

Armagh Baptist Church
Sunday 17th May 2009 – 11:30am
Acts 2:1-21 Pentecost Has Come!

Introduction

I think we can all identify with the build up to a very important event? You as a church know what it was like to build up to the induction of a new pastor a few weeks ago. And I can certainly testify to what that was like for me and my family. There is all the waiting, from months in advance, there is all the preparation that goes into preparing for that one evening, and then all of a sudden it's on top of you, there's the last minute panic, and then the big day arrives!

Well as we come into Acts ch.2 this morning – the big day has arrived! Pentecost has come! The day the disciples had been told to wait for back in Acts ch.1:4-5 has now arrived.

You remember Jesus said to them:

'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

This was now the outpouring of that gift, **God the Father** had promised. This was exactly what **Jesus, God's Son**, had been telling them about. This was **the baptism of the Holy Spirit** for the early church. He had now come!

So what can we say about this great event from this passage this morning?

1. It was a Historical Event

It is very important that we remember this – The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the Church was an actual historical event, which happened at a certain time and at a certain place in history.

Where did it happen? – In Jerusalem (Acts 2:1, 2:5, Acts 1:4)

When did it happen? – On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1)

There was a Feast of Pentecost before the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts ch.2. The Feast of Pentecost was an already established OT Feast, just like the Feast of Passover, just like the Day of Atonement, etc. You can read all about the OT Feast of Pentecost in Leviticus ch.23.

The Feast of Pentecost was a Jewish Feast which took place 50 days after the Feast of Passover. It was also known as the Feast of Weeks.

Think about it for a moment: 50 days is 7 weeks (49 days) + 1 day.

Remember Jesus died on Good Friday afternoon, and Passover began that Friday evening and continued through the following day – Saturday, so

exactly 7 weeks or 49 days later would have been another Saturday. But one day after that brings us to Pentecost Sunday. So it was a Sunday when the Holy Spirit was given, and it was a Sunday when Jesus rose from the dead! That's 2 reasons for Christians to make Sunday their special day of worship. We celebrate the fact that Jesus is alive, and we rejoice in the fact that God has given us his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts!

Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks was also the feast to celebrate the beginning of the grain Harvest. The First sheaf from the crop was brought and waved before the Lord, to acknowledge that He is Lord of the Harvest. Well, as we will see, before Acts ch.2 finishes, we will have the first spiritual harvest of the Christian Church recorded for us, as 3000 people trust in Christ and are added to the Church! The Church grew in one day from 120 people in Acts ch.1:15 to over 3000 people by the end of Acts ch.2! That was the effect of the Holy Spirit being given, and the Gospel being preached, clearly and in power, by Peter that day.

God makes no mistakes – His timing is perfect.

Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Passover by becoming our Passover Lamb and by being sacrificed for us on Calvary's cross to deal with our sins.

The Holy Spirit being poured out on the church fulfils the Feast of Pentecost, by producing the first spiritual harvest of the Christian Church, and adding thousands into Christ's Kingdom!

Later Judaism also believed that the Feast of Pentecost was the anniversary of the Law being given at Mount Sinai in Exodus ch.19.

If so, that is more significance, because the Holy Spirit has now been put into our hearts to help us to live by God's Law, something none of us were able to do in and of ourselves, because all of us have broken God's Law.

So the pouring out of the Spirit took place in Jerusalem, on the Day of the Feast of Pentecost – a Sunday. It not only fulfilled the OT Feast of Pentecost, but it marked the pouring out of the Spirit **by Christ**. This was proof that Jesus had not only risen from the dead, but that He was now seated at his Father's right hand in heaven, and he was now able to send another Comforter in His Name, to be with His Church forever.

So this event really marks the birth of the Christian Church. This was the church being baptised by the Holy Spirit. This was the Spirit being given by Christ to his Church as he had promised back in John chs.14-16. So this was a remarkable historical event, but more than that...

