

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – The Book of Acts

(SB_Acts2_The Pentecost Phenomenon)

Introduction

The “Day of Pentecost” followed the Feast of Firstfruits. The Day of Pentecost was so named because it fell on the 50th day after the Sabbath of the Passover. Pentecost was also known as “the Feast of Weeks,” “the Firstfruits of the Wheat Harvest,” and the “Day of Firstfruits.” This is a bit confusing because the Day of Pentecost (a Greek term) was the 50th day after the Sabbath associated with Passover and the Firstfruits feast (Lev 23.15-22). So, the chronology of these feasts occurred as follows:

- Passover – Nisan 14 (Nisan is the first month of the Jewish calendar)
- Sabbath – Nisan 15 (a regular Sabbath followed Passover)
- A Wave Offering (Lev 23.9-14) – a.k.a. the “Feast of Firstfruits” – offered annually on the day after the Sabbath of Passover (Nisan 16) and included the first of the harvested grain along with a male lamb.
- The Feast of Weeks (Lev 23.19-22) – the day after the seventh Sabbath (seven Sabbaths equals seven weeks which is 49 days) which would have corresponded to the 50th day after the “Feast of Firstfruits.”

The feasts after Passover were all associated with the harvest of grain and designed to be a means of expressing thanks to God for the harvest and as an act of faith. As they offered the best grain (i.e. the first fruits), they were, in effect, expressing faith that God would be faithful and bless the remainder of the harvest. We can see some typology here between the celebration of faith in God’s blessing the harvest and the resurrection of all believers that is assured through the resurrected firstfruits – Jesus Christ.

The disciples were in Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus’ command recorded in Luke 24.49 – “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Luke provides us with more details of the events between Jesus’ resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Acts.

- From Acts 1.2-11, we are told that Jesus spent 40 days after His resurrection instructing His disciples.
- During this 40 period, He taught them things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1.3).
- He gave them the command to wait in Jerusalem for the Promise of the Father (Lu 24.49; Acts 1.4-5) just a few days prior to His ascension.
- He addressed the disciples question about the time of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1.6-7).
- He ascended into heaven from Mount Olivet (Acts 1.9-12).
- The disciples returned to the upper room where they were staying during this festival season (Acts 1.12) and continued in prayer to God (Acts 1.14).
- Peter takes the lead and initiates procedures to enable God to select a replacement apostle for Judas, the Betrayer.
- This resulted in Matthias being selected (Acts 1.15-26).

As Acts 2 begins, we do not know exactly where the disciples were gathered. It doesn’t add up that the large crowd mentioned in verse 5 joined the disciples in the Upper Room or gathered in the narrow streets outside the house in which the disciples were gathered even though verse 2 indicates that they were in a house.

It is possible that the disciples were gathered in the Upper Room. When the supernatural phenomenon of a “sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (v. 2) followed by “divided

tongues as of fire” (v. 3) and the disciples speaking with other tongues (v. 4) all occurred, the disciples began to leave the Upper Room and pour out into the streets and the nearby Temple area where the crowds celebrating Pentecost had gathered. As they did so, the events of Acts 2.5ff began to transpire.

Passages That Associate the HS with Wind or Breath

The Greek word for “Spirit” here is *pneuma* and it is closely related to the Greek word for wind which is *pnoe*. This word is also translated *breath* on occasion. These Greek words carry the same connotation that the Hebrew word *ruach* conveys in OT passages that describe the work of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Gen 1.2; Job 26.13; 33.4; Psalm 104.30; Isa 40.12-13). In these uses, the Spirit of God empowers with a creative, restorative or regenerative effect or work.

What Type of Filling with the Holy Spirit Was This?

In our previous studies of the subject of the “filling of the Holy Spirit,” we have seen that the Greek construction pattern used in Acts 2.4 is an example of a “type 1” filling, i.e. a type of filling whereby the content with which the individual was filled was the Holy Spirit as opposed to a different content, i.e. the “character” of/from God (Eph 5.18). We have also seen that the “type 1” filling is not normative for this present dispensation. It was not commanded and it was not necessarily the result of a development of Godly character as is the type 2 filling even though those who experienced it were not ungodly and were believers. The type 1 filling has very much in common with (if not the same as) the “endowment” of the Holy Spirit that was experienced by believers within prior dispensations. As a matter of fact, Jesus uses a Greek word translated “endued” in Luke 24.49 where He instructs His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were “endued with power from on high.”

Why is this fact important? If this “filling” with the Holy Spirit is a filling that has commonality with the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Age of Israel believer rather than the Church Age believer, then it provides us with a point of continuity with the Age of Israel rather than the dawn of a new dispensation that is disconnected from the prior.

The Old Testament contains several passages that reference an outpouring of the Holy Spirit (e.g. Isa 32.15; 44.3; Ezek 36.26, 27; 37.14; 39.29; Joel 2.28, 29). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the speaking in tongues, and miracles of healing (tantamount to a temporary removal of the physical effects of sin) were all a foretaste of the coming millennial age. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit is sometimes called a baptism with the Spirit; however, it should not be confused with another baptism by the Holy Spirit to which Paul refers when he mentions the formation of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12.13). This latter work of the Holy Spirit had never been promised and is related to the “mystery” truth to which Paul refers in Ephesians 3.

Why Were There People From So Many Nations in Jerusalem?

The Passover Feast and the Feast of Pentecost were about fifty days apart as we have noted already. Travel during that era was not as easy as it is today, so many of the pilgrims who made their way to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast would stay for more than just a few days. Thus, the inclusion of the names of so many languages in Acts 2.9 - “Parthians,” “Medes,” “Elamites,” dwellers of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Cretans and Arabs. All of these were either Jews or proselytes to Judaism. Everyone heard at least one of the disciples praising God in their native language as the disciples spoke in “tongues.”

As the pilgrims were all amazed by this phenomenon, they wondered what it could possibly mean (Acts 2.12). This gave Peter another opportunity to assume the leadership role (Matt 16.18) and preach a sermon explaining this event (Acts 2.14-39).