

Having filled out the company of twelve apostles the 120 waited together for the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit. And He came! He came about nine in the morning as the fiftieth day following the Passover was fully come. Pentecost [fiftieth] was a feast day of the Jews prescribed in the Law of Moses to be held fifty days after the offering of the first fruits of the Harvest each year. It celebrated the commencement of the harvest itself. What a harvest was begun on this Day of Pentecost. The Day was replaced by a harvest of souls continuing until the Rapture. Under the Law a sheaf of first fruits were to be offered each year on the first day of the week following the Passover—two days after the Passover, Leviticus 23. The Lord Jesus was surely the Firstfruits from among the dead when He rose two days after He had been the Passover sacrifice upon the Cross. He was the first and foremost of a vast harvest of saints to be born again by the blood of the sacrifice of our Passover, Christ. All this was clearly foreshadowed by the seven feasts prescribed in the Law, as are other events yet to come.

1Corinthians 5:7 *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

Romans 11:6 *For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy.* This was no coincidence, what happened on this Day of Pentecost! But what did really happen? Something never seen or heard before. Suddenly, without warning, a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind then filled all the house where they were sitting. And cloven tongues **like as of (but not) fire** appeared and **it (not they)** sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The mighty sound attracted a crowd. Since it was a feast day many Jews and proselytes were in Jerusalem observing it. They are spoken of as devout, perhaps because this was not one of the major feasts like the Passover or the Day of Atonement and only attracted the more devout. As part of their devotion to God they were faithfully honoring a command of the Law they observed. They were rewarded that day with far more than they expected or could ever dream of. We don't know how many already had saving faith under the Old Testament when they came but we know 3500 did that day and many more within the next few days. It was a revolutionary saving faith with liberty and power they never would have dreamed of, much less asked for. A life and relationship with God and one another based upon faith, love and holiness not simply obedience of a severe Law they could not keep.

Their world had been turned upside down and the world of the Jews was also, Acts 17:6. The nations and people named as present covered the whole Roman Empire representing Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. God had put this one pagan nation into worldwide power at that time (as prophesied by Daniel). It was Satan's masterpiece, his throne, and it inflicted cruelty and defeat upon God's

chosen people, Israel. Yet God used it to facilitate the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ world wide. The same nation that He allowed to crucify His Son unwittingly and unwillingly became a sort of cradle of Christianity. All of Acts takes place in the Roman Empire. On the other hand Rome was later to become incubator for something horrid, Babylon the Great, Revelation 17.

These fishermen on the street with a despised Galilean accent were speaking in the native languages of each of the nations represented there. What were they saying? Clearly they were speaking languages foreign to them. They would not have been accused of drunkenness otherwise. This was not a "gift of ears, of listening" given a selected few. Obviously not everyone understood all the different languages spoken but when one's native tongue was spoken they got it. The other tongues being spoken were confusing to those not familiar with them. The tongues were really not needed to convey truth or information on that day. They were for a sign of God's power at work. Those dwelling throughout that part of the empire had a common language they used routinely, Aramaic. Jesus used it too. Though they were all Jews they seldom used Hebrew for daily communications.

What was being said? The Greek indicates they spoke short weighty statements, neither long sermons nor mere slogans.

Why did the Holy Spirit come this way instead of just quietly entering their hearts as He does today? Over three years before He had openly descended personally as a dove upon the just baptized Jesus with a proclamation from heaven by the Father. He had been with the disciples while within Jesus, John 14:17. But He had returned back home to The Father in Heaven with Jesus when He had ascended to Heaven ten days before. Now He returned alone—with the gift of tongues for men, proof that Jesus was indeed a Man in heaven at the right hand of God and had sent Him. The barrier of languages imposed by God at the Tower of Babel was broken through by the Spirit's coming, forecasting the removal of language barriers someday. But even though the Spirit moved Peter to quote some well known Scripture predictions of the Spirit's coming upon the Jewish people, it was not to be yet. While the offer to Israel to repent and be saved was genuine, powerful and earnest, it was in vain. Only a remnant repented at this time as recorded here. The other signs prophesied by Joel had to wait, for Israel was not ready to receive them. Though signs were given, tongues spoken, miracles wrought, preaching enabled, and multitudes were indeed saved, Israel's leaders didn't repent. They remained entrenched in their own little religious empires and compromising relationships with their Roman occupiers. The offer was forthright and genuine. And their refusal equally so, ensuring disaster for the nation and for them personally as well. But not unpredicted or without forewarning from the lips of the prophets. The Lord Himself appealed to them to repent. Their response was to pay Judas to betray Him.

