

## **The Book of Acts (#6); The Day of Pentecost (1)**

Today we arrive at Acts 2, in which we read of the great event of Pentecost, the day when the risen and enthroned Lord Jesus poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples. Pentecost literally means “fiftieth day”, named for the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Sabbath of the Passover. Pentecost was an important annual feast observed by the Jewish people for many centuries. It was one of three annual feasts to which Jewish men would journey to Jerusalem to celebrate. This feast was also known as the Feast of Weeks, because it was observed seven weeks after Passover. It is sometimes described as the Feast of Harvest, for it coincided with the first fruits of the wheat harvest in the latter Spring of the year. In this regard it was also known as the Feast of the First-fruits. One of the reasons that this feast was significant to the Israelites is because it occurred at the same time of year that Israel had arrived at Mount Sinai and there received the law of God through Moses. Israel had arrived at Sinai about two months after having left Egypt due to the Passover event.

This day on which our Lord gifted the Holy Spirit to His people was an epic, life-changing event. The disciples, who were relatively few in number and cowering in fear from the threatening Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, were transformed into vital, emboldened witnesses of Jesus Christ. The result was that God performed a great work of salvation through enlivening His people and empowering their witness. He caused the kingdom of God to expand and increase greatly in a relative brief span of history. Numerous newly converted disciples of Jesus Christ were added to the fellowship of the church upon their repentance from sin, faith in Jesus Christ, and confession of their new life in Christ through baptism. This is an extremely important event in biblical history to which we will give careful attention for several weeks, Lord willing.

This entire chapter of 47 verses before us relates the events of the Day of Pentecost. The first section, which we are addressing today, describes the coming of the Holy Spirit and the initial reaction of the people (2:1-13). The second and longest section of this larger passage contains Peter’s sermon to the Jewish crowds that had gathered (2:14-36). The third section of this chapter records the Jewish crowd’s reaction and their response to Peter’s sermon (2:37-47).

Let us read Acts 2:1 through 13:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup>And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?” <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? <sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” <sup>12</sup>So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

<sup>13</sup>Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

We will only address today this first section of the passage, in which we read of the initial coming of the Holy Spirit and the immediate effects and results. After we address the details of this opening section, we will then consider several biblical and theological themes that emerge through this event.

### **I. Details of the passage (Acts 2:1-13)**

## 1. The description of what occurred on the Day of Pentecost (vs. 1-4)

**Verse one** records the gathered disciples anticipating the promise of the Father to be given them, which the Lord Jesus had told them in advance that they would receive. “*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*” Now it is not recorded that the Lord gave His disciples the specific day of Pentecost that this event would occur, but they must have assumed it would be so. We read of our Lord’s instructions to them in Acts 1:4 and 5.

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

They had been meeting together daily in anticipation of the occasion. There would have been present about 120 disciples, including the apostles, a number of women, the immediate family of Jesus, and numbers of other disciples who were in Jerusalem at this time.

“They were all with accord in one place.” This itself was indication of God’s blessing. It is not that common an occurrence when you have a gathering of people, even the Lord’s people, to be of one accord in one place. This is the first and perhaps the last occasion this oneness of spirit is recorded in the New Testament. Of course unity of the brethren is a desirable goal for the people of God. It takes God’s grace operative in the hearts and minds of His people to effect spiritual unity and agreement. Psalm 133 speaks of the blessing of unity among the brethren.

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is  
For brethren to dwell together in unity!  
<sup>2</sup>It is like the precious oil upon the head,  
Running down on the beard,  
The beard of Aaron,  
Running down on the edge of his garments.  
<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew of Hermon,  
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—  
Life forevermore. (Psalm 133:1-3)

**Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892) made application of this psalm in this way:

As to the brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity, oneness of life, truth, and way, oneness in Christ Jesus, and oneness of object and spirit. These we must have or our assemblies will be synagogues of contention rather than churches of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Unity within a local church is desirable and achievable, with the Lord’s help. Unity is present when there is an agreement on the essentials of the faith, that is, what it is we believe the Bible to teach us regarding God and our relationship with Him and with one another in Jesus Christ. This is the purpose for which Jesus Christ gave pastors and teachers to the church.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>till we all come to *the unity of the faith* and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Eph. 4:11-13)

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Nichols, ed., **Church History Study Bible** (Crossway, 2023), 903.

