

A Fresh Outpouring of the Holy Spirit Pentecost Sunday

Thesis: We are a people who are praying for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit to come individually, corporately, and nationally.

Text: Acts 1:1 – Acts 2:14

Context:

Today is Pentecost Sunday.

Intro about Pentecost:

PENTECOST (שבועות, chg shb't, "weeks"; πεντηκοστή, pentēkostē, "fiftieth"). In the Hebrew Bible, Pentecost is an annual harvest festival that occurs seven weeks after Passover. It became an important Christian holiday after God poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Jerusalem church on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection.

Pentecost in the Hebrew Bible

Leviticus 23:15–21 instructs the Israelites to hold an annual one-day harvest festival seven weeks, or 50 days, after Passover (see also Exodus 34:22). This festival included extensive sacrifice (Leviticus 23:15–21; Deuteronomy 16:9–10; 2 Chronicles 8:13). At Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks, Israelite farmers would start their journeys toward Jerusalem to present their firstfruit offerings (Wigoder, "Shavu'ot," 707; Werblowsky, "Shavu'ot," 628).

Pentecost in Acts

On the Pentecost immediately following Christ's resurrection, God pours out (ἐκχέω, ekcheō) the Holy Spirit upon the Jerusalem church, thus enabling them to perform extraordinary deeds such as healings, speaking in tongues, prophesying, and inspired preaching. Fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 8) occurs on Pentecost while the disciples are gathered in a house (Kee, *Good News*, 30). The Holy Spirit rushes into the house as a strong wind, and tongues of fire appear over each of the disciples. Fire is a conventional literary feature of theophanies (e.g., Exodus 3:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 4; Ezra 13:10). (Ronald D. Roberts, "Pentecost," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, 2016.)

Pentecost as the way of life from God

For a first-century Jew, Pentecost was the fiftieth day after Passover. It was an agricultural festival. It was the day when farmers brought the first sheaf of wheat from the crop, and offered it to God, partly as a sign of gratitude and partly as a prayer that

all the rest of the crop, too, would be safely gathered in. But, for the Jew, neither Passover nor Pentecost were simply agricultural festivals. These festivals awakened echoes of the great story which dominated the long memories of the Jewish people, the story of the Exodus from Egypt, when God fulfilled his promises to Abraham by rescuing his people. Passover was the time when the lambs were sacrificed, and the Israelites were saved from the avenging angel who slew the firstborn of the Egyptians. Off went the Israelites that very night, and passed through the Red Sea into the Sinai desert. Then, 50 days after Passover, they came to Mount Sinai, where Moses received the law. Pentecost, the fiftieth day, isn't (in other words) just about the 'first fruits', the sheaf which says the harvest has begun. It's about God giving to his redeemed people the way of life by which they must now carry out his purposes (NT Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, p. 21).

Public reading of the word of God: Acts 1 and 2.

***Acts 1:1** In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but **wait** for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

The Book of Acts is really "all about what Jesus is continuing to do and to teach." The mysterious presence of Jesus [fills] the whole story. He is announced as King and Lord, not as an increasingly distant memory but as a living and powerful reality, a person who can be known and loved, obeyed and followed, a person who continues to act within the real world. That, Luke is telling us, is what this book is going to be all about. We call it 'The Acts of the Apostles', but in truth we should really think of it as 'The Acts of Jesus [Part 2]' (NT Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, p. 2).

Concerning Acts 1:5. John the Baptist prophesied: "*I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*" (Matthew 3:11).

Instead of being plunged into water, you'll be plunged into the Holy Spirit. Instead of a renewal which would form them as the re-stored Israel, waiting for God to become their king as so many Jews of the day had hoped, they would

experience a renewal which would form them as the restored humanity, celebrating the fact that God was becoming king of the whole world, and knowing that as a reality inside their own selves. That is the very heart of the spirituality, and indeed the theology, of 'The Acts of the Apostles'. God is at work to do a new thing in the whole world (NT Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, p. 4).

Here is our word for the year: Holy Desire: baptize us with fire (Matthew 3:11). God give us holy desire: baptize us with the power of the Holy Spirit and the fiery passion of the Lord Jesus.

6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

Changing mental models is hard work. A mental model is a framework for how you see the world. A mental model is like the glasses we wear that color and inform everything we perceive.

They must, after all, have been very puzzled. Nothing that had happened in the previous few weeks had corresponded at all to their game plan. As far as they were concerned, when Jesus called them and taught them in Galilee during the previous three years or so, they were signing on for some kind of Jewish renewal movement. They believed that God had appointed Jesus to be the true King of Israel, even though most of their contemporaries were still (to say the least) suspicious of him. They had seen Jesus rather like King David in the Old Testament, who for several years was a kind of king-in-waiting, standing in the wings with a ragtag group of followers wondering when their turn would come. Jesus' motley band of followers had imagined that he would be king in some quite ordinary sense, which was why some of them had asked if they could have the top jobs in his government. Jesus, with his extraordinary healing power and visionary teaching, would rule in Jerusalem, and would restore God's people Israel. The result of this, as many Jews of the time believed, was that, when God restored Israel, the whole world would be turned around at last. Israel would be the top nation, ruling over the rest of the world. That's what had been promised, more or less, in the Psalms (look at Psalm 72, or Psalm 89) and the prophets (read Isaiah 40–55). Of course, the nations of the world would then be judged for their wickedness. But there might also be the possibility that the blessing God gave to Israel would come at last upon the whole creation. All of this could be summed up in the phrase: 'restore the kingdom to Israel'. That's what they were hoping for, and the question was natural: 'Are we nearly there yet?' They hadn't been expecting that Jesus would die a violent death. His

crucifixion made it look as though they were wrong: he wasn't the Messiah, they weren't heading for the top jobs, Israel wasn't being renewed, and the world was carrying on in its wicked way, with the rich and powerful oppressing the poor and needy. Business as usual. And then he had risen from the dead, again confounding their own and everyone else's expectations. What did it mean? Did it mean that their dreams of 'restoring the kingdom to Israel' were now back on track? (NT Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, pps. 6–7).

