

Pentecost 2023

What Happened to Prepare the Disciples...and Us?

(preached 5/21/23)

NEXT SUNDAY is Pentecost, when the 120 disciples were Baptized in the Holy Spirit and Power:

[Acts 2:1-47 ESV] 1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

THOUSANDS GATHERED. On that fateful day, thousands of people were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, the summer harvest. It was on this very day, centuries before, when God descended from heaven and ***hovered at the summit of Mt. Sinai, give Moses the 10 commandments, and establish His covenant with the Hebrew people.***

Thus in Acts 2, **God the Holy Spirit descends from Heaven to deliver the NEW covenant to the people—the one formed by and centered on Jesus.**

INCREDIBLE! What follows what I just read to you in Acts 2 is incredible: not only do the disciples speak in tongues, but go forth to flow in the Gifts of the Spirit: words of knowledge, wisdom, and prophecy. Healing, miracles, great faith, and discernment. In my opinion, one of the most mind boggling miracles is when Phillip is “teleported” from the Gaza strip to a town called Azotus which was miles away!

PETE’S SHADOW. Another amazing one is when Peter is laying hands to heal, and the anointing on him was so great the people’s faith so high that when some merely stood in his shadow they were healed! “Wowzers” is all I can say to that!

I have to ask myself then: **did something take place between the resurrection of Christ and Pentecost—which took place exactly 50 days later—to prepare the disciples for this?** Was there something Jesus did, that physical eyes did not see, that inspired the Lord to release these supernatural gifts? And how does this apply to us today?

LINEAR VIDEO GAMES. I like storylines that run chronologically. In the video game world there are 2 schools of thought: 1) Games whose storylines and progression are “linear” and 2) Non-linear “open world” games where you can go wherever and do whatever. I prefer linear, because I enjoy following a good, deep story line that unfolds before me and leads me on a journey of discovery and revelation.

PSALM 23. Our journey with Jesus is the same: we follow Christ down a path which He has decided and remember: ***it’s HIS path that HE’s walking and we just follow.*** Psalm 23 lays out the path in order: green pastures and still waters first, then the valley of death’s shadow all the way to the presence of our enemies, ending up in the Lord’s House.

JESUS’ JOURNEY THUS FAR. Therefore let’s answer the “what happened?” question first by following Jesus and here’s His journey so far: the Cross, the Grave, and Resurrection. Jesus remained on earth for 40 days after His Resurrection then this took place:

[Acts 1:1-26 ESV] 1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

ASCENSION. This event is called the Ascension and used to be celebrated in the Church in the past. At the very least, we need to acknowledge it and learn what it means, because we benefitted from it immensely! Let’s continue to follow Jesus to see where He went next and why:

[Hebrews 6:19-20]. 19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

UNDERSTOOD “THE WHERE”. The ancient Jews reading this letter would have understood the “where” of these two verses, just as we here in 21st century understand the “where” of sliding into Home Plate. Let’s break this down:

- The author of Hebrews establishes Jesus as the eternal High Priest.
- One job of the HP is to present the animal sacrifice of sin for the whole Hebrew nation before God in the innermost place of the Temple called the Holy of Holies.
- God dwelt in the HOH and ONLY the HP could enter there! The room was shielded by an ultra-thick curtain so that the other priests couldn’t even look in there.
- The HP would pass through the curtain with the animal sacrifice in hand and offer/present it to the Lord.
- If the Lord approved it, the HP would slit its throat and ask God to forgive the sins of the entire nation.
- ***This act was called Intercession because the HP is acting as a “go between” between God and the people.*** The HP was also called an “Advocate” (on behalf of the people), sort of like a defense lawyer appearing before a judge and asking mercy for his client.

JESUS ASCENDS. Back to these verses: after disappearing in the clouds in Acts 1, Jesus ascends all the way up to Heaven and enters into the Heavenly Temple. As the HP He passed through the “curtain” into the room where God dwells, sitting on His throne.

Verse 20 says He did this in OUR behalf and names Him as “forerunner.” What’s a forerunner? Imagine a crowd of people on a journey to a destination...like in Psalm 23. The forerunner is the person who goes ahead and gets there first, whom everyone else is to follow. He may scout the path, remove/skirt obstacles, destroy/find a way around enemies, etc. **Anything to make the journey possible and successful for those who are following.**

There was something Jesus needed to do before we could follow Him, because something was in the way: our sin. The good news is verse 19 tells us He—and what He did—is a sure & steadfast anchor for our souls! Let’s continue to read:

22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant. 23 The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, 24 **but he [Jesus] holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever.** 25 Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.** 26 For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, **since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.** 28 For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

RINSE AND REPEAT. OC priests were mortal and temporary, their offerings for sin were temporary, and the affects of this “atonement” were also temporary meaning they had to be done over and over.

Jesus is forever!

- He will hold the office of HP forever!
- As the Lamb of God His sin offering to Father God was Himself, so when Father accepted said offering it was forever!
- When Jesus made Intercession for US, asking His Father to have mercy and grace upon us, not only did Father say “yes!” but His “yes!” was forever!

Look at verse 25: “He is able to save to the uttermost” and focus on that last word. It means “completely” and “at all times.” So the verse could read like this: “He is able to save completely and at all times those who draw near to God through Him.”

SAY THIS ABOUT YOURSELF RIGHT NOW: “I AM COMPLETELY SAVED.” And “I am Saved at all times.”

After completing this mission, Jesus then did this:

[Hebrews 8:1] 1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one **who is seated at the right hand of the throne** of the Majesty in heaven.

