

EXPLAINING PENTECOST

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How would you explain Pentecost? You could say it was a Jewish Feast, and that would be partly correct. Fifty days after the festival of Passover came the Pentecost Festival. For the Jews these festivals, were all important though none so important as Passover. These festivals were the most important religious times of their year; and they were spaced around 50 days apart. For centuries these commemorative events had come and gone, and the Jewish people loved them all and celebrated them all, for of all people the Jewish people celebrated Life. These festivals were important for Jesus and His disciples also. For these first century Jews who followed the Messiah Jesus, these two festivals came to have the most meaning. During Passover Jesus the Lamb of God was sacrificed for their sin; and on Pentecost, the Feast of the First Fruits, the time of the wave offering before the Lord, the Holy Spirit of God had flooded their little upper room and had given to them the power to be the mightiest force the world had ever seen.

Would you explain Pentecost simply as a Festival? It really matters how we explain these events. Most people explain Pentecost in terms of the Holy Spirit who came with fire and wind and tongues. In fact, some denominations base most of their theology upon such things as 'speaking in tongues' or 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' or 'the fullness of the Holy Spirit.' It must 'grieve' the Holy Spirit whose purpose is to give testimony to Jesus. The Bible says, ^{JN 15:26} "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will **testify** about me.²⁷ And you also must **testify**, for you have been with me from the beginning."

After the Holy Spirit had come in great power and the people thought the strange acting and strange speaking people were inebriated, because they could think of no other option than drunkenness. They were so perplexed by what they were witnessing that they deduced from what they saw the most suitable answer they could find: These people are drunk! That's what they thought. And, indeed, they were drunk—drunk with 'new wine', drunk with the divine gift that heaven had poured out upon them! They were drunk with the Spirit, not drunk of the flesh.

Simon Peter, spokesman for the disciples, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, explained the meaning of Pentecost to them. Reading between the lines we hear him saying to them:

IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD. Simon Peter was saying to them, "The God who promised you these things is always faithful to His word." Just as we need to know that, this struggling group full of the unity of the spirit and bathed in prayer needed to know that it would not be by their works and their power but by the Power of God.^{ZEC 4:6} So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but **by my Spirit**,' says the LORD Almighty." If the great temple builder and leader Zerubbabel needed this assurance, this vulnerable group needed it more. What group

could have been more vulnerable than were they? They had fled from the Jewish authorities, cowered before the Roman authorities, and hid from the Jerusalem authorities. That Upper Room was first a place of devotion; but now it was a place to hide. The Upper Room disciples must have trembled at each knock of the door below. They must have spoken in whispers for fear of finding the same fate as Jesus the Nazarene. They must have moved about in the evening shadows and in the darkness when going out for food or for other necessities. They must have glanced across their shoulders for fear of being followed. They knew all the promises of God and they were still afraid. Does that sound familiar to anyone here? Are you worried and afraid of what is going to happen even if what we worry about never happens and even if God has promised His care and protection? Aren't we a funny lot, vacillating between fear and faith, wrestling with despair while clinging to hope, believing yet doubting at the same time? Aren't we a funny lot? We forget the words of Scripture: ^{2Tim 1:7} "For God did not give us a **spirit of timidity**, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." God has not given His church anything less than a spirit of faith and boldness; any other spirit comes from within our own human weakness.

This work of the Kingdom is not our work it is God's work. Jesus said, "The Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This business of the church is not our business, it is the Father's business, which Jesus knew at 12 years of age when he told his bewildered parents, "I must be about my Father's business."

That's how Peter explained Pentecost. Listen to his words: ^{AC 2:14} Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

^{AC 2:17} "In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

^{AC 2:18} Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

^{AC 2:19} I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

^{AC 2:20} The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

^{AC 2:21} And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Peter was saying to the people who stood gawking and wondering about the events of that morning, IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD! Pentecost was a God Event. God had already written it into His Agenda as the beginning of the Last Days. Brethren, we are living in the last days of the Lord, and we do not know when the Mighty Last Day will come. But come it will, just as Pentecost came as a promise of God. A young girl of the Pentecostal faith was at the women's clinic in Whitesburg, where Martha had an appointment. I was in the waiting room and she came up and said, "I have a message from God for you and for everyone who will listen." Interested I replied, "What is it?" She said, "Jesus has spoken to me several times and has told me He is going to return soon, and He has told me to tell everyone I can about it." I do not doubt what the young lady said, for He may return very soon. He has always been Faithful in everything. But the return of Jesus will not take place until the Father decides that it is time to end time. When the Father determines that, it will happen. Pentecost still means IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD!