This much desired unity takes effort on our part to obtain. Paul exhorted the church at Ephesus with these words:

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup>with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Eph. 4:1-3)

In **verses two** and **three** we read of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus. We first read of two symbols that preceded the Spirit coming upon them. The first symbol was the sound of a mighty wind. The second was the appearance of fire distributed to each disciple present. **Verses 2** and **3** read,

*“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.”*

If we read the opening words of verse 2 carefully, we note that there did not come a mighty wind upon them, but rather “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.” It was a great sound they heard, not a great wind they saw or felt.

Wind is commonly associated with the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. The Old Testament Hebrew word, רוּחַ (*ruach*), is translated either “wind” or “spirit”, which is determined by the context in which the word is found.

In Ezekiel 37 we read of the Holy Spirit likened to wind or breath that gave life to a valley of dry bones, which was a metaphor for exiled Israel. The Holy Spirit is likened to the wind which imparts spiritual life, even “resurrection life” to the Lord’s people. Of exiled Israel, which had been all but destroyed by God’s judgment, God commanded Ezekiel,

Also He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath (i.e. wind), prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath (wind), ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Come from the four winds, O breath (wind), and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”’” <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. (Ezek. 37:9-10)

The Lord Jesus Himself associated the wind with the Holy Spirit when speaking with Nicodemus:

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>The *wind blows where it wishes*, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:15-8)

The sound of the wind on Pentecost signaled the coming of the Holy Spirit, a loud sound which filled the house where the believers were meeting, but which perhaps was heard in much of Jerusalem, for the result was the gathering of a crowd of people to assess its source and what it indicated. “The sound of the wind denotes heavenly power, and its suddenness reveals the inception of a supernatural event.”<sup>2</sup>

The second symbol of the Holy Spirit is expressed in **verse 3**, which reads, *“Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.”* This should be understood as the fulfillment of the words of John the Baptist. He had declared of the coming Messiah, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Luke 3:16). Tongues of fire speak of the appearance of a burning torch resting upon the individual heads of the disciples. Fire is a common biblical emblem to represent and display the glory of God in His purity and power. It conveys the sense of God’s holiness, His judgment, as well as His grace. We read of God

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<sup>2</sup> Simon J. Kistemaker, **Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles**; New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1990), 76.

appearing to Moses in the burning bush (cf. Exo. 3:2), which required Moses to remove his sandals because he was standing on holy ground. We read of Elijah's victory over the prophets of Baal when fire came out of heaven and consumed his sacrifice in the presence of all on Mount Carmel. And we read of a fiery chariot whisking away Elijah from earth into heaven. Fire has the quality of cleansing or purifying, as metal is refined by fire, so disciples of Jesus are cleansed and purified by the fire of God the Holy Spirit. The fire upon the heads of these disciples revealed and displayed that the Lord Himself had come upon these people and had empowered them to speak, bearing His message to the crowds. It authenticated their words that they were representing God.

After the initial two signs, then the event of the Holy Spirit working through these disciples becomes evident. We read in **verse 4**, "*And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*" With the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon them, each of them were filled with that same Spirit. They were then gifted by the Spirit to speak in foreign languages that they had not previously known. Their speech was inspired by God, and they were born along speaking on His behalf. God was speaking a message through them, apparently in words the speakers themselves may not have understood. One once described the scene in Jerusalem:

The 'sound' of the rushing wind had been heard hurtling through the city in the early morning hours, and had served as guide to the spot. A curious crowd came hurrying to ascertain what this noise of tempest in a calm meant, and they were met by something more extraordinary still. Try to imagine the spectacle. As would appear from verse 33, the tongues of fire remained lambently glowing on each head ('which ye see'), and the whole hundred and twenty, thus strangely crowned, were pouring out rapturous praises, each in some strange tongue. When the astonished ears had become accustomed to the apparent tumult, every man in the crowd heard some one or more speaking in his own tongue, language, or dialect, and all were declaring the mighty works of God; that is, probably, the story of the crucified, ascended Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

