

Part 1, What is Pentecost?

The day of Pentecost is told primarily in Luke's account titled the Acts of the Apostles; so-called because it relates the story of the apostles who were commissioned by Jesus to continue the Mission he had started.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4 NIV)

The day of Pentecost was an ancient celebration where, according to the Jewish oral tradition was the time of the Lord giving the Israelites the religious Law at Sinai through Moses. It coincided with the Feast of Weeks in late spring, seven weeks – or 50 days after Passover, hence the name of Pentecost. ('pentecost' is Greek for fifty.)

- ✓ The first important meaning of the Feast of Weeks for Israel under God's Law was to celebrate thanksgiving for the first harvest.
- ✓ The new important meaning is for all God's people under God's grace. It is the celebration of the first harvest of those redeemed in Christ.ⁱ

That new meaning is shown in the account where people from many nations who spoke different languages exclaimed "we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:11-12 NIV)

Promises

Two of the signs that John records demonstrate how Jesus fulfils and renews Pentecost celebrations. John records. ..

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." (John 2:18-19 NIV)

The promise and sign of the cross & resurrection are paired with another, Jesus as the first harvest, again with the promise of rebirth and renewal. The scripture with which we begin to mark communion today,

Communion Scripture: Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 NIV)

Part 2, Re-Birth & Renewal of Pentecost...

By God's design, the day of Pentecost has been re-born as both the celebration of the first harvest, those 1000's of disciples who followed Jesus and the twelve who were commissioned as Apostles, and as the day Jesus' Church was born.

As the writers to the Hebrew, or Israelite people said,

The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' (Heb.10:15-16 NIV)

This quote used by the writers to the church itself came from the Old (but not defunct) scripture, coming from Jeremiah 31. It means there is a new birth and a renewal. From that day on, the promises of God about his Spirit being with all people began.

Jesus Promises his presence...

Among the prophetic promises Jesus made was this:

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. [And] 'When the Advocate 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. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. (John 14:18-20 & 15:26-27 NIV)

At the re-born Pentecost the people gathered there came to realise that Jesus is the I Am, in the Father, and they were distraught at how they had treated him. So, they asked Peter what they should do.

Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.' (Acts 2:36-39 NIV)

He promises his presence and calls us to answer today, just as Jesus called the disciples and Peter the first church.

Summary Action

The re-birth of Pentecost should not have been a complete surprise because God had been revealing clues about his plan -through past prophets, priests and King. Jesus had revealed this more to the disciples, speaking in parables and promises.

It was not simply a show of supernatural force on the part of God -a sign for the people to wonder at and then ignore. No, it was an invitation spoken personally and directly to all the people there: in their own language with all the nuance and inflections of each language.

Are we listening for his words today? Are we searching for and noticing the clues and signs he is giving and are we accepting the Presence of His Spirit in us? By Him, God's Spirit as promised by Jesus, we have greater confidence to live in His promises and presence as His people.

'I will pour out my Spirit on all people...And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' (Acts 2:17&21 NIV). Amen

ⁱ David Brickner, *Christ in the Feast of Tabernacles* (Chicago IL: Moody Publishers, 2006), p170.