He is with us in all our endeavors for His Kingdom. He is a Giving God! He gives us everything we have. He gave us the Gift of the Holy Spirit to empower us to work for the Coming of the Kingdom in history.

Peter's explanation of Pentecost is also IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS. ^{AC 2:22} "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

" `I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.
^{AC 2:26} Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will live in hope,
^{AC 2:27} because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
^{AC 2:28} You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

^{AC 2:29} "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

" `The Lord said to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand

AC 2:35 until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet." ' "

AC 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this:
God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified,
both Lord and Christ."

It's all about Jesus death for our sins. ^{Vs.23} This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. God the Father purposed that His only begotten Son would die for our sins. Evil men with wicked hands and hearts slew Him, nailed Him to a cross. But their hearts were no more evil than ours. Jesus had to die in our place. When He died, He paid the price of sin for every man. He took upon Himself your sins and gave His life for them. He did not want to die, but He refused life to do the Father's will. It was all about Jesus who died for your sins and for my sins and for the sins of the entire world. IT WAS ALL ABOUT JESUS.

It was all about Jesus' resurrection. ²⁴ **"But God** raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." Pentecost was the foremost proof of the resurrection of Jesus; and every time a person is saved it is proof that Jesus is living and saving. But with no Pentecost there would have been no church; with no Pentecost there would have been no convincing proof of the Resurrection; with no Pentecost there would have been no power to launch a world-wide movement of compassion and salvation to a sinful and decadent world. Pentecost was launched with Power, God's Power, a Power demonstrating with finality the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In Explaining Pentecost Peter noted that it was also all about Jesus' Exaltation: ³³ "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

" `The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand

AC 2:35 until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet." ' "

AC 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this:

God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

As you can see, then, it was all about Jesus' exaltation as the King who would eternally be seated upon the throne of David. In His exaltation Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to comfort and to empower the church; and in His exaltation Jesus was made Savior, King, Lord and Messiah or Christ. Someone once said about Christmas "Jesus is the reason for the season." I'm here to tell you that Jesus is the reason for every season and for everything. His Name is above every name that is named in heaven and on the earth. "All hail the power of Jesus name, Let angels prostrate fall, Bring forth the royal diadem And crown Him Lord of all." Why? God has crowned Him with glory and with honor

and given Him a Name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and in earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That is how Peter explained Pentecost—it is all about God and it is all about Jesus. But Peter was more graphic in his final summation—Pentecost is also ALL ABOUT YOU. I include myself in that You. For nobody is exempt. We all need to repent and follow Christ in baptism and discipleship. You see, when Peter mentioned Pentecost to his listeners he said,³⁸ “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Then he added,³⁹ “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

You see, the Gift makes you a Child of God. In his excellent commentary, R.B. Rackman has these special words for us. “It was the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ which first made it possible for the divine Spirit to dwell in a human personality. When the Word was made flesh, the Holy Ghost became the Spirit of the man Jesus; and now that Jesus was glorified the Spirit of Jesus was become the Spirit of consummated humanity, and through the channel of that humanity he could be poured out upon the brethren of Jesus. This new presence of the Spirit has also a corresponding effect on human society. Being the Spirit of the Son of Man, the church His indwelling creates is a universal church; no longer the church of a small select race but the church of humanity.”

He adds: “This Pentecost witnessed the introduction into the world of a new order of life—the life of the Divine Spirit in humanity.”

Pentecost really is all about you. You need to give up your sinful life for a New life in Jesus. God loves you and wants you to have this New Life. Jesus died to give it to you. You need to repent and believe to receive it. Pentecost is all about God, all about Jesus, and all about you. What will you do with Jesus?