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Pentecost

"Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

Key verses: Acts 2-9

Key personalities: The eleven remaining Disciples and the 120.

Timeline: The God of Eternity; entered as a Man, being fully God and was dead, buried and rose again and then Sends us His Holy Spirit, 33 A.D.

Pentecost, from the Greek word *pentekostos* for "fiftieth," refers to the beginning celebration of the Festival of Weeks (from Leviticus 23:4-33; Deut. 16:10) which was 50 days from the Passover; this was a major celebration of God's work. This is when the Disciples and 120 followers gathered where Jesus had His Last Supper--where He said, "*Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, now I send you to continue the work.*" He then breathed into them His Successor, the preeminence and permanence of the Holy Spirit, and asked them to do to others as He has done to them: show the world the Gospel and forgive! Now Pentecost shows us the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the beginning of the Church (Acts 1:8-15; 21-47).

The Book of Acts. This is a Book of history of the Early Church and records the accounts of the Apostles and the spread of the Holy Spirit. It is written by Luke, a Physician, as a part two to the Gospel of Luke, giving a testimony of Christianity to *Theophilus*. It begins with Jesus' Ascension to Heaven and calling to the Disciples to be His witness to the world. Acts depicts the growth of Christianity, first to the Jews and spreading to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome and leaves off to the growth and spread of the Church. The main characters are Peter and his inspiring sermon on the day of Pentecost (as predicted by the prophet Joel). We witness the unlikely and powerful conversion of a hater and persecutor of Christ and Christians to quintessential missionary--the conversion of Saul to Paul--and his companions during their missionary journeys.

Key Happenings: The Great Empowerment, The Holy Spirit!

Jesus Sends us! Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. With the Holy Spirit, they will have the power to be Christ's witnesses. Wham, Pentecost! This was the event of the first introduction of the permanence of the Holy Spirit for all Believers. It also took place to give further instructions about serving in the kingdom of God. This was their *baptism by the Holy Spirit* as promised by John the Baptist and the OT prophets. It refers to the coming and staying of the Spirit in Believer's lives. No longer do we have Him coming and going; we have Him continually (Judges 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6; Psalm 51:11; Isa. 11:2; 63:10-11; Luke 3:3-6; 24:47-49).

- Acts 2:1-12 tells us that a *rush of a mighty wind filled all the house*. The disciples were all gathered together. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in 'other tongues,' that is, languages they did not previously know, so that the other people around could understand what was being said (Ex. 3:2; 13:21; 24:17; 40:38; 1 Kings 19:11-13; Ez. 37:9-13; John 3:8). Acts 2:13-21 tells us that the early Christians were mocked because they appeared to be in a drunken frenzy. Peter, gives an explanation of what was happening, that it was the baptism with the Holy Spirit, by quoting Joel (Joel 2:28-32; 3:1-5).
- As Christians, we *Receive the Holy Spirit*, and continually have Him living within us so that we are equipped to work and speak for Him! Before Christ came, the Holy Spirit was not available to all, nor was He omnipresent, or "everywhere." This is not a conversion or some kind of rebirth (John 13:10; 15:3; Romans 8:9; John 3:5)!

Greater things/works. We are called and empowered for *works*, not so much miracles; rather, we are called to righteous deeds and a greater number of them in amounts, cultures, and regions of people transformed. Jesus was limited to Palestine as He walked this earth; we have had the whole world to go with the full force of the Church for many centuries--over 20 so far! When Jesus went to the Father and sent us the Holy Spirit, the work began at Pentecost. Now, we will have a greater Kingdom impact and expansion than when Jesus walked the earth. As Christians, our work is multiplied by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and thus, an exponential increase of followers and opportunities. This was predicted in the Old Testament, *Pour out my*

Spirit, the God's fulfillment of Joel's Pentecost prophecy. This was not just about the coming of the Holy Spirit, but what the Holy Spirit was to do, point to Christ, give us newness of life and restore us (1 Kings 17:22; Matt. 28:18-19; John 2:11; 5:17; 7:21, 39; 8:39; 10:32; 14:16-17, 26; 15:13, 26; 16:7; 19:30; Acts 1-2).

The central point, reason, and purpose for us to have the Holy Spirit working in us is to be empowered for ministry.

That is what is described as a *FILLING*. This is always associated, in Scripture, with extraordinary power for ministry, doing something to further the Gospel and the cause of Christ. It is never meant to draw attention to us or to put on some kind of show (Joel 2:28-31; John 13:10; 15:3; Romans 8:9; John 3:5; Acts 2)

Before Christ came, the Holy Spirit was not available to all, nor was He omnipresent, or "everywhere" (John 13:10; 15:3; Romans 8:9; John 3:5)! The Holy Spirit now is working in us to empower our faith and ministry. It is never meant to draw attention to us or to put on some kind of entertainment! The Christians who came to faith in Christ after Pentecost receive the Holy Spirit even before they accepted Christ by faith (John 3:3-6; 16; 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 12:3).

