

# The Many Facets of Pentecost – *Matt 13:51-52, Luke 24:44-49, Acts 2:1-4*

**Introduction** – Pentecost is the only Old Testament festival that the church (historically) still celebrates. On that day, recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the old age and a new age was ushered in. It was the baptism of the church and the beginning of the New Creation. A new temple was being erected where the Spirit of Living Water would flow to all the world. The Old Covenant history and purpose of Pentecost is fascinating to study. What we find is that there are many facets to this festival that the New Covenant reveals or fulfills. Preaching on Pentecost by a “scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven” reveals “things new and old” which are brought out of the treasure house of God’s Word. Here are several of them.

**The Word** - Pentecost (“the fiftieth”) was celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day counting from the Sabbath following Passover. In Leviticus 23, we see that it was called the “Feast of Weeks.” It was the first day after seven sevens. It was more than just an eighth day Sabbath; it was a super-Sabbath. As the Spirit was poured out, it was also a New Jubilee (Lev 25) where liberty and rest were proclaimed, and all debts forgiven. Our sins are forgiven, and we are set free by the gift of God through Jesus Christ administered by the Holy Spirit.

**The Feast of the Harvest** – It is called the Feast of the Harvest as well (Ex 23:16) because it was a festival where every faithful Jew would travel to Jerusalem and present the firstfruits of the grain harvest. Those firstfruits represented the entire harvest that God was giving His people all over the world. At the Pentecost where the Holy Spirit was poured out, “there were devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), and there were three thousand souls saved that day (Acts 2:41). But that was just the firstfruits of a promised greater harvest all over the world (Gen 12:3, Rev 7:9-10).

**3,000, Pentecost, and the Law** – The three thousand souls saved was a reversal of a previous judgment. The Feast of Weeks was celebrated in remembrance of God establishing His covenant with His people after bringing them out of Egypt. At Mt. Sinai, God gave the people His law, written on tablets of stone, and on that day, 3,000 people died due to their idolatrous worship of the golden calf (Ex 32:28). Joshua established what looks like the Feast of Weeks with another giving of the law in Josh 8:30-35 and Pentecost became a time when the Law was regularly read to the people. Later, God promised the people that the Spirit would come and write the law of God on their hearts (Jer 31:33). When the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved, the Word of God sealed in their hearts.

**Divided Tongues Reunited** – There was another reversal on that Pentecost. In Gen 10 we have the table of nations and in Gen 11 we have the story of the tower of Babel where God divided the people with diverse languages so that they could not understand one another. In Gen 12, Abraham is promised that through him, all these nations would one day be blessed. Some from all nations were gathered on Pentecost AD30 and “when this sound occurred...everyone heard them speak in his own language” (Acts 2:6) for they were cloven, or divided, tongues (2:3). And what were they speaking? “we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11). The spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ to all nations in all languages had begun. The firstfruits were brought in by the preaching of Peter and offered to the Lord in baptism. The nations are reunited in the church (Eph 2:14-18) through the work of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Eph 4:4-6).

**Sound of a Rushing Mighty Wind, Tongues of Fire** – God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex 3). God led Israel out of Egypt with a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21) and when Moses went up Mt. Sinai it was amid thunderings, lightnings, loud trumpets, smoke and fire by which the LORD descended (Ex 19:16ff). His Shekinah glory rested upon the tabernacle as Israel wandered through the wilderness (Num 9:16). John the Baptist said Jesus would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16), and John the Apostle records that the Holy Spirit blows like the wind (John 3:7-8).

Peter explained that the outpouring of the Spirit that day was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:17-24). This was a fulfillment that God’s Spirit would be poured out upon them (vv17-18), and that the end of the old creation had come (vv19-20). At the first creation, the Spirit hovered over the waters and God spoke. Now the Spirit hovered over the apostles of the New Humanity and by His Spirit they spoke. These fiery tongues both declared the mighty works of God’s salvation (v21)

but also as a sign of judgment (vv23-24). Isaiah and Jeremiah both had prophesied that since Israel would not listen to God's Words in their tongue, they would hear stammering tongues of the foreign nations coming upon them in judgment (Isaiah 23:11-13, Jer 5:15). Later, Paul would clarify that tongues were not primarily messages for believers, but words of judgment to unbelieving covenant members (1 Cor 14:22).

**Pentecost and the Leavened Feast** – There are distinctions between Passover and Pentecost that are important as well. The bread at Passover was “*the bread of affliction, for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste*” (Deut 16:3). Passover was at the end of the barley harvest and a sheaf of the harvest was waved before the LORD and the bread was made in haste without leaven. Pentecost, on the other hand, was where the new grain offering (wheat) was given, two loaves of leavened bread were waved before the LORD (Lev 23:17-21). Loaves were made of the finest flour with leaven, and all three sacrifices, the ascension, the sin, and the peace offerings were made on that day. Only the LORD ate the ascension (whole burnt) offering, and only the priests partook of the sin offering. But everyone partook of the peace offering (Lev 7:11-34). And so, Pentecost included a feast of a sacrificed animal, unleavened bread, and wine, and was a picture of the communal meal with God and His people.

**Pentecost Salvation** – Just as every Lord's Day is a celebration of the Resurrection, so it is a celebration of Pentecost, the outpouring and work of the Holy Spirit upon the nations of the world. We are all summoned to this mountain that quakes with a greater noise and fire than Mt. Sinai (Heb 12). Here, by means of the Holy Spirit, God's Word is spoken and written upon our hearts. And by means of the Holy Spirit, we partake of Jesus, the One Who was sacrificed for our sins and has granted us new life, as we partake by faith of leavened bread and wine. And then, we are sent out into the world, like leaven put in a lump of dough until it was all leavened (Matt 13:33). Joy to the world, for the Lord has come in the Person of the Holy Spirit, to bring the blessings of salvation, in the name of Jesus, far as the curse is found.

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*Dave Hatcher – Pentecost, May 28, 2023*