

The Power of Pentecost

Acts 2:14-39

The Holy Spirit is poured out at Pentecost to enable the church to fulfill the great commission. Just as every true Christian is filled by the Spirit, so the entire church is empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the good news.

NOTES:

The Last Days

The gift of languages at Pentecost is a reversal of Babel when the Lord “confused the language of all the earth; and from there Yahweh scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth” (Gen. 11:10). People united to worship false gods and make their own name great, but God scatters them in order to show mercy. He called Abraham and later Israel to lead the nations to Him, but Israel often was the one being led away. Pentecost is the Feast of Weeks, a harvest festival, fifty days after Firstfruits which was celebrated during the Passover week (Lev. 23:4-8). People from every nation are gathered in Jerusalem when the Spirit is poured out (Acts 2:5). Everyone wonders what’s happening when they hear the gospel in their own language, and mockers think they’re drunk, but Peter stands up and declares this is what Joel prophesied about: God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh in the last days (v16). This is what Jesus said would happen: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn. 16:7-8). The Spirit is poured out on all flesh: sons and daughters prophesy, young and old have visions and dreams, and even servants are included (vv17-18). The wonders in heaven and signs on the earth include the sun going dark during Jesus’ crucifixion and the curtain torn in the temple (Lk. 23:44-45). The blood, fire, vapor and smoke, sun turning into darkness and moon to blood refers to the destruction of Jerusalem that Christ already predicted in the Olivet Discourse, which would happen in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24, esp. vv29-30; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). Jesus, like Joel, quotes Isaiah who spoke of the coming judgment on Babylon: “For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine” (13:10). Israel is going to be judged and brought down. The “last days” is not the end of the space-time continuum, but the end of the Judaic aeon and the beginning of the time of the Gentiles. The devout people who hear and believe the gospel are going to take it back to their own nations, and by the Spirit the nations are going to believe. God raised Jesus up from the dead by the Holy Spirit, as they witnessed, and the Spirit is now poured out (vv32-33).

The Spirit-Filled Church

In the old covenant the Holy Spirit was the life-giver and author of regeneration in every faithful Israelite (Jn. 3:5-10). But because Jesus had not yet come, the Spirit had not been poured out in new covenant strength. The Spirit empowered certain individuals to serve God in special ways like Samson tearing apart a lion or killing a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a donkey (Jdgs. 14:6; 15:14-15). David prayed that the Lord would not take His Spirit away from Him, the Spirit that enabled him to rule as a godly king (Ps. 51:10-13). Even after God put His Spirit upon seventy elders to help Moses bear the burden, he lamented: “Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and

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that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:29; 17). The Spirit equipped prophets, priests, and kings, but Israel routinely fell into decline, idolatry, and apostasy. They needed something better. When Jesus ascended to the Father as our new head and received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, everything changed: "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (v33). We don't have a list of prophecies, visions, and dreams of the sons, daughters, and elderly in the early church. What this seems to mean is that everyone knows Lord, understands His word, and is powerfully equipped by the Spirit for the work of ministry. We see the fruitful kingdom work of young and old, women and men throughout the New Testament (e.g. Acts 18:26; Matt. 18:1-6; Acts 21:8-9). This church-wide gifting doesn't negate the offices of elder and deacon (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1), and the Spirit-filled church has men and women, old and young, all worshiping together and serving one another because everyone is walking in the Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit

What does it look like for the Spirit to empower someone? Our first example is Peter the former three-time coward: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (vv36-38). Peter becomes like Jesus. He knows that even if it means some short-term trouble for him, the Lord will bless his obedience. He tells this bewildered and skeptical crowd that they are corporately responsible for killing Jesus—and it works! Christians in the New Testament are constantly at risk of insult, slander, hatred, poverty, pain, and even death. What's strange is that they are simultaneously triumphant. Not everyone believes Peter, but 3000 are added that day (v41). What does the work of the Spirit look like in this new community, the new Israel? "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (v42). Everyone is reverent, and they share possessions, even selling things in order to bless one another (vv43-45). They meet publicly and show hospitality, house to house, giving glory to God such that more people come to the Lord daily (vv46-47). Luke doesn't leave much to the imagination. We know what life in the Spirit looks like. Who wouldn't want to be part of a people like that, of the church alive in Christ by the Holy Spirit? Know who you are in the Spirit and walk in Him.