[Hebrews 10:12-13] 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, **he sat down at the right hand of God**, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

SAT DOWN. Jesus sat down on His throne at the right hand of Father God, a position of both authority and rest. ***At this point, a major change was made within US*** and here it is:

[Hebrews 8:10-13] 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts**, and **I will be their God, and they shall be my people**. 11 And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 **For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.** 13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

SINAI VS ZION. In the original Pentecost, God wrote His laws onto 2 stone tablets, establishing first (old) covenant. After Jesus made Intercession for us in Heaven, Father God wrote His word onto the tablets of our hearts and minds. Since Jesus IS the Word, Father wrote JESUS into our hearts and minds!

Verse 11: “know” the Lord doesn’t mean knowledge or memory, but means to become BFF’s with. You know your BFF better than anyone and they know you. You have a connection that runs deeper, you feel safe around them, you’ve told them your secrets—they have done the same with you. Getting to know the Lord means we experience Him! We’ve felt His love and mercy, we see His kindness, we adore His holy and just nature, we’re amazed at His wisdom and power!

Our “Pentecost” was the day we were Saved! In the OC when the HP made intercession before God for the people, he wore a breastplate with 12 precious gems with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on them. The Lord would see these names and, when the Priest asked for mercy and forgiveness, God would see the names of the 12 tribes and forgive them specifically.

MY NAME & YOURS were written on Jesus’ chest when He stood before His Father! On the day you and I received Him as our Savior, Jesus spoke our names out loud and Father said “forgiven!” In that glorious moment, God the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven and it was our Sinai/Zion time! He didn’t come with a black cloud, thunder, and lightning—He came with fire and power and wrote Jesus onto our hearts and minds! Our spirits were resurrected from the dead and made into the perfect likeness of Christ! We were then declared sons and daughters of our Father, Who art in heaven!

Now we’re ready

We weren’t ready before.

- When Jesus went to the Cross, we weren’t ready.
- When He rose from the dead, we weren’t ready.
- When He first ascended to heaven in Acts 1, we weren’t ready.
- We weren’t made ready until Pentecost because then, it was finished. The problem of sin was dealt with, once and for all.

With our sins forgiven, the Holy Spirit living within us, and Jesus literally written in our hearts and minds, we’re ready...for what? Let’s read on:

[Hebrews 10:19-23] Therefore, brothers, since **We** have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

WHOA! Only the HP can enter into the HOH into the presence of God! What's going on here?!

Please remember: we follow Christ.

The Psalm 23 paths of righteousness were HIS and created for HIS name's sake.

It's our path only because He was the forerunner and we followed.

JUST AS JESUS ENTERED INTO THE MOST HOLY PLACE IN HEAVEN, WHERE FATHER GOD SITS ON THE THRONE, *we are to follow Him.*

JESUS LIT THE WAY. As the forerunner, He cleared the path, paved it, and installed street lights and reflectors, lighting the way for us. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a Light into my path."

DRIVING AT NIGHT. IDK about you, but as I get older I don't like driving at night. It didn't use to bother me and when I was younger I secretly scoffed at older people who said this. Now its happening to me and I don't like it. Yet, when I'm going through a section that has plenty of bright street lamps and reflectors on the road, I feel more secure. *Despite the surrounding darkness and the weakness of my aging eyes, when the path is well lit, it's easy to follow.*

DARK PLACE. The modern world is a dark and terrible place and its only getting worse as the mysterious "Restrainer" allows it to. This world is waiting for its messiah, the Antichrist, the Son of Perdition and Man of Lawlessness to make his debut. Wicked spirits are becoming bolder and acting more openly than they ever have in my lifetime, and drawing many into deception and rebellion against Jesus.

Yet the darker it is, the more effective Light is. The brighter it shines, and the more it stands out.

Jesus cleared & LIT UP the path for you and I to enter into God's presence, even though we're not High Priests.

JESUS IS THE CURTAIN. There's still a curtain, a veil, separating the presence of God from the rest of the world and that curtain IS Jesus. No one cometh unto the Father except through Him. He is the only way and truth. He is the Good Shepherd Who leads us and remember the end destination of Psalm 23: *the House of the Lord where we dwell in goodness and mercy forever.*

It's time to stop being afraid of God in the sense that He's going to punish us—Jesus took our punishment.

FORGIVEN. We don't need to be afraid of God in this way because Jesus—Who is also God—made sure we were completely forgiven. The Lord promised to forgive and “not remember” which means He doesn't bring it up later/hold sins against us. The writer of Hebrews escorts us to this next part in our journey of following Jesus:

[Hebrews 12:22-25] 22 But **you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God**, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, **and to God**, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 **and to Jesus**, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. 25 **See that you do not refuse him who is speaking.**

OC was Mt. Sinai and God descending from Heaven to earth.

NC is Mt. Zion, and it's Christ ascending us to the summit where He is.

The Heavenly Jerusalem is where God dwells, where He sits on his throne. Christ is the door Who gets us there, to dwell in His presence.

We have access there right now...in the spirit. The Father, the Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are there along with the angels and the dead in Christ. It's time for us to approach God and hear His voice.

Look at **verse 25**: He IS speaking, He's not silent, and the only question is are we close enough to hear Him?

[Hebrews 4:14-16] Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has

been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

- God sits on a throne of Grace for the believer, not judgment or wrath.
- If we approach Him, we're not bothering Him.
- He isn't busy on more important matters.
- He has time for us because He's eternal and is above time.
- If we approach God we receive grace and mercy.

Verse 14: HP Jesus has atoned for our sins and made intercession with Father for us.

Verse 15: HP Jesus was here in a regular human body just like ours, facing all the same temptations as us. Even though He didn't give in to them, He still gets it. He's sympathetic to our struggle!

Verse 16: WITH CONFIDENCE we approach God's throne KNOWING He's not angry and isn't waiting to whip us. He wants us to come close to Him, so that we can receive Grace and Mercy!!!

ALTAR CALL