

The Book of Acts

Pentecost

Lesson #2 for July 14, 2018

Scriptures: Acts 2:1-13,22-39; John 14:16; Joel 2:28-32; Psalm 110:1-3.

1. Pentecost, one of the three major festivals in the Jewish holy year, came fifty days after Passover; thus, the name *fifty* or *Pentecost*. The third was the Day of Atonement. What should we learn about the experience of the early church on that most important occasion? Many today consider Pentecost to be the day of the birth of the Christian church.
2. We do not know much of what happened during those fifty days. The disciples stayed in Jerusalem for at least one week after the resurrection at which time Jesus appeared to them including Thomas. (John 20:24-29) Some or all of the disciples traveled to Galilee where along with some 500 others they met Jesus on a hill. (Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:6) But, as the time for Pentecost drew near, they returned to Jerusalem. It was a time of reconciliation and self-examination.

These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 37.2.

3. On the fortieth day, Jesus led His disciples—and probably others—out of Jerusalem and over the Mount of Olives to the place where He ascended to heaven. How many people in Jerusalem saw Jesus, His disciples, and others there in Jerusalem just before His ascension? For the next ten days, they spent time together in prayer, fasting, and reconciliation. They were no longer seeking the highest place among their fellow disciples; instead, they were anxious to get started doing what the Lord had told them to do.
4. Some of them, maybe many of them, were staying in the upper room which was in the home of John Mark's parents. It may have been there, or perhaps somewhere nearby, when fairly early in the morning they heard a noise like a strong wind which filled the whole house where they were sitting. Tongues of fire came down and spread out, touching each person. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 2:1-3; contrast the story of Elijah at Mount Horeb recorded in 1 Kings 19:9-13.) Clearly, the number of people who wanted to be there could not fit into any room available in Jerusalem at that time. So, they moved to a more public area. (Acts 2:6-13) We do not know for sure where this movement started or to where they moved. Did they go to the temple area? Remember that when it was over, three thousand people were baptized! Where did that take place? Were they baptized in water? Or, "with the Holy Spirit and fire"? (Matthew 3:11) How many different languages were being spoken? Or, was that really a gift of "ears" in which each person *heard* what the apostles were saying in his/her own language?
5. In a number of places in Scripture, (For example, see Exodus 3:20; 19:18; 24:16-17; Deuteronomy 4:15; John 3:8; and Matthew 3:11.) wind and/or fire are used to represent

an appearance of God, sometimes called a *Theophany*. This event, recognized as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early rain, was the most open and complete manifestation of the Holy Spirit's work yet seen in sacred history.

The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. **They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ. Sadness filled their hearts as they thought of how many times they had grieved Him by their slowness of comprehension, their failure to understand the lessons that, for their good, He was trying to teach them....**

During the patriarchal age the influence of the Holy Spirit had often been revealed in a marked manner, but never in its fullness. Now, in obedience to the word of the Saviour, the disciples offered their supplications for this gift, and in heaven Christ added His intercession. He claimed the gift of the Spirit, that He might pour it upon His people.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 37.1,3. [Bold type is added.]

6. While there is some evidence that the Jewish people had used baptism as a right of entrance into their faith, it really was John the Baptist who made it prominent. That same John the Baptist predicted that Someone was coming who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. (See Luke 3:16; compare Acts 11:16.) Jesus Himself mentioned the coming of the Holy Spirit on several occasions. (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; John 14:16,26; 15:26)
7. This so-called *baptism of the Holy Spirit* at Pentecost was a unique event related to Jesus's victory gained by His life, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and return to heaven. (Acts 4:8,31; 11:24; 13:9,52; Ephesians 5:18)
8. That was the former rain. What kind of manifestations of the Holy Spirit's work do you expect to see at the time of the latter rain? Do you see evidence of the work of the Spirit in your own life even now? Could there be Pentecost-like events taking place?
9. **One of the most unexpected and remarkable results of the Pentecostal outpouring was the fact that the disciples were able from that time forward to speak fluently the languages of any nation to which they traveled.**

"There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." [Acts 2:5] During the dispersion the Jews had been scattered to almost every part of the inhabited world, and in their exile they had learned to speak various languages. Many of these Jews were on this occasion in Jerusalem, attending the religious festivals then in progress. Every known tongue was represented by those assembled. **This diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which [40] they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the**

languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles** 39.2-40.0. [Bold type and Bible reference in brackets are added.]

It is estimated that in the first century there were eight to ten million Jews in the world and that up to 60 percent of them lived outside the land of Judea. Yet, many who were in Jerusalem for the feast were from foreign lands and could not speak Aramaic, the language of Judean Jews at that time.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, July 9.