The Holy Spirit introduces us to Christ's work before we are even evangelized, so we are able and willing to believe and accept Him. He may give to you extra gifts and power for His glory in ministry when He deems it necessary and/or when we yield ourselves to Him, and are mature enough to handle it (Num. 11; Psalm 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11; Acts 1:4-8; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:1-11; 1 Cori. 1; 14:26-33; Joel 2:28-29).

The first Holy Spirit manifestation to the early church are to Jews in Acts 1:8, then to the Gentile world in a step-by-step manner. We see three more episodes of the coming of the Holy Spirit, with the Samaritans (Acts 8), the Cornelius household (Acts 10), and the Ephesians (Acts 19). It started with the 'chosen ones,' the Jews, because they held the responsibility of being evangelists to the world (Gen 12:1-3). The God-fearing Greeks, Samaritans, and the rest of the Gentile world were next (Psalm 51:11; Isa 63:10-11; Acts 2).

How the Holy Spirit works in Acts

1. The Holy Spirit endows Believers with the power to spread the Gospel of Christ (Acts 1:8).
2. The Holy Spirit is given to all Believers as a gift (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 8:18-20; 10:45; 11:17; 11:17; 15:8).
3. The Holy Spirit falls upon people in consecutive people groups starting with, and pointing back to Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:38; 8:15-17; 10:44-47; 11:15; 19:6).
 - a. The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Jews (Acts 2:4-21).
 - b. The Samaritans (Acts 8).
 - c. The Gentiles through Cornelius' household (Acts 10:45-48; 11:16).
 - d. The Ephesians (Acts 19).
4. *Speaking in tongues* coincides with praising and glorifying God as an extra ability and power to witness to others in their own language (Acts 1:8; 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6).
5. Acts 5:29-32 makes it clear that obedience to God is a mark of His presence, not tongues!

What we see in the book of Acts are diagrams, or illustrations, of what the Holy Spirit's power looks like as it comes upon different groups. It sometimes comes with *speaking in tongues* for some, but not all (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6), and always for a purpose for non-believers, or to help others understand in their own language.

Tongues are never said in Scripture to be in and for itself, such as being a sign of blessing for a church, or that a person has a special insight or message directly from God that is not contained in the Bible. When this happens, this is not of God, but of human pride and grandstanding (or a work of Satan!) The Holy Spirit comes with the gift of prophecy for some, but not all (Acts 2:17; 19:6; cf. 10:46). He comes with overflowing praise of God's glory and greatness (Acts 2:11; 10:46), never to lift people up, or to distract from Christ. He comes with a call for obedience and the formation of our character to follow God's will (Acts 5:32). He comes, giving us courage and boldness to witness and serve (Acts 2:14-36; 9:17-22). And, He brings us the power through various gifts, (Heb. 2:4) miracles, (Gal. 3:5) signs, and wonders, (Acts 6:8) that point to Him and give God the glory.

- There is no place in the book of Acts, or any place in Scripture that tells us that when we receive the Spirit, we all will speak in tongues or prophesy. Paul makes this very clear in 1 Corinthians 12 -14! The point in Acts 1:8 is that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we will receive His power; and His power will enable us to serve Him in evangelizing the whole world. That is the main point. Unfortunately, people get so wrapped up in the *tongues* and the *Spirit baptism* thing, they forget the main call we are given: Build fruit

and faith! Satan gets us so riled up over nothing, and we are so busy fighting amongst ourselves, we have no time or energy to do what God has called us to do!

How the Holy Spirit works in the rest of the New Testament:

1. The Holy Spirit is our support (Mark 4:37-41; Matt. 14:28-33; John 20:19-22).
2. The Holy Spirit imparts new life to us, is essential to our salvation, and sensitizes us to God (John 3:3-6; 16; 1 Cor. 12:3).
3. The Holy Spirit is our companion, and always indwells in us (John 14: 1-3; 15-17; 23; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 3:16-17; Heb. 13:5-6).
4. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate (John 14:16-17).
5. The Holy Spirit declares the truth about Christ (John 16:13-14).
6. The Holy Spirit enables us to minister and witness (Acts 1:8).
7. The Holy Spirit is God, and powerful. He is able to act in power and strength through us to do what is needed (Acts 1:8; 4:31; 10:45).
8. The Holy Spirit pours out God's Love to us (Rom. 5:4-5; Gal. 5:22-23).
9. The Holy Spirit is essential for our sanctification, growth in maturity, and faith in Christ (Rom. 7:21-21; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:23).
10. The Holy Spirit indwells (Rom. 8:9-11).
11. The Holy Spirit bears inner witness that we are His children (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 4:6).
12. The Holy Spirit intercedes and pleads for us, in our weakness, in our behalf, before God. (Rom. 8:26).
13. The Holy Spirit gives us gifts to use in His service to glorify Christ, to build His church, and to spread the Gospel (1 Cor. 12:4-11).
14. The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to exhibit godly character (Gal. 5:22-23).
15. The Holy Spirit enables us to give God the glory (Eph. 3:16).
16. The Holy Spirit regenerates the Christian (Titus 3:5)
17. The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21).