Take note that the baptism of the Holy Spirit was an event once for all time. He did not come and then departed from them. He came to abide with the Lord's people forever. Jesus had told His disciples,

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- <sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16f)

Now it is most commonly believed and taught that every true believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit upon his or her conversion. But I prefer to believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit performed by Jesus Christ was a one-time event, that occurred on this day of Pentecost, the blessing of which every person thereafter enters and experiences upon his conversion. Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." What he was declaring was that all of us were baptized in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It was a single, once for all event. **Simon Kistemaker** (1930-2017) had this understanding:

The coming of the Spirit fulfils John the Baptist's prophecy that the disciples would be baptized with the Spirit and with fire. Therefore the coming of the holy Spirit ushers in a new era, for He comes to take up His dwelling with men not temporarily but forever.<sup>4</sup>

This event on this day began a new era, the age of the Spirit. As people are converted to Jesus Christ who is Lord and Savior, they are brought into this new age or new era. A new age does not begin with each Christian's conversion, which would be implied if the Lord baptized every new convert with the Holy Spirit. Rather, Jesus Christ baptized His church with the Holy Spirit on this one occasion that would continue to be in effect and in force for eternity. In other words, if we were asked the question, when were you baptized in the Holy Spirit? We might respond, "I was baptized in the Holy Spirit with all other believers, when Christ gave

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Maclaren, **Expositions of Holy Scripture, The Acts** (Baker Book House, n.d.), 46f.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 77.

forth the Holy Spirit to His people on the day of Pentecost. This would be a similar response if someone were to ask, “When were you crucified with Christ?” Our answer would be, “When Jesus Christ died upon His cross 2,000 years ago.” Pentecost was a single even that brought blessing upon the Lord’s people wherever they are and whenever they had come to saving faith in Christ.

## 2. The initial reaction of the unconverted Jews to what was occurring (vs. 5-13)

Luke recounted what happened when the Jewish people had arrived at the place of the great sound of wind. He tells of what they heard from the disciples speaking, who each had a tongue of fire resting upon him. **Verses 5 through 13** record these words:

<sup>5</sup>And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup>Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? <sup>9</sup>Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” <sup>12</sup>So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

<sup>13</sup>Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

Although no one immediately understood what and why these things were happening, the crowds were, nevertheless, divided in their initial assessment of what they were witnessing. There were Jews present who had traveled to Jerusalem from all over the known (Roman) world. They were “devout men”, that is, observant Jewish people who were in Jerusalem because they were devoted to their God. Luke described them as “dwelling in Jerusalem.” We should probably understand this stay in Jerusalem to have been short term, rather than them having immigrated to Jerusalem. Why were they all there, and then? Perhaps they had traveled to Jerusalem to take part in the Passover festival. We know later that Paul himself was motivated to arrive in Jerusalem for this purpose. In Acts 20:16 we read, “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” And so, perhaps these Jews were in Jerusalem for this event. However, there may have been many “devout” Jews in Jerusalem because they were anticipating the arrival of the Messiah. All Jews knew that Daniel’s prophecy of 70 weeks (of years) had transpired and there was a general expectancy of the Messiah’s arrival.<sup>5</sup> We do know that ultimately it was in God’s purpose and providence that these many Jews were in Jerusalem at this time and in this place “from every nation under heaven.”

Many of these Jews who were dwelling in Jerusalem after having arrived and from all over the known world. “These Jews represent the world at large.”<sup>6</sup> Luke wrote that “they were all amazed and marveled.” What had most impressed them was how it was that these Jews from Galilee, who were known as backward and uneducated, were speaking to them in their own languages and dialects. **Charles Spurgeon** wrote of the general opinion of the day of Galileans:

The Galilean dialect was a base degradation of the true Jewish tongue, so that the Galileans were always subject to the sneers and scoffings on account of their mispronunciation. There are several stories in the old rabbinical writings, all intended to ridicule the Galileans, yet these men had now been taught to speak their own language perfectly, and, what was marvelous still, languages that they had never heard now came pouring forth from their lips with the greatest fluency.