2. It was a Supernatural Event

Look at what happened in Acts 2:2 -

There was a sound: *'a sound like the blowing of a violent wind'* (v.2)

It *'came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.'*
See John 3:3-8 and Ezekiel 37:1-10 – this is how the Spirit is described elsewhere in Scripture – ('ruach' = wind or spirit in Hebrew).

There was a sight: *'They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.'* (v.3)

Fire speaks of purity and cleansing. They were set on fire for God.

There was a sign: *'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.'* (v.4)

This reference to speaking in other tongues must be interpreted in the light of vs.5-11. These tongues were the other known languages of those who were present in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They had come from all over the known world of that time – They were God-fearing Jews, who had come from every nation under heaven – From Asia there were Parthians, Medes and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia (Iraq), Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia – all in v.9 from the Continent of Asia and into Asia Minor – or modern day Turkey. Then in v.10 they also came from Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene – so that's North Africa as well – together with the Arabs of v.11. And then visitors from Europe: Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism) and Cretans – people from the island of Crete – so people from Italy and the Mediterranean island of Crete were also there. And all of these people were hearing these early believers speaking in their own language (v.6). All the speakers were just from back-water Galilee – unschooled, ordinary men, and yet the amazing thing was that all of these people from these other nations were hearing them in their own native language (v.8) – their own local dialect.

*'We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' (v.11)
'Amazed and perplexed they asked one another, 'What does this mean?''*

And that's exactly what was supposed to happen. As I said this tongue-speaking, this ability for the disciples to communicate in other languages, that they had no prior training in, was meant to be 'a sign' to the watching world that something special, something supernatural was happening in Jerusalem that day. It was supposed to make them all sit up and take notice. It was supposed to cause a stir, it was supposed to get them talking and wondering and asking questions, because very soon God was going to give them some amazing answers!

So they heard a sound – like a violent rushing wind.

They saw a sight – like tongues of fire coming down and resting on each one of them, and...

They were given a sign – the filling of the Holy Spirit which enabled them to speak in other known languages so that total strangers and visitors from all the nations of the world could hear the good news of the Gospel in their own local dialects.

Should we seek for such an event or experience to happen to us today? Should we be looking for a repeat of Pentecost today?

Well I have stressed to you this morning that this was a remarkable historical event. There is only one Pentecost as far as the Christian Church is concerned. It was an historical event in the early church, the same as the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were historical events. We don't look for a repeat of Calvary, or for Jesus Christ to rise from the dead again, so why do some look for another Pentecost experience?

We can't experience a day like the Day of Pentecost again, but we can each one of us be baptised by the Holy Spirit as and when we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour today. In Acts 1:15 we are told very clearly that the 120 people who were waiting for the Day of Pentecost to come, were believers. And if you turn over to Ephesians 1:13 you will find a very clear verse which tells us that if we believe we will be **sealed** with the Holy Spirit – set apart by the Spirit to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you want to be baptised by the Holy Spirit then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and you will receive the Holy Spirit too.

But although we have this further teaching from the New Testament, it wasn't as clear as that on the Day itself. In fact as well as being an historical event and a supernatural event it was also...

3. A Confusing Event

Just look at the effect it had on the on-lookers and unbelievers.

They just couldn't understand what was going on – they were puzzled:

- A crowd came together in bewilderment (v.6)
- They were 'utterly amazed' (v.7)
- They were 'amazed and perplexed' (v.12)

Not only were they puzzled, but they were full of questions:

- What does this mean? (v.12)
- Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? (v.7)
- *'Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?'* (v.8)

(These were their own local dialects – the reverse of Babel - Genesis ch.11)

Some were puzzled, some were full of questions, but others just mocked! (v.13) – *'Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too*

much wine! Had they? Was that really what was behind the goings on that day? This was a very confusing event for all involved, and for all looking on, so we need...

4. Peter's explanation of the Event (v.14-21)

Pentecost needed to be explained. It was totally bewildering to everyone involved until God spoke into the confusion through his servant Peter.

And Peter takes the mockers head-on, as he stands to his feet in vs.14-15. Remember this was the guy who 7 weeks earlier couldn't even stand up in front of a simple servant girl, and say he belonged to Jesus. He denied three times that he was a disciple of Jesus. With oaths and curses and swearing he denied any knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth. And yet now, he's the one who stands to his feet in front of a crowd of *thousands* and opens his mouth, and out comes the explanation of this event!