The Holy Spirit initiates our salvation. The Spirit can also call a person who is already a Christian, but has been relaxed or distant in the faith, to wake up. This is called rededication. The Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry with gifts that can grow as we grow in the faith. Also, we can be renewed in our faith, be enlarged in our faith. This is called *sanctification*. It is these last three aspects that people misinterpret as a Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes first, then the conversion!

Being filled with the Holy Spirit basically means having great joy from our commitment to God (Nehemiah 8:10). It also means we are to seek His power with joy, for the overcoming of our sins, for the courage to witness, and for the job of ministry, even to people we do not like. This joy means *radiant joy*, meaning we can be filled up with the joy that flows among the Persons of the Holy Trinity. That is the very love God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit (One God with three personalities or manifestations, not three Gods) have for one another. This Joy, our dedicated commitment in Christ will overflow from us to the others around us! This Joy becomes sealed in us as we mature in the faith and as we are filled with His Word. It is the power to enjoy Christ in worship, as a lifestyle that will affect all aspects of our life as well as the others around us, and then will empower us for His service, for His glory. This is what we are to seek so it can be repeated; we are not to seek it for our betterment or attention, rather for Christ's sake! We are to be filled with Joy, by being in His Word, because we are in Christ! This is the extra power He gives us to glorify and serve Him (John 14:16-26; 16:12-15; 17:17; Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Col. 3:15-16)!

- Now, it is God's role and work that are empowering and saving; we merely respond. Our faith is a response, not a work; we recognize Christ because He reveals Himself to us. All the blessings and wonders that we experience are in Christ; He gives us faith that we can turn into more faith by our commitment and obedience (John 3:30; Rom. 6:12; Gal. 2:20-21; Eph. 2:8-9; 5:15-17; Phil. 3:1-21; Col. 1:3-6, 10-12, 15-29).

Discipleship has a cost. Following Christ will also cost us, and require effort and consistency. This can cast fear and trepidation amongst most Christians. How can you develop an attitude to embrace what society, family, friends, or even people in your church fail to see and do?

Key Takeaway: *I am sending you.* This is the "Great Commission," the marching orders for our faith and practice! *As the Father sent me, now I send you to continue the work*, with empowerment to His ambassadors

and representatives here on earth the Holy Spirit, and asked them to do unto others as He has done to them: Show the world the Gospel (Daniel 7:13-14; Matt. 4:17; 28:16-20; Luke 24:44-53; John 17:18; 20:19-31; Acts 1-2; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:18-2:16; 15:1-8)!

The Call to the Church? We must be excited for, teach and point to who Christ is and what He has done for us, thus giving great joy and gratitude through our commitment to God and, in context, the courage to witness. We are to have joy in our collective faith and fruit so it will overflow from us to others around us and then into our neighborhood and then world! This joy grows in us as we mature in the faith and as we are filled with His Word. It is also the power to enjoy Him in worship and as a lifestyle that will affect all aspects of our lives as well as that of others around us in His service and glory. Because of Christ, His Word will bring us joy. (Ruth 3:2-7; Isa. 9:3; Neh. 8:10; Eccl. 2:18; Matt. 24:21-22, 30; Luke 15:7-10, 32; 17:30; John 14:16-26; 16:12-15; 17:17; Acts 28:16-30; Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Cor. 7:29; 2 Cor. 2:15-16; 4:7-12; Eph. 1:13-14; 6:16; 4:30; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:15-16; James 1:2; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Questions to Ponder

1. The point and reason for being empowered by the Holy Spirit was to serve Jesus, not to bring attention and glory to themselves. How have you seen some get this wrong?
2. How has The Holy Spirit comforted, encouraged, admonished, or coached you? How have you done so with others?
3. Do you have the ultimate hope and assurance that you are not made for this world, that your true home is heaven? How do you feel about this?
4. How do you feel about your personal Christianity and that God will completely and thoroughly accomplish and achieve His purpose throughout the universe? How can this give your confidence?
5. Did you know that the Holy Spirit is preparing you for His work?
6. How has the Holy Spirit prepared your journey of faith? How can this help you overcome fears and doubts?
7. What do you lack to have more wholehearted commitment to faith?
8. How would you express the importance of our connectivity to Christ to produce faith and fruit? How can you do this more even in times of harassment and/or doubt? What do you need more of to be comforted and empowered in Him?
9. What gets in your way of follow-through and obedience?
10. How have you received great joy from our being filled with the Holy Spirit? How has this improve your commitment to God?
11. How can you allow more of the Holy Spirit's Joy to overflow from you to the others around you?
12. What can you do to make sure your joy becomes sealed in Christ and not in the world's ways?