Now there are some commentators who attempt to argue the miracle was not that these Galileans were speaking in languages foreign to them, but that the miracle was in the hearing of these disparate Jews—each

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Daniel 9:24-27.

<sup>6</sup> Kistemaker, 80.

heard in his own language what was being said to them. Why these commentators want to argue this point is a mystery to me. It certainly does not fit the passage, for the Scriptures declare clearly that it was the disciples, because they were filled with the Holy Spirit, who were speaking in other languages.

Luke identified fifteen different regions or nations from which these Jews lived. There were “Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.” If you traced these locations on a map of the Roman world, you would detect that the first four names listed were in the east, in the lands where the Jewish exiles had been taken by Assyria and Babylon. Then Luke identified Jews from Asia Minor—“Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia.” He then mentioned those from Africa, including “Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene.” Luke speaks specifically of the city of Rome, the capital of the empire. But then Luke also included several other nations, including those Jews from the island of Crete and also “Arabs”, who were probably from Nabatea, the region southeast of the Dead Sea. It is very likely that many of these Jews were converted to Christ on this day or in subsequent days through the witness of the early church, and then returned to their homelands taking the gospel with them. This is probably how the church at Rome began, for when Paul had written his epistle to the Romans, it was addressed to an existing church, but one he had not yet visited (cf. Rom. 1:13). It is clear that these Jews were hearing the gospel proclaimed to them in their native languages.

These Jews were puzzled and inquisitive as to how and why this was happening. Verse 12 reads, “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘Whatever could this mean?’” But others, probably the Jews native to Jerusalem and Judea thought differently. Verse 13 reads, “Others mocking said, ‘They are full of new wine.’”<sup>7</sup> This provides the occasion for the apostle Peter to stand forward to give an inspired message of what God was doing on this most remarkable day.

Now having considered the details of these verses, we may now stand back and address the biblical and theological implications and application of this event and this passage.

## **II. Biblical and theological implications of this event**

The day of Pentecost is an extremely important event not only for the early church, but with respect to bringing to realization God’s purposes in all of redemptive history. How, then, should we understand this event of Pentecost.

### **A. First, Pentecost may be viewed as a reversal of God’s judgment at Babel.**

Early in the story of Genesis, not long after Noah’s flood, mankind united with one another under the leadership of mighty, but ungodly men. We read of that generation beginning with Genesis 11.

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. <sup>2</sup>And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. <sup>3</sup>Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. <sup>4</sup>And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.” (Gen. 11:1-4)

These people were in rebellion against God, having refused to be fruitful and multiply across the face of the earth. They had what we would refer today as a “globalist” desire and design. They desired a one-world government that would function apart from God’s will, disregarding His word. Some have thought that one reason for desiring to build a high tower was that they would be immune from a repeat judgment of God through

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, there are some fundamentalists who try to argue that the Bible teaches that drinking alcoholic beverages is sinful in all forms. In their arguments you will commonly hear them say that the disciples in the New Testament only drank unfermented grape juice, by which no one could get drunk. They argue that the New Testament uses the term “new wine” when it speaks of unfermented grape juice. But clearly, these Jews wrongly thought that these disciples had become drunk drinking “new wine.” New wine was alcoholic, recently fermented wine.

a flood, but that view is rather speculative. However, Moses did record God's assessment and action in response to these united people who stood opposed to Him. We read,

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup>So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Gen. 11:5-9)

The devil would have his kingdom spread throughout the world, dominating the nations. But God would have His kingdom encompass the world, and He would begin that work by soon calling out one man to become the father of the nations—Abraham. **Greg Beale** wrote of God's purpose: "At Babel human beings wanted to 'make a name' for themselves instead of making God's name glorious, with the result that they were judged by being scattered throughout the earth."<sup>8</sup> And so, God in His judgment withheld the evil one from his aspirations of dominion, until His own kingdom through His Son would be prepared and readied to encompass the world. That time had arrived, and God had begun to cause the kingdom of His Son to go world-wide. The Lord was reversing His judgment upon the nations at Babel, by communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations. He began to do so by gifting these Jewish disciples to speak forth the gospel so that their hearers could say, "we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