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

A person with an experience beats a person with an argument every time.

What is the empowering of the Holy Spirit?

The empowering of the Holy Spirit is an experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit in direct contact with the individual in the outer man. It is not an inner experience received or accepted on "faith." It is not doctrinal, it is experiential. It is an encounter with the Holy Spirit, in which the Spirit comes upon a person in such a way that the person gains certainty of the supernatural power and activity of God. This certainty increases boldness in witness and releases a more confident faith in God.

Reception

Such an encounter with the Holy Spirit may be repeated, it may come through a process, it may be experienced in varying degrees or intensity, and it may involve different physical, emotional, and spiritual manifestations.

The point is, there will be many encounters with the living God as we seek to know him and to be empowered by him for service. Each of these encounters should be received with thankfulness.

Possible results of an encounter with the Holy Spirit

- A conscious awareness of the living person of the Holy Spirit
- An experiential knowledge of the love of God, the joy of the Holy Spirit, the nearness of Jesus, etc.
- An impartation and release of spiritual gifts may occur resulting in effectiveness in evangelizing, healing, serving, etc.

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

We give testimony to what we have seen, heard, and experienced of the **life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming** of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Currently Jesus rules and reigns from the right hand of the Father and is on mission in the earth by his Spirit accomplishing the will of the Father. And, we are his witnesses who are called of God, authorized by Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Acts 1:1-14).

Acts 2:15 tells us that only 120 out of the 500 witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus obeyed Jesus and gathered in the upper room to wait on the gift promised by the Father, as Jesus instructed.

Acts 2:1 *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place [unity and community]. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

The wind and the fire are wild, untameable forces, and the experience of the wind rushing through the house with a great roar, and the fire coming to rest on each person present, must have been both terrifying and exhilarating. Of course, there are many times later in this book, as there are many times in the life of the church, when the spirit works softly and secretly, quietly transforming people's lives and situations without any big noise or fuss (NT Wright, Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12, pps. 22–23).

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven [principle of representation].

:5. ...but in his own subtle way he is saying to us that on that Day of Pentecost the whole world was there in the representatives of the various nations. Nothing could have demonstrated more clearly than this: the **multi-racial, multi-national, multi-lingual nature of the kingdom of Christ**. Ever since the early church fathers, commentators have seen the blessing of Pentecost as a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel. At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would now be gathered together in Christ, prefiguring the great day when the redeemed company will be drawn 'from every nation, tribe, people and language.' Besides, at Babel earth proudly tried to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly descended to earth (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World, The Bible Speaks Today* (InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 68).

6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

There are 2 miracles here: 1) the disciples were speaking in "other languages as the Spirit enabled them" (Acts 2:4). This is different from the prayer language mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:2, where Paul teaches that the language (tongues) there is for speaking to God in praise. Here they are speaking to people and are "declaring the wonders of God in their own tongues" or heart languages (Acts 2:11). **2)** Each person heard what they were saying in their own language (Acts 2:6).

So, there is the 1) miracle of the disciples speaking in other languages and 2) there is the miracle of the hearers hearing in their own language.

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

There were different responses to the same experience. Some were amazed and curious (Acts 2:6-7). Some were resistant, mocking, and rejecting.

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:

The gospel involves both showing and telling, proclaiming and demonstrating. Without explanation, people often won't understand and misunderstand or misinterpret what is happening.

17 “*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters [children and teens] will prophesy, your young men [young adults] will see visions, your old men [older generations] will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants [all classes of people], both men and women [both genders], I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.... 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” (Acts 2:1-21).

This work of God is wonderfully inclusive, because there is no category of people which is left out: both genders, all ages, all social classes. But it is wonderfully focused, because it happens to all ‘who call on the name of the Lord’ (verse 21). Here, once more, ‘the Lord’, which in Joel meant Israel’s God, YHWH, now seems to mean Jesus himself. And with this Luke introduces a vital and complex theme in his work: ‘salvation’. All who call on the Lord’s name will be saved. ‘Being saved’ doesn’t just mean, as it does for many today, ‘going to heaven when they die’. It means ‘knowing God’s rescuing power, the power revealed in Jesus, which anticipates, in the present, God’s final great act of deliverance’. Peter will now go on to encourage his hearers to ‘call on the Lord’s name’, and so to know that ‘salvation’, that rescue, as a present reality as well as a future hope (NT Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12*, pps. 33–34).

Ministry Time

1. **Corporately and nationally: Let’s pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all our generations: children and teens, young adults, and older people.**
 - a. *Acts 2:17–21 (NIV84): In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters [children] will prophesy, your young men [and women] will see visions, your old men [and women] will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.... 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*
 - b. Let’s pray for a personal, corporate, and national outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

2. **Individually: Ask God for first-time empowering of the Holy Spirit or for a fresh encounter with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).**
 - a. According to Jesus, God longs to give the Holy Spirit to people. All we have to do is ask.
 - b. How and when God does that are up to the Lord.
 - c. We set aside our demands and trust God to touch us and empower us according to his way and to his will.