

The Last Pentecost

Holy Confusion – Part I

Acts 2:1-12

Introduction

More than three million people jammed the streets and alleyways of Jerusalem. Jewish law required all males who lived within twenty miles of Jerusalem to attend. Ordinary labor was prohibited during this national holiday, and all shops were closed. Many Jews had traveled from many other nations to stay for the Passover and Pentecost, and their vacation was about to end. Within days, there would be a great exodus from the city, when hundreds of thousands of pilgrims would begin their journey home.

Unknown to them, according to the plan of God, this was the last Pentecost. The dawning of a new dispensation was only hours away – when the third person of the Godhead would make His electrifying descent from the throne of heaven above.

Acts, chapter 2, is the story of that descent.

The Last Pentecost

In order to re-enter the drama of this incredible day and appreciate its significance, we first need to understand some of the background.

The last Pentecost was the result of Christ's promise

1. First of all, this last Pentecost was the result of Christ's promise.

You may remember that Jesus Christ promised the Spirit would come. Turn to Acts, chapter 1, verse 5.

... but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

Also, look at verse 8a.

but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses . . .

You need to understand the changing role of the Holy Spirit. In:

- the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit's role in a persons life was *temporary* (for example, He came upon Saul and later, He left Saul, as we are told in I Samuel, chapters 10 and 16);
- the New Testament, the Holy Spirit's role in a person's life is *permanent* (“... He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever” John 14:16);
- the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit's presence was referred to as *an anointing in order to fulfill special tasks* (Samson is an example of this as the Spirit empowered him and then, abandoned Him, as recorded in Judges, chapters 13 and 16. David prayed in Psalm 51:11, “. . . do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” This is not the prayer of a New Testament believer, but an Old Testament believer who was afraid that God would remove the anointing Holy Spirit which allowed him to fulfill his kingly tasks.);
- the New Testament, the Holy Spirit does not temporarily anoint, but *permanently indwells* (Jesus promised His disciples in John 14:17

that the Spirit was with them and would be in them.).

The Spirit had been with the disciples and in the future, the Spirit would indwell them. The Spirit would no longer be there just for special tasks, but for every activity of life.

Theological applications concerning the Holy Spirit

In fact, let us make some theological applications for today, concerning the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a future blessing for faithful believers

- The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a future blessing for faithful believers.

Paul wrote to the most carnal, divisive church in the first century – the church at Corinth – in I Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 13a,

. . . by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . .

That is in the past tense. At the moment of conversion, you received the Holy Spirit; you did not have to wait for Him to come.

I like the way the author Tony Evans expressed it when he wrote,

God does not have baptism “halfway houses,” nor does He baptize on the installment plan. There’s no such thing as a layaway baptism where you make a down payment up front, pay on it each month, and then after enough time as a Christian, you get to take your baptism out of layaway and enjoy the whole deal. No. All of the Holy Spirit you are ever going to get as a believer, you received when Jesus baptized you by means of the Spirit into His body at your salvation. So the question in the Christian life is not, “How much of the Holy Spirit do you have?” but, “How much of you does the Holy Spirit have?”ⁱ

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a special privilege for spiritual people

- The second theological application is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a special privilege for spiritual people.

In fact, according to Romans, chapter 8, verse 9, if you do not have the Spirit indwelling you, you do not have a claim to Christianity. So anyone who tells you, “You haven’t been baptized by the Holy Spirit,” is saying you are not saved. All Christians are Spirit baptized.

The Holy Spirit is not some treat for the spiritually elite. (Did you like that? You actually pay me to come up with stuff like that!)

I tell my kids, “Listen, if you behave for your mother today, and do your chores and treat each other with some semblance of civility, then when I come home, I’ll take you out to Goodberrys for ice cream after supper.”

Now parenting experts say you are not supposed to bribe your kids. I am not bribing them, I am just telling them, “If you behave, we go to Goodberrys; if you misbehave, you go to bed.”

The parenting experts need to learn about the power of ice cream!