10. There has been much discussion down through the years about what actually happened with reference to that *speaking in tongues*. It is very clear both from Scripture and from Ellen White that those were true languages spoken by various groups of people. Read Acts 2:6,8. These verses describe the languages as *dialectos* meaning languages of a nation or region. (Compare with Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14.)
11. This was not just a manifestation of some miraculous power to place God's stamp of approval on what was happening. This was a necessary gift from God to allow for the rapid spread of the gospel throughout the then-known world. The fact that some tried to make fun of them, suggesting they had had too much wine, was a suggestion of the Devil himself (*Acts of the Apostles* 40.2) working through the Jewish priests. They accused the disciples of being drunk! The fact that all those foreign-dwelling Jews heard the message in their own languages is clear proof that the accusation was absolutely false.
12. Fortunately for us as Christians, this accusation inspired Peter to stand up and explain what was happening. Compare Acts 2:17 with Joel 2:28. Peter pointed out that what was happening was the fulfillment of a prophecy given hundreds of years earlier by the prophet Joel. Joel had written his book probably around 825 B.C. Joel had stated that this event would happen "afterwards"; but, Peter said this is what "I will do in the last days."
13. It is important to remember as we noted from Ellen White earlier that Jesus had carefully taken the disciples through the prophecies in the Old Testament, pointing out how they had been fulfilled by His life and death. Peter picked up some of those arguments and quoted Psalm 16:8-11 from the *Septuagint* and demonstrated that Jesus was to be raised from the dead before His body had fully deteriorated. That is exactly what had happened. All of these events were clearly known and remembered well by the people who dwelt in and around Jerusalem. (See Luke 24:18.) There was no argument about the truthfulness of Peter's statements. Of course, Peter's focus was on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This event sets Christianity apart from all other religions. It is our promise and confirmation of life after death.
14. It is important to remember that the priests who were present in that crowd were members of the Sadducees, a party that did not believe in the resurrection or any kind of life after this life. But, in very strong words, Peter stated that Jesus had not only risen from the dead but also was now seated at the right hand of God in heaven. That made the priests furious. When Jesus was endowed with full authority, He sent the Holy Spirit to do what was happening before their eyes. Contrast Acts 6:7 and Acts 15:5.
15. It is important to note that Jesus did not receive some authority that He had not had

previously. (John 1:1-3; 17:5) It was simply a recognition of the marvelous victory won by Jesus in His conflict with the Devil in what we call the great controversy over God's character and God's form of government. Satan could not get Jesus to sin even once during His entire life; nor could Satan get Him to give up His mission on this earth and go back to heaven, leaving us in our sins. Instead, He followed every detail of God's plan for His life, step-by-step, including, finally, arising in His own power from the grave. (DA 785.2) Thus, He proved that all of Satan's accusations against Him were false. That is what made this event so important.

16. The life and death of Jesus not only made salvation possible for all of us but also answered the accusations that Satan had made against God and against His character and government. Satan was proven to be a liar and the "father of lies," even a "fraud."
17. Don't you wish you could have a copy of Peter's entire sermon on that occasion? What do you suppose he said? We have only a few minutes of excerpts of that speech. But, it had a powerful effect on his hearers. When Peter was done, they asked, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) Peter's response was one that Christians should be working toward even now—to convince sinners to turn away from their sins and be baptized. Repentance and conversion mean a radical change in the direction in one's life, a turning away from our sins to following the footsteps of Jesus. (Acts 3:19; 26:20)
18. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day was rewarded by the conversion and baptism of 3000 people! Thus was demonstrated the first-fruits of God's plan for His church from that point until the second coming of Jesus. **Spreading the gospel and convicting sinners of their sins is the main reason for the existence of the church.** Every day we should seek opportunities to share the good news of the gospel.

Christ's ascension to heaven was the signal that His followers were to receive the promised blessing.... When Christ passed within the heavenly gates, He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as this ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. The Pentecostal outpouring was Heaven's communication that the Redeemer's inauguration was accomplished. According to His promise He had sent the Holy Spirit from heaven to His followers as a token that He had, as priest and king, received all authority in heaven and on earth, and was the Anointed One over His people.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles** 38.3-39.0.

19. Having learned something about Pentecost and the beginnings of the early rain, what should we conclude about the latter rain? Remember that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was for the specific purpose of helping the disciples more effectively spread the gospel. Are we prepared to receive the Holy Spirit in latter rain power?
20. Despite the fact that many Jews, especially the scribes and the Pharisees, had studied intensively what we call the Old Testament, no one had any idea that the Messiah would come and live as Jesus did, be crucified on a Roman cross, and then arise from the dead! At that point in time, no human being could have even guessed such a series of events.
21. So, what exactly does baptism have to do with this conversion experience? Remember that baptism is supposed to recognize a death of the old man of sin and a resurrection to a new life as a new baby Christian.