## **B. Secondly, Pentecost may be viewed as the onset of the new creation.**

In the Old Testament the prophets foretold the age of the Messiah to be the onset of a new creation. The old creation of this fallen world populated by fallen men and women would give way to a new creation comprised of godly men and women who love God and are submitted to Him as their Lord. Their lives would be characterized in this new "world" (kingdom) with joy, peace, and righteousness. They would reign with Christ enjoying life within His reign of grace in their lives. With the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ, the new creation has come into history. The giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost signaled the onset of the promised new creation. Paul wrote of it in this well-known verse: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17). Believers already live in the present time as citizens of His kingdom in the new creation, but it is world that is also yet to come in its fullness at the second coming of Christ.

In the Old Testament we read that God promised a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit that would be the onset of the new creation. Ezekiel 36:25-28 reads,

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. <sup>26</sup>I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. <sup>28</sup>Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.

And in Ezekiel 39:29 God spoke through His prophet: "And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD." It is the giving of the Holy Spirit to His people that enables Christians to live as new creatures in the new creation into which they have been raised in Christ. **Greg Beale** wrote this:

This notion is important for all Christians to know, but those who teach and preach in the church should especially have an awareness of the inaugurated end-time new creation. Such awareness should

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<sup>8</sup> Greg Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology; The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Baker Academic, 2011), 959.

color all that they exposit from God's word. It is especially important that pastors make clear to their congregations the eschatological resurrection power that they possess, since awareness of this power enables believers to realize that they have the ability to carry out God's commands. On this basis, God's "commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). And, as we have seen, it is God's life-giving Spirit who empowers His people to carry out His commands, which otherwise, indeed, too burdensome to obey.<sup>9</sup>

### **C. Thirdly, Pentecost may be viewed as the forming of a spiritual temple.**

This is, of course, related to what we have just said regarding Pentecost as the onset of the new creation. God has purposed in history to form a temple, that is, a spiritual temple in which He would dwell with His people and in which they would serve and worship Him. The event of Pentecost was God initially forming "believers into a transformed temple of the end-time creation."<sup>10</sup>

Most of us are probably familiar with the passage in 1 Peter in which he wrote of Christians as living stones being built into a holy temple in which God may dwell and manifest His presence to His people. Peter wrote,

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, <sup>5</sup>you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup>Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,

"Behold, I lay in Zion  
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,  
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

When did the Lord begin to build this spiritual temple and when was it that He began to indwell this spiritual temple with His Spirit? It was, of course, at Pentecost. As the result of the chief cornerstone—Jesus Christ—having been rejected, but nevertheless made "a chief cornerstone" of His spiritual temple, He began to build this temple and began to manifest at Pentecost His spiritual presence to His people which is His temple.

### **D. Fourthly, Pentecost should be viewed as proof that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and had been exalted as both Lord and Christ by God the Father.**

This is the major thrust of Peter's sermon that we will begin to consider next time we address this book of Acts. Peter declared in the face of the events that they all had witnessed, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

## **III. Aberrant views of the event of Pentecost**

### **1. There are those that teach that Pentecost is a normative event for all Christians at all times.**

They teach Christians to wait and prayer for a repetition of Pentecost, as though this event was a goal to which all churches and Christians should desire to acquire and experience. Please do not misunderstand, there are occasions that are commonly referred to as revivals, in which God will manifest His saving power and presence in significant, remarkable ways with amazing results in efforts to evangelize and revitalize the church. We should desire and pray for such manifestations of the Spirit to work in and among us. But that is different from the teaching and practice that claims the experience of Pentecost can be expected to be repeated in history. Pentecost was a single, one-time occurrence, that set the New Testament churches on a course to evangelize the world.

Similar to this idea...

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 962.

<sup>10</sup> This is taken from a chapter title of Greg Beale's book cited above: chapter 18: "The Commencement of the Spirit's Building of Believers into the transformational Temple of the End-Time New Creation."