Fortunately, God does not do that with His Holy Spirit. He does not say, “Now if you pray long and hard; if you tarry; if you weep; if you’re really good, I’ll give you a taste of the Holy Spirit.”

You and I are never commanded anywhere in the Bible to seek the baptism of the Spirit; to pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. No, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the once for all experience of every believer. God takes the new believer and by means of the Holy Spirit, immerses them into the body of Christ.

Paul, in fact, wrote to Titus, in Titus, chapter 3, verses 5 and 6,

He [God] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior

You and I are no more deserving of the Holy Spirit than we are of Jesus Christ. We receive Jesus Christ not by merit or works, and as well, we receive the Holy Spirit not by works or deeds. Both are received by means of salvation.

So, we do not pray for the Holy Spirit to descend upon us, or fall upon us, or come from heaven with power. He is standing here tapping His fingers

saying, “Excuse me, I’ve been down here now for two thousand years. Where have you been?”

Everyone who has received Christ as their personal Savior, has received the baptism, and indwelling, and sealing of the Holy Spirit.

Now, there is something else I want you to know about the last Pentecost.

The Last Pentecost was the fulfillment of Jewish chronology and feasts

2. The last Pentecost was the fulfillment of the Jewish celebration.

You need to understand the significance of Jewish chronology and feasts.

Jesus Christ was led as a lamb to die in order to deliver men and women from the bondage of sin. That happened at the same time Israel was celebrating the Passover. During Passover, they took the lives of lambs and ate them in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt.

Paul declared in I Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 7b,

. . . For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

It was during the Feast of First Fruits that the nation celebrated the first crops brought in from harvest. The priest waved a sheaf of grain before the Lord – the seed that had died and born fruit. It was the first fruits from their crops that they gave to God in celebration of life. It was during the Feast of First Fruits that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Paul referred to this in I Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 20, when he wrote,

. . . Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.

Do not think for a moment that the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ coincidentally occurred during these special feast days. The events of His life and death fulfilled those feast days. I cannot help but be moved to consider the historical fact that as Jesus Christ came riding into the city of Jerusalem on the donkey, temple shepherds, on that same day, would be herding the sheep from the outlying regions into the city for their sacrificial death.

Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, writes that 256,000 lambs were killed during the first century Passover. You can imagine that sheep and

young lambs are filling the streets as The Lamb of God, who had also entered the city to die, had come. Here he comes, the final sacrifice, the fulfillment of Passover, surrounded by thousands of sacrificial lambs.

And, fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits, the Bible reads, in Acts, chapter 2, verse 1,

When the day of Pentecost had come . . .

(literally, was fulfilled),

. . . they were all together in one place.

Israel had also been celebrating Pentecost for centuries. Pentecost literally means “fiftieth”. It occurred fifty days after the Feast of First Fruits. One of the primary functions of Pentecost was to celebrate the giving of the Law. In the Old Testament there were the rumblings of the earthquake as Moses ascended Mt. Sinai. And, there was the fire and smoke as God supernaturally communicated onto tablets of stone the law.

Now, in the last Pentecost, there are the loud rumblings as of a mighty wind, and there is fire, and God is supernaturally communicating through the lips of his apostles, the message of grace.

At the first Pentecost, on Mt. Sinai, God gave His Holy Law. And the law would produce a national conscience.

At the last Pentecost, God will give His Holy Spirit. And the Spirit will produce an international church.

To pray for Pentecost to happen again is to ignore the simple fact that it was an historical event, prophesied centuries earlier, with non-repeatable action. We cannot duplicate Pentecost any more than we can duplicate Bethlehem or Calvary.

To pray for Pentecost to happen in the church would be like praying for America to become independent of England. It has already happened. No one today, prays for the revolution. It happened and now, every American enjoys the benefits of freedom and independence because of the ongoing effects of that historical event called the American Revolution. While early Americans waited for independence, we are born independent.

In the same way, these apostles waited for the Holy Spirit to descend, indwell them, and baptize them into the body of Christ – the church. We, as soon as we are born again, are immediately indwelt by

the Spirit and baptized into the body of Christ. We benefit immediately.