22. While virtually no human being, including the disciples, could have guessed what was coming, Jesus had repeatedly foretold that the Holy Spirit would be poured out. See John 14:15-18; 16:4-14; and Acts 1:8.
23. Do these promises of Jesus to His disciples apply to us in any way? Can we still claim the promise of the Holy Spirit? If we do receive the promise of the Holy Spirit, how does that impact our proclamation of the gospel message? The purpose of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is to prepare us to proclaim the gospel. It is not likely that many of us will receive the ability to speak foreign languages without having learned them in a traditional manner; but, we need to be so full of the gospel story that we are prepared to tell anyone who asks us. (1 Peter 3:15)
24. Do you think there will be a kind of Pentecostal experience connected with the latter rain? Could the latter rain actually happen in our day?
25. There are some Christians who believe that the Holy Spirit has only been present on earth following Pentecost. However, the Holy Spirit has been on this earth much longer than that. Paul suggested in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. We believe that process occurs through the power of the Holy Spirit; so, He must have been present at least from the days of Moses. But, based on Genesis 1:1-2, the Holy Spirit was active even at creation.
26. The work of the Holy Spirit is so important in the book of Acts that it is mentioned about 55 times. Some scholars believe that we should call the book of Acts not the Acts of the Apostles, but rather, the Acts of the Holy Spirit.
27. Suppose that you had had an experience like that of the disciples at Pentecost. Would you feel empowered in speaking to those around you about the good news of the gospel?
28. We know that the author of Acts was the good Dr. Luke. From reading the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, we recognize that he had a very thorough and complete knowledge of Jewish history, customs, and laws. He understood what lessons they were supposed to learn from Passover and Pentecost. Is it clear in your thinking how these things are related?
29. Don't you wish you knew more of the details of what happened during those 50 days between Passover and Pentecost? Would a more thorough understanding of what happened at that time make us better prepared for what is coming in our day? Clearly, Peter felt that the single most important event that had happened during those days was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.
30. Take another look—a kind of overview—at Peter's sermon recorded in Acts 2:14-39. Was it the general pattern of the sermons the disciples were to preach? Notice this sequence: (1) He identified passages from the Old Testament as predicting what would happen in the life of Jesus; (2) He recalled the events that had just taken place in fulfillment of those passages; (3) He called for the people to respond. Peter and the other disciples had one central theme to everything they preached: Jesus—incarnate, crucified, risen, ascended, and soon to return.

The disciples were to carry their work forward in Christ's name. Their every word and act was to fasten attention on His name, as possessing that vital power by which sinners may be saved.... Christ's name was to be their watchword, their badge of distinction, their bond of union, the authority for their course of action, and the source of their success.—Ellen G. White, *The*

Acts of the Apostles 28.2.*

31. In his sermon, Peter referred to *this Jesus*. Why did he use that comment—that nomenclature? We need to remember that His name was not Jesus. *Jesus* is an English derivation from a Greek transliteration of *Iesus* from the Hebrew name *Joshua* which was His real name. And there were, no doubt, many named Joshua living among the people in Judea in those days. So, Peter wanted to make sure that everyone understood he was speaking specifically about the One we call *Jesus*. Peter wanted to lead people to His cross to remind them of the terrible suffering He had gone through followed by that incredible triumph when He arose from the tomb. That offered them real hope. They were to accept Him as their Lord and Savior. And every sermon preached by a true Christian pastor should challenge his listeners to respond to *that Jesus*.
32. Does it surprise you to read that 3000 people were baptized in a single day in Jerusalem? Just a few weeks earlier when Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross, it seemed like the Christian cause was dead. What happened?
33. Think about the methods we are using to spread the gospel in our day. Are they truly effective? What is the most effective form of evangelism known to man and God? It is when a person witnesses personally to one of his or her friends about Jesus Christ and invites that person to become a part of the Christian movement.
34. In conclusion, we need to note that some Christian groups believe that speaking in what they call *tongues* is the only proof that one is a true Christians. Read 1 Corinthians 14, and compare it with Acts 2. Are those two occasions talking about the same thing? Is speaking in tongues an essential part of the Christian experience? How would you explain these passages to someone who fully believes that speaking in tongues was and is the only evidence of true Christianity? As a part of the latter rain, do you think that Seventh-day Adventists in our day will actually receive the true gift of speaking in tongues in some parts of the world?
35. What would you expect to happen to you if the latter rain were poured out now?

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Last Modified: June 6, 2018

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