in the world?

John 16:7–16 ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ However, **when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears **He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.** ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that **He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.** ¹⁶ "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father."

Declare means openly show. Holy Spirit makes you a witness – one who hears and sees!

Ministry