And we, as believers, receive all of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead at once.

The last Pentecost marked the creation of the New Testament Church

3. The last Pentecost marked the creation of the New Testament Church.

Paul says, “C’mon, wake up! Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which you have from God - you no longer belong to yourself - you are the sanctuary of God.”

Collectively we come together and create the “ekklesia,” or the local New Testament Church, which is a body that moves and functions and serves. We will talk more of this later, but for now, the coming of the Spirit created a new temple for Holy God and a new organism called the church.

Three occurrences as the Holy Spirit descended

Alright, that is my sermon introduction for this morning! Now let us continue and look on as the Holy Spirit descends. Three things occurred as the Holy Spirit descended.

Something audible occurred

- First, something audible occurred when the Holy Spirit descended.

Look at Acts, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2,

When the day of Pentecost had come, . . .

(literally, when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled!),

. . . they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

You need to understand that a “wind” did not come rushing in. Look at verse 2 again,

. . . there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind . . .

Please note that it was not a mighty rushing wind that came and tore at their clothes; it was a noise that sounded like a violent rushing wind, similar to a tornado or a hurricane. I have never heard such a sound as the wind from a recent hurricane. It was like

the lag of a jet plane. It must have been somewhat frightening for this sound to begin inside that upper room.

This was something audible that happened when the Holy Spirit descended.

Something visible occurred

- Secondly, something visible occurred when the Holy Spirit descended.

Look at verse 3.

And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

Notice again, this is not literal fire, but it has the appearance of fire. That is the only way that he could describe it.

In Revelation, John writes, “I saw something like . . .”. He is trying to find words in the Greek language to explain the unexplainable.

This was an unexplainable event. All of a sudden, a noise begins to build in the room and then, perhaps through the wall or from the ceiling, there comes a flickering wisp like flame. It then, divides and goes separately to each individual and rests on them.

No further reference is made to this flame-like appearance. This was, evidently, indeed the baptism of the Holy Spirit. To the Jew, fire had always been the symbol of the divine presence.

Something verbal occurred

- Thirdly, something verbal took place when the Holy Spirit descended.

Look at verse 4 of Acts, chapter 2. And, by the way, to the neo-Pentecostal, charismatic claim for Pentecost experience, may I remind you that this was more than speaking with languages previously unlearned, it also included something audible and something visible. Perhaps we could test their claims of the Spirit. Verse 4,

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

The word “tongue,” comes from the Greek word “glossa,” which gives us the transliterated word “glossary”. Later, in verse 6, the word is changed to

the Greek word “dialektos,” from which we get our word “dialect”.

This was a known language consisting not of babbling or the simple consonant vowel, consonant vowel sounds of an infant child. This consisted of vocabulary and grammar and order.

So, when the Holy Spirit descended, something audible happened, something visible happened, and something verbal happened. That leads me to another critical point about Pentecost.

The Last Pentecost was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy

4. Fourthly, the last Pentecost was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Turn to Isaiah, chapter 28, verse 11.

Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, “Here is rest, give rest to the weary,” and, “Here is repose,” but they would not listen.

This passage was fulfilled with the Babylonian captivity, yet the apostle Paul quotes this verse in reference to the phenomena of speaking in tongues, in I Corinthians, chapter 14, verse 21. Paul reminded them that it was a sign to the unbelieving nation that they had indeed, rejected the true Messiah.

When Peter and the others stood and declared in foreign tongues the truth of God’s plan through Jesus Christ, every rabbi who had Isaiah tucked away in his heart; every Jewish leader who knew the scroll of Isaiah, their great prophet, must have shuddered with the thought, “Could this be the sign that we crucified the wrong man; the God-man?”

Paul clears any doubt as he writes in I Corinthians, chapter 14, “Yes, tongues were the sign to the unbelieving Jew that Christ was the true Messiah!”

Now, let us go back to Acts, chapter 2, and notice how the Jews responded! And, as we read their response, my question to you is, “Do you see yourself in their response?!! How are you responding today, to the descent of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the dispensation of grace?”

