

The Meaning of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13)

The setting:

- Jesus had promised to His followers this: **Acts 1:8**, NASB
- And He had told them this: **Acts 1:4-5**, NASB
- In our text, the **wait** is over—the **promise** is delivered!
- **But, what does it mean? What did it mean then? What does it mean now, for us?**

Verse 1

It happened on the day of **Pentecost**

- That clues us into both **timing** and **meaning**
- Pentecost (fiftieth) was a Jewish festival—proclaimed by God—that was celebrated 50 days after Passover (See **Leviticus 23** and **Deuteronomy 16** for details) (also called “**feast of weeks**” or “**...of harvest**”)
 - **About timing:** 50 days after Jesus was crucified (on Passover) (40 days with and 10 days waiting)
 - The timing is intentional (Cf. Passover and First-fruits fulfilled)
 - **About meaning:** Pentecost fell at the beginning of Israel's summer grain **harvest**
 - **Deuteronomy 16:10-11 and 12a**, NIV
 - To acknowledge that the harvest was from God (giving back)
 - To rejoice in His goodness
 - Remember their deliverance
 - All “**at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His name**”
 - Keep all that in mind... look what happens next...

Verses 2-3

Remember “**at the place He will choose as a dwelling for His name**”?

- The **noise like a violent rushing wind** and the appearance of **fire** signify God's new dwelling place
- These are OT expressions of God's presence coming to rest somewhere
 - Tabernacle: **Exodus 40:34-35** and **38**, NASB
 - Temple: **2 Chronicles 7:1-3**, NASB
 - **Now, Jesus' followers are that place: His presence comes and fills them** (**all together/gathered**)

Verse 4

- **Upon experience...**
- **Super-natural enabling...**
 - **Remember the purpose of His Spirit coming upon us and enabling us (**Acts 1:8**)**
 - Pentecost (OT Feast) was when God's people entered the season of harvest
 - Look! **Matthew 9:37-38**, NASB
 - Pentecost (New Testament) is Jesus doing just that!
 - The church is activated—empowered—propelled into the harvest (next: **scope of harvest**)

Verses 5-13

We will take an in depth look at “speaking in tongues” in the coming weeks since it comes up several times in the Book of Acts, and is a topic of some intrigue

For now, I want to make sure we catch the imagery and messaging as intended here (**scope of harvest**)

- Luke wants us to get that what was happening was meant to have international implications
 - Keeping in mind God's end-game for salvation (**Revelation 7:14**, NASB)
 - So Jesus had told His followers: **Matthew 28:19a**, NASB and **Acts 1:8**, NASB
 - The love and mission of God were meant to be world-wide in scope

The message is supposed to be carried to the world by Jesus' followers

- Here we have a microcosm, instant expression of that
 - **Verse 5 (every nation under heaven)** (symbolically true)
 - The crowd contained both **Jews** and **gentile converts to Judaism** (cf. v 10)
 - = a mini-gathering of “**every tongue, tribe, nation**” (hors d'oeuvre)
 - **Point:** (**Matthew 24:14**, NASB) – Experience the work/Word of God in **their own languages**

What is being communicated here (through this **tongues event) is:**

- (1) God's saving work of love through Christ's cross is for the entire world (**John 3:16**, NASB)
- (2) Jesus is not only Israel's true King, but the true King of all Kings (**Philippians 2:9-11**, NASB)

So, both Jews and Gentiles from all the surrounding nations (then-known world) are there to witness God's **presence** and **power** coming upon Jesus' followers, and to hear both His **praises** and Gospel **message**

- **Verse 11** = they heard them in their own languages "**speaking of the mighty deeds of God**"
 - This was a praise event, not a preaching event
 - They all had a common language(s), and Peter would preach in that right after in response to the question, "**what does this mean?**" (**verse 12**)
 - Notice, the speaking in tongues was not communicating meaning to the gathered crowd
 - It was expressing praises about **the mighty deeds of God**
 - Impt: (**1 Corinthians 14:2**, NASB)

So, this tongues event was a **sign** expressing to those present that a certain work of God was taking place right before them

- A continuation of God's mission to the world, now taking expressed through Jesus' followers (Church)
- That comes to include both Jews (Israel) and all other nations
- This was always the plan of God (Abraham, Israel, the Church)

When Peter goes to explain it (next week) he says:

- (1) This is in the Bible; (2) this is for all of humanity (**see 2:16-17**)
- **Aside:** Notice **verse 13** (some want to dismiss; malign the work of the Spirit) (may have looked strange)
 - **But, like Peter, we will tell you (1) This is Bible; (2) this is for you**
 - **we are radically committed to those things**

Now, let's not miss the grand happening here (Peter directed everyone's attention correctly)

- This is about **God's mission** of saving people though Jesus **going forward**
- Peter preaches Jesus: see **verses 22-24 and 32-41**

This is what we want to lay hold of—the grand effects of Pentecost

- The whole church was made vividly aware of God's presence (verses 2-3)
- There was a boldness to speak the truth about Jesus (verse 14ff)
- There was a deep conviction of sin (verse 37)
- There was a great harvest (verse 41)

The Baptism of the Spirit if for accomplishing God's purposes!

And since it is God's harvest -- God's work -- God's mission...

- ... We carry it out with Him and in His power (**with you... you will receive power**)
- "**The work of God can only be carried on by the power of God.**" –*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, p. 99
- The thing about Pentecost is that it activated the church into God's purposes
 - **The harvest:** By chapter 4 the church grew from the **120** gathered in the upper room to over **5,000** throughout Jerusalem (a growth rate of 4,167%)
- And when Jesus said in **John 14:12**, NIV we would do "**greater things**", He was referring to **the harvest!**
- **Don't you want to be activated?**

When we are talking about being in "A Spring in the Spirit" as a church

- We are not talking about the cultivation of some feeling
- We are not talking about some unknown, ominous experience
- We are talking about being **activated—empowered—propelled** into God's mission (About Jesus)
 - **Plain and simple:** The work of the Spirit is to promote the truth about Jesus
 - **John 15:26-27**, NASB
 - Where the Spirit is most active, Jesus will be most testified about (**holiness, mission, exalting Jesus**)

This is the goal of it all

- When Jesus said this: **John 16:7**, NASB
 - It was not about esoteric experience, or our comfort, or spiritual entertainment
 - It was about God's mission! The next verse: **John 16:7-8**, NASB
 - Our participation in that is what is "for our good"

This text is not primarily about the violent rushing wind or the flames of fire or the speaking in tongues

- It is about what they meant! And mean!
 - **That God's presence and power are available to believers individually and as a community**
 - **And by that we have been activated to work in His harvest**

In that very real sense, we need another Pentecost!

This comes though being filled with the Holy Spirit

- Which is not a one time event (though some of this day were perhaps peculiar to that day)
- The main thrust—they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (**verse 4**)—was not peculiar to that day
- They would be filled again and again (**Acts 4:8** and **31**, NASB)
- **Ephesians 5:18-19**, NLT
 - Literally in the Greek text = **be being continually filled with the Holy Spirit**
 - That should be a common part of our walk with Jesus and prayer life (2nd prayer)

This same power, that raised Christ from the dead, is for you! (Cf. **Romans 8:11**)

- In order that we might participate in the purposes of God (faithfully and fruitfully)

The life of the Christian is patterned after the life of Christ

- **Luke 3:21-22; 4:1, 14, 18**, NASB
 - The Spirit came **upon** Jesus, He was **full** of the Spirit and **led** by the Spirit, moved in the **power** of the Spirit, and was **anointed** by the Spirit (FOR HIS MINISTRY) (HOW MUCH MORE DO WE NEED!!!)
- **Acts 1:8** and **2:3a**, NASB
 - So, let's go after that...

Let's ask God for another Pentecost! That:

- The whole church would be made vividly aware of God's presence
- There would be a boldness to speak the truth about Jesus
- There would come a deep conviction of sin
- There would be a great harvest

That looks like revival (cf. place of abundance); How revival starts:

Revival starts when "men and women first inwardly groan, longing to see the status quo changed—in themselves and in their churches. They begin to call upon God with insistence; prayer begets revival, which begets more prayer. It's like Psalm 80, where Asaph bemoans the sad state of his time, the broken walls... the burnt vineyards. Then in verse 18 he pleads, 'Revive us, and we will call upon your name.'

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. Only when we are full of the Spirit do we feel the need for God everywhere we turn." —*Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire*, p. 60

Maybe where your need "Fresh Wind and Fresh Fire"(to be revived—power) is: Marriage; parenting; addictions...

- **That is God's mission too!**
- Pray and ask God's help and to be filled for His purposes in your life!
- **That God, grant faith today as we pray and pour out His helping Spirit upon us!**

(1) Pray right now as individuals; (2) Then we will pray this song together ("Spirit of the Living God")