Peter is a changed man – because of two things: He has met with the Risen Lord and been forgiven, and he is now filled with the Holy Spirit to give him the courage to witness, and the words to say. And isn't that exactly what Jesus promised them just before he left them? (See Acts 1:8).

'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!' (v.14-15). So that put pay to that idea!

So what is the explanation then?

Well, here Peter turns once again to the O.T. Scriptures - just like he did in the meeting with the disciples in the prayer meeting in Ch 1.

He takes OT Scripture, believing it was inspired, believing it had to be fulfilled, and now he applies it to their up to date situation. Here he turns them to the OT Prophecy of Joel, ch. 2, vs. 28-32: *'No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.'*

(Read vs.17-21)

'In the last days...' – This started at Pentecost and will end at the second coming of Christ (cf.v19). So we're in that period now, so this applies to us.

'I will pour out my Spirit on ALL people' (v.17-18)

- Not just on the Jews, but on gentiles too!
- Not just on the old, but on the young as well!
- Not just on the men, but on women also!
- (v.21) – God's Spirit will be poured out on everyone who calls on the name of the Lord, who gets saved! As simple as that.

No other distinctions. It's not just for priests and prophets as it was in the OT. We are a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a people belonging to God – all of us will be indwelt by the Spirit!

(v.19) *'I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below'* – What's that?

Well I've just said, that Pentecost, and in particular the sign of the believers being able to speak in other languages, caused a stir! It got people talking, it got people asking questions. That's what signs and wonders are supposed to do! Throughout John's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles we will see that happening. Every time a sign or a miracle takes place in Acts, the apostles jump in there straight away and they try to explain it, and they always used the miracle or the sign as their platform to preach the Gospel – to point people to Jesus as Saviour. Telling them how he died on the cross for their sins, but telling them also how God has now raised Him from the dead, and that now is their opportunity to believe in Jesus for themselves, and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit into their lives.

Some of the signs and wonders mentioned in v.19-20 may still be future. Some of these may be the signs spoken about in the Book of Revelation, heralding the end of this world as we know it and the second coming of Jesus to be seen to be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. There will be... *'...blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.'* (v.19-20).

That will be a great and glorious day for those who are ready – those who are already trusting in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. But in Joel 2:31, where this passage is originally found, it actually says, *'before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.'* – For those who are not ready, for those who are not saved, for those who are not trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, it will be an awful day, a dreadful day, when they will be banished from his presence forever into Hell. I wonder which it will be for you – a great and dreadful day, or a great and glorious day?

5. The Blessings of the Event (v.21)

It's important that each one of us hears this as we close:

'And everyone – whoever – calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Here is a promise of salvation to anyone who will believe in Jesus.

'I will pour out my Spirit – on all who people – who believe' (v.17 & v.21).

Cf Ephesians 1:3 – *'Having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit'*.

You can know the Holy Spirit living within you:-

- He will change you
- He will help you to live a holy life (Rom 8:9)
- He will assure you that you are a child of God (Rom 8:14-17)
- He will open your eyes to Biblical Truth (John 16:13)
- He will gift and empower you for service (cf Peter – Acts 2)
- He will be with you forever (John 14:15)

Conclusion

So we have seen this morning that the Holy Spirit has already been given at Pentecost. We no longer have to wait, long, or pray, for His coming.

The real question is: Have you received Him? Have you believed? (v.21)

*'Everyone who **calls on** the name of the Lord will **be saved**' (Acts 2:21)*

*'**Believe on** the Lord Jesus Christ and you will **be saved**' (Acts 16:31)*

If you do believe in Jesus – put your trust in Jesus - the Holy Spirit will come to live within you, change you from the inside out, make you a totally different person, and bless you in every way!

So, if you believe in Jesus today – you will receive the Holy Spirit today!
In that sense, this could be your Day of Pentecost – today!

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