**2. There are those that claim and teach that Pentecost teaches that every Christian is to seek a second blessing after initial salvation.**

They believe and teach that subsequent (after) to initial salvation, that if this second blessing from God is obtained, a great work of sanctification will occur remarkably and instantly. The Christian will then be lifted to a higher plane of Christian experience in which he will live in victory over sin and the devil. A poor, struggling, defeated Christian becomes a great holy man or woman, who is then characterized by great faith and great blessing from God. This is commonly believed and taught in Pentecostal churches. It characterizes what is known as Wesleyan views of sanctification. It is not biblical. Granted, God at times in answer to prayer and in His own purposes may grant great and immediate blessing to defeat sin or to overcome some significant trial or challenge, but to seek a second blessing of being baptized in the Holy Spirit separate from initial salvation is not taught in the Scriptures. Every true child of God has been baptized into the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ when initially converted. Yes, we should all desire and pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but that is not to be understood as one personally experiencing the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**3. There are those who say that the Pentecost event teaches that the Holy Spirit gives the gift of tongues to Christians, which they believe to be a heavenly language by which one's spirit speaks to God.**

It is claimed that this gift is that of an "unknown tongue", that is, it is not a common language among the nations, but it is a prayer language, sometimes claimed to be the language of angels. We would argue that this is not biblical; it is not taught or seen in the Scriptures. Every place the gift of tongues is used in the New Testament, it is the miraculous enabling of someone to speak in a foreign language that he or she has not previously known.

Some might challenge this assertion, asking, "But what of Paul's claim, in which he wrote, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal' (1 Cor. 13:1), does this not say that he spoke in the language of angels?" No, it doesn't. Paul was using hyperbole to make a point. To paraphrase his words, it is as though he said, "Why, even if I could speak in the language of angels, but have not love, I am nothing."

This practice of speaking in tongues, that being a heavenly or prayer language, is claimed by groups that are clearly not Christian. Hindus speak in tongues. Muslims speak in tongues. Mormons speak in tongues. From the Mormon website I found these words:

Speaking in tongues was mentioned in revelations to Joseph Smith as one of the many gifts of the Spirit that follow those who have faith in Jesus Christ. Early Latter-day Saints experienced this gift in two ways. The first, speaking or singing in an unknown language, is sometimes called *glossolalia*. This form of spiritual expression was understood to have originated in the time of Paul and was typically followed by an inspired interpretation.

Now we are not saying that speaking in tongues is of the devil (in every case), rather, it is apparently a common experience of people who are moved to experience extreme emotions. But we would say that the devil uses this gift of tongues to deceive people to believe themselves to be spiritually gifted and in communion with the true God. That practice bypasses the mind and stirs the emotions to think and react apart from the Bible, the Word of God, that He has given us to understand, believe, and follow.

The New Testament spiritual gift to speak in a foreign language that had not previously known came to an end in the apostolic age. The apostle Paul wrote of the cessation of revelatory spiritual gifts, including the gift of tongues. In 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 we read these words,

Love never fails. But whether there are *prophecies*, they will fail; whether there are *tongues*, they will cease; whether there is *knowledge*, it will vanish away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part.

<sup>10</sup>But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.

This is an important matter for us to understand. This is the issue that largely distinguishes non-charismatic from charismatic Christians. Charismatic Christians believe that the revelatory spiritual gifts of prophecy, a word of knowledge, and the gift of tongues continue to be present and are needful today. Non-charismatics believe that God no longer imparts these gifts; He ceased to do so in the early Christian era. Those who believe these revelatory (or sometimes referred to as “sign gifts”) gifts have ceased are commonly referred to as cessationists; those who claim they are still experienced by Christians are non-cessationists. And so, among evangelicals there are charismatics and cessationists. Cessationists espouse the finality and sufficiency of God’s revelation of Himself in the Bible. Charismatics do not believe in the sufficiency of the Bible. They certainly believe the necessity of the Bible, but they do not believe that the Bible is the final and sole authoritative Word that God has given to His people. They believe that God speaks apart from the Bible through the ongoing gifts of prophecy, tongues, and the gift of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Now here in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 we read that these gifts were temporary in nature. Paul taught the church at Corinth that the time would arrive when these revelatory gifts, through which God communicates His Word, would come to an end. A consideration of the Greek verb tenses used would suggest the following ideas being conveyed by Paul: First, the gift of tongues would die out on their own; however, Paul does not say when this would occur. And second, Paul wrote that the gifts of prophecy and knowledge would cease to be manifested when that which is perfect has come.”