God would have sent Christ back to set up the Kingdom if they had had a change of heart. Thousands of individuals, convicted by the words the Holy Spirit spoke through Peter that Galilean fisherman, cried out,

“men and brethren WHAT SHALL WE DO?!”

Peter's words still ring down through the ages,

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

They did repent, their sins were remitted and they did receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [The Greek word translated Ghost in the KJV is the same as translated Spirit elsewhere.] There was no waiting period then nor is there now. Paul clearly states that **every** believer has the Holy Spirit upon being saved.

Ephesians 1:13 in whom ye also [have trusted], having heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (DBY),

The resulting transformation from selfish, fearful legalistic souls to loving, generous, joyous souls was rapid and wondrous. They loved the truth of God given them by the Apostles. They loved to be together and fellowship with those of like faith. They loved to share both their spiritual and earthly wealth with one another. And they loved their unsaved neighbors who were watching and brought them to the Christ they had found. So they grew in numbers and grew in favor of the people of Jerusalem as the Lord added to the assembly daily such as should be saved. Note, souls were added to the assembly by the Lord, through personal conviction and repentance. They were apparently not actively recruited by the saints or the Apostles. Evangelism became necessary later when the outreach to Gentiles began.

No entrance examinations other than confession of sins and baptism were evident nor necessary. All was fresh and pure. The believers continued together daily in the Temple, which probably was the only place big enough to accommodate them all. One wonders what the priests thought of this. The increased activity in the temple was probably a welcome show of interest at first, until they discovered the real purpose and object of their visitor's hearts. But the saints broke bread together from house to house, not honoring the Temple with this sacred devotion to their rejected Lord. This term “broke bread” could mean they shared common meals or they remembered the Lord together daily with one another in their private homes. Probably both. So they ate their meals with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God.

Though the assembly as an outwardly identifiable entity was not yet openly apparent, it did exist from the beginning day when formed by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

*1Corinthians 12:13 For also in [the power of] one Spirit *we* have all been baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit.*

The Spirit took up residence on the earth from the Day of Pentecost onward. This is personally in the bodies of each believer and collectively in the assembly, as a whole worldwide on earth, and in each local assembly taking the Name of Christ.

Today many, though Christian, do not gather to His name alone but have added their own labels due to divisions or independency. Some may quench the Spirit's activity in them collectively as a body by interposing human leaders and arrangements in their services. This displaces the priesthood of all believers established by New Testament scripture, 1Peter 2:5. Some, as the Galatians, have introduced false doctrines displacing the doctrine of Christ. Others, as the Corinthians, have condoned or allowed sinful practices. Yet the Holy Spirit is still here upon earth seeking to bring sinners to repentance. He is here on earth enriching, guiding and empowering the personal Christian life of each believer and their use of the gifts given each of them through Him to serve Jesus Christ. And He is here on earth seeking to provide leadership among saints gathered unto the Lord's Name. O do not systematically quench Him in meeting arrangements, careless allowance of sin or unscriptural teaching! Beware that personal fleshly behavior can usurp His place by unresponsiveness to either His restraint or to His prompting. And He is here in the Bride (the church He established in Acts 2) saying “Come Lord Jesus,” Revelation 22:17, 20. For He will leave with us. He who is now preventing the rise of the False-Prophet is soon leaving with us, 2Thessalonians 2:6-8. Then Israel and the whole world will be systematically subjected to the awesome wrath of Almighty God for seven long years, until they repent or destroyed.

Peter's preaching was powerful. He relied upon the Word of God. But He let the Spirit lead him to speak what he did the way he did. The Spirit empowered his boldness to condemn his fellow countrymen for denying the Just. Peter himself had personally denied Christ three times just after Jesus had been apprehended. How can he have dared be so bold after so great a fall? Was he not ashamed? Yes. He went out and wept when he first realized what he had done, Luke 22:62. But the Lord came to him privately shortly after He had risen, Luke 24:34, and Peter was personally restored to communion with the Lord. But he had lost all confidence in his suitability to go out to serve the Lord. Instead He went back to his old business, fishing. And he took all the other disciples with him! There, on the shores of Galilee, the Lord confronted him again and restored him to his place of service and leadership among the disciples, John 21. So by grace Peter became instrumental in the forming of the assembly, the Bride of Christ, the body of Christ. It was formed first among the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, then some years later, among the Gentiles, Acts 10. Peter was instrumental in both instances. The Lord had given him the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, Matthew 16:16-19, and he used them well, with the power and leading of the Spirit.

By Ronald Canner, July 15, 2008