Look at verses 5 and 6.

Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered . . .

Evidently, this sound was not confined to the room. For all we know, it may have filled most of Jerusalem. When everyone heard it, they were bewildered and they came.

Look at verse 7 to find out what happened.

And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?”

Three responses from the crowd

Let me give three responses or reactions from the crowd.

Amazement

- The first response is amazement.

I wish I could have seen this. The crowd was so amazed because these apostles were uneducated Galileans. They wondered, “How are uneducated Galileans speaking fluently in another language?”

Look at verse 8.

And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

The list of languages the apostles were now speaking was impressive. Notice the list in verses 9 through 11.

Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.

Imagine that! Their languages included everything from African to Italian dialects.

Confusion

- There was also great confusion in the response of the crowd.

Look at verse 12.

And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

In other words, “What in the world is going on?”

Ridicule

- There was amazement and confusion and, thirdly, there was ridicule or rejection.

Look at verse 13.

But others were mocking and saying, “They are full of sweet wine.”

What are they saying? They are saying that the temple is filled with drunk men. However, when do drunk men speak fluently in another language?

Bob Ingersoll used to stand on a platform, in the late nineteenth century, and take out his stopwatch. At that time, people never said anything against God; at least publicly! So, he would gather quite a crowd, as he said, “If there is a God, I want Him to strike me dead within the next thirty seconds.” He would dramatically hold his stopwatch in the air and count down the seconds. The crowd would gasp; ladies would faint; people would say, “Oh, God’s going to strike him dead!” He would just count down, “Five, four, three, two, one. I’m still alive! You see, I told God to strike me dead and He didn’t – He doesn’t exist.”

Since when has God been obligated to obey anyone?

There are skeptics who today, look at you and what God has done in your life. And when they cannot explain it; when they cannot come up with some tangible reason, yet they know you have been transformed; you are a different person – they are either going to be amazed, or confused, or they are going to ridicule and reject the evidence.

Application

Two present day questions from this past tense event

Let me give two present day questions from this past tense event.

Do you have all of the Holy Spirit?

1. Do you have all of the Holy Spirit?

In other words, have you been born again? If so, then at the moment of your conversion, you were by the Lord’s own grace, baptized by means of the Holy

Spirit into the Body of Christ. You did receive all of the Holy Spirit. Have you become a Christian?

Does the Holy Spirit have all of you?

2. Does the Holy Spirit have all of you?

My friend, the person of the Holy Spirit was not given to you so that you might have some unusual experience, He was given to you so that you would have the Helper. And, in having the Helper, that you might obey the leadership of the living God.

I like the funny story that actually happened, in a fifth grade Sunday school class. At the beginning of each class, they were to recite a creed. Each child had one line of the creed to learn and in each class, they each contributed their one line until all the creed was spoken. The teacher had hoped that the students would absorb not just their one line, but the entire creed.

All went well until one Sunday, about four months into this experiment, when the class began to recite the creed. The first girl as usual, recited her line flawlessly, “I believe in God the Father, maker of heaven and earth.”

The second, a boy, stood up and said his sentence, “I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord.”

Then, silence descended over the class. Finally, one girl who discovered the problem, spoke up and said, “I’m sorry, sir, but the boy who believes in the Holy Spirit is absent today.”

I wonder . . . is that our problem? Have we really bought into the truth that the Holy Spirit really did descend on this Last Pentecost; that the fulfiller of that Old Testament feast had indeed come and that He really does now permanently indwell every believer?

Do we really believe it? If we do, then the way we talk and walk; the way we dress the temple of the Spirit; the places we carry Him to; the activity we put Him through answer whether we really believe He came down, and went in.

Every time you say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” or “I believe Acts, chapter 2, really happened,” you are saying, “I believe God is committed to changing me and shaping me and empowering me to stand as a witness before the jury of the world.” And in the process, He is passionate in His promise to conform us into the likeness of His only Son.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 10/13/1996 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Tony Evans, The Promise, p. 38.