This is a much-debated passage. The greatest debate is over the expression, “when that which is perfect has come.” There are three major views.

(1) Some argue “that which is perfect” refers to the **second coming of Jesus Christ**. They would say, therefore, that these gifts through which God speaks to His people continues even until today. This is the view generally held by charismatics—non-cessationists.

(2) Others argue that “the perfect” refers to **the completion of the New Testament**. Paul was telling the Corinthians that when the complete revelation of God has come in the New Testament Scriptures, then the temporary gifts would cease. Cessationists commonly hold this view (John MacArthur was a strong proponent of this position).

But interestingly, not all cessationists hold to this view. There is a footnote in the New Reformation Study Bible which reflects the opinions of Reformed theologians who are cessationists, who do not all hold to Paul referring to the New Testament Scriptures.<sup>12</sup> I tend not to hold that view as well, although I am a cessationist. It would seem both a violation of the context and reason to think that Paul is referring to the completion of the New Testament canon.

(3) Other views hold “that which is perfect” is to be understood as either (a) **a state of mature love** in the church that will signal the end of revelatory gifts, (b) **the maturing of the early church**, or (c) **the death of the early Christian**.

What is my understanding? *I believe that when the need for these “sign” gifts was no longer present, these gifts ceased to be seen in the churches.* In other words, during the *infant* stages of the church when God was showing to the world and His people that He was calling out a people from all the world (*i.e.* Gentiles) to be part of the kingdom of God, these gifts were needed. But when the church had matured that all Christians understood that the church of Jesus Christ was comprised of people called by God out of every nation, and that Gentile believers had equal standing as Jewish believers, then the purpose for these gifts had come to an end. God had confirmed and affirmed through the revelatory gifts that His church was to be comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. No further demonstration of God’s purpose through these gifts was needed; the sign or revelatory gifts ceased to be manifest among the churches.

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<sup>11</sup> Of course they also believe that the gift of tongues is an unintelligible heavenly, prayer language. We have already shown that this is not biblical. Every use of the gift of tongues in the Bible may be understood as God giving someone the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language that he had not previously known or studied.

<sup>12</sup> See R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., **The Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Pub., 1995), 2131.

Consider Paul's use of the idea of spiritual *maturity* and unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church in Ephesians. This is particularly seen in **Ephesians 4:11-16**.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to *a perfect man*, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup>that we should *no longer be children*, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup>but, speaking the truth in love, may *grow up* in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, *causes growth of the body* for the edifying of itself in love.

Notice that the maturity of the church has to do with recognizing the spiritual unity among true believers and manifesting love in the church. God gave the apostles and prophets (temporary offices) as well as evangelists and pastor/teachers to bring about this maturing in unity, a unity comprised of all true believers in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile.

We may look at **1 Corinthians 14** we see the same kind of thought conveyed. Paul wrote that though he spoke in other languages due to the Lord gifting Him, he would rather speak five words which the church could understand rather than 10,000 words in an unknown language before the congregation that nobody understood. Let us read **verses 18 through 22**.

<sup>18</sup>I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; <sup>19</sup>yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. <sup>20</sup>Brethren, do not be *children* in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be *mature*. <sup>21</sup>In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. <sup>22</sup>Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.

Take note of what Paul declared. When he was rebuking the church for their wrong use of the gift of tongues, he wrote, "Do not be children in understanding"; rather, they were in their understanding to be "mature" (v. 20). Paul was declaring that when the church was as "children" they spoke using this gift of tongues, or in foreign languages. But once they became "mature" those childish practices were to be discarded. This is the same idea that he had given in 1 Corinthians 13:10 when he wrote, "But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away." The Greek word translated here as "perfect" is translated in 1 Corinthians 14:20 as "mature." The revelatory gifts, particularly the sign gift of speaking in tongues (foreign languages) and the interpretation of tongues were temporary gifts for the church in its childhood, but those things were put away once the church had become mature, when it was known that it was a world-wide church comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

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