“PENTECOST”

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 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. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4 NKJV)

The word “Pentecost” always reminds me of an incident when I was translating Russian. I had several large Russian–English dictionaries. In addition there was a drawer filled with 3x5 cards. Whenever one of the translators encountered an obscure word and eventually found its definition, they would put the word and its definition on a 3x5 card. I encountered this word. I knew it was describing a group this person belonged to, but I couldn’t figure out what it meant. I could see the roots for the words “fifty” and “days”. I asked a senior translator for help. She said, “I’m surprised Mr. Pritt. I thought you were a church member. What comes fifty days after Easter?” I gave her a blank stare. “Pentecost! The person is Pentecostal.”

Pentecost is a holiday shared by Christians and Jews. Fifty days from the firstfruits of the barley harvest is Shavuot or the Day of Pentecost. Rabbinic scholars believe that it was on this day that the LORD came down on Mount Sinai and gave the Law to Moses. It is the birthday of the nation of Israel. It was one of seven festivals of Judaism.

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were in Jerusalem, as Jesus had commanded, to wait for the promise of the Father, “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you.” On the Day of Pentecost Jerusalem was filled with Jews who had come there from all over the Roman Empire to celebrate this festival. They were witnesses of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples - the birth of the Church.
1. How Is The Pentecost Event Similar To Previous Divine Events?

The sound from heaven, the mighty rushing wind, the tongues of fire connect this event with previous occasions when God came down from heaven to meet with man. These same elements of noise, wind, and fire were present when God met with Moses and then with Elijah.

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.

(Exodus 19:16-17 NKJV)

Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13 NKJV)

The significance of the tongues of fire on each of them is that they were being purified to be suitable ministers for God and also they were "living sacrifices." On special occasions in the Old Testament the sacrifice was consumed by fire from heaven.

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." (Isaiah 6:5-7 NKJV)

And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. (1 Kings 18:36-38 NKJV)
I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (Romans 12:1)

2. How Did This Pentecost Differ From Previous Divine Visits?

At Sinai, only Moses could understand what God was saying. To the crowd of people at the base of the mountain it was a terrifying sound.

Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice. (Exodus 19:18-19 NKJV)

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exodus 20:18-19 NKJV)

The last week before His death God spoke to Jesus while a group of people was gathered around Him. Only Jesus understood God’s voice.

"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. (John 12:27-30 NKJV)

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit enabled all the disciples to speak God’s words to all of the people present in their native languages.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? 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--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:4-11 NKJV)

It is often said that Pentecost was the undoing of the curse of Babel when God punished them by giving different languages to the workmen
who were building a tower up to heaven. It was also an undoing of the cloud of unknowing when God speaks to men as at Sinai.

3. Pentecost Was Beginning A New Way Of Sending the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament there are numerous examples of God sending the Holy Spirit upon a leader to empower him to serve God – Moses, the elders of Israel, King Saul, David, and various prophets.

So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD, and he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tabernacle. Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. (Numbers 11:24-25)

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: "Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance? (1 Samuel 10:1)

So it was, when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day. When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. (1 Samuel 10:9-10 NKJV)

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon all the disciples individually.

The disciples may have thought the promised gift of the Holy Spirit to be for apostles just as He had been given to leaders and prophets in the past. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to all the believers.

Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:3-4 NKJV)

The gift of the Holy Spirit is proof that a person has believed and been saved. Paul argued at the Council of Jerusalem that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit when they believed, thus God desires salvation through faith in Jesus Christ to be preached to the Gentiles and Jews alike. When Paul came to the church at Ephesus he asked, “Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?” They hadn’t heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul preached the Gospel, baptized, the Holy Spirit came.