

Pentecost Sunday

May 15, 2005

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV)

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

Today is a special day for the Christian Church. It's the day when we celebrate our birthday.

Before Jesus went back to heaven, He instructed His disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father.

Acts 1:4-5 (NKJV)

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; [5] for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

One hundred and twenty of them stayed in Jerusalem, in a large room, for ten days until suddenly, on the day when the Jews were celebrating the Feast of Pentecost, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting and 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.

After that experience, Peter immediately went out and began to witness to those in Jerusalem and 3000 people were converted that day. It wasn't because Peter was a great preacher. That was his first sermon! He was a fisherman. He hadn't been taught how to preach.

What was it that caused people to be converted to Christianity that day?

It was the power of the Holy Spirit that Peter had received in the upper room.

The Church was born in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost.

The early church was a church that experience great miracles. The power of the Holy Spirit was manifested over and over. People were healed. People were delivered. The gifts of the Spirit were evident. You can read about it in the Book of Acts. The church in the Book of Acts was a powerful church.

They believed in the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostles encouraged those who were part of the early church to seek to be baptized in the Holy Spirit like they were on the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 19:1-6 (NKJV)

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples [2] he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit..... [6] And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

The church in the Book of Acts was a Spirit filled church.

As time passed, the church lost that power. It went through what historians call **The Dark Ages**. The church became dominated by man and man's organizations, ritual and ceremony.

However, there were some isolated cases of the power of the Holy Spirit in church history.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, **John Wesley** preached that there was a "**second blessing**" that Christians should seek to experience. The second blessing was called by several names including..."entire sanctification", "perfect love", and Christian perfection".

John Wesley's colleague, **John Fletcher**, was the first one to call this second blessing a "**baptism in the Holy Spirit**". He preached that it was an experience that would bring spiritual power and an inner cleansing to those who received it. This was in 1766.

In the following century, in 1831, **Edward Irving**, a Presbyterian pastor, and his friends in London starting talking about a "**charismatic renewal**" for the church. He preached that glossolalia, or speaking in other tongues, was the "standing sign" of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Another group in 1875 known as the **Keswick** "Higher Life" movement, taught that there was a second blessing called the "baptism in the Holy Spirit". They said that it gave those who received it an "endowment of spiritual power for service."

So, for at least a century before the time of the Pentecostal outbreak in America in 1901, there were movements emphasizing a second blessing called the "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" with various interpretations as to just what it was.

Here in America, in the late nineteenth century, there were Christians who were known as "holiness" people. Their name described who they were. They believed in living a life of holiness, which they defined as no smoking, no drinking, no make-up, etc. They drew great crowds to their camp meetings. Some services attracted 20,000 or more.

The first "Pentecostals" in the modern sense appeared on the scene in 1901 in the city of **Topeka, Kansas** in a Bible school conducted by a holiness teacher and former Methodist pastor named **Charles Fox Parham**.

Mr. Parham and his students began to actively seek to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in other tongues. On January 1, 1901, one of the students in that Bible school, a girl named **Agnus Ozman**, was baptized in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in other tongues. After her experience, the other students and **Mr. Parham** also were baptized in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in other tongues.

As a result of this Topeka Pentecost, **Mr. Parham** formulated the doctrine that tongues was the “**Bible evidence**” of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. **Mr. Parham** began traveling around the United States holding revivals preaching about this new exciting experience.

In 1905, he came to Houston to hold a revival and teach in a Bible school. An African-American preacher named **William Joseph Seymore**, attended the meeting.

The following year in 1906, **William Seymore** was invited to pastor a black holiness church in Los Angeles, California. The church was located at 312 Azusa Street.

What happened at Azusa Street has fascinated church historians for decades. It can only be explained as a sovereign move of God. For over three years, the Azusa Street “Apostolic Faith Mission” conducted three services a day, seven days a week, where thousands of seekers received the baptism in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in other tongues.

Word of the revival was spread abroad through a paper called “The Apostolic Faith” that **Seymore** sent free of charge to some 50,000 subscribers. From Azusa Street Pentecostalism spread around the world.

One interesting aspect of what happened at Azusa Street was the phenomenon of blacks and whites worshipping together under a black pastor. Considering the racism and strict segregation of the times, that was miraculous. It is still very unusual for something like that to happen even today, 100 years later. When the Holy Spirit was poured out in that revival, people from all the ethnic minorities of Los Angeles were represented.

Isn't it something, when the Holy Spirit truly moves, all of our racial prejudices are washed away by the blood of Jesus.

I am so glad to pastor a church where we don't worry about the color of a person's skin. That's not important! What is important is the color of a person's heart. And the Lord can take a heart that is black with sin and make it as white as snow!

Let me tell you. When we get to heaven there will be no distinction between the races. John was able to look into heaven and he said.....

Rev. 7:9-10 (NKJV)

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Heaven will be a place where all God's people stand together around the throne worshipping God. If you have a problem worshipping with people who are not the same color as you are, you're not going to enjoy heaven at all. By the way, what are you going to do if the language spoken in heaven is different than the one you speak now? Some people may have a real hard time with that.

From those humble beginnings, the Pentecostal movement has become by far the largest and most important religious movement to originate in the United States. Pentecostals have become the largest family of Protestants in the world.

In 1993, there were over 200,000,000 people in Pentecostal denominations around the world which was surpassed in number only by the Roman Catholics. In addition to these "Classical denominational Pentecostals", there were over 200,000,000 "Charismatic" Pentecostals in the mainline denominations and independent charismatic churches, both Catholic and Protestant, which placed the number of both Pentecostals and Charismatics at well over 420,000,000 persons in 1993. The number is much greater than that today.

The latest figures I have found say that Pentecostalism is growing at a rate of 13 million a year, or 35,000 a day and today there are nearly 600,000,000 Pentecostals around the world. It is, after Roman Catholicism, the largest Christian tradition.

In addition, the largest church in the world is a Pentecostal church in Korea, pastored by **David Yonggi Cho**, with a membership of over a million and a weekly worship attendance of 240,000.

Two Pentecostal Churches in Buenos Aires have a weekly attendance together of over 150,000.

When I speak of Pentecostal churches, I am referring to all the churches that believe that the Pentecostal experience is for the church today and believe in speaking in other tongues and the other gifts of the Spirit.

Rick Kirchoff, a Methodist who spoke at one of their conventions recently, began his message with these words.....wrote

“It’s time to open up to the mind-blowing, heart-warming, life-changing power of God.

The power of God can invade the body, inflate the mind, swell the soul, lift the Spirit and make us more than we ever imagined.

It'll make you young when you're old, and it'll make you live even when you die.

The power and presence of the Spirit will disturb, delight, deliver and lift.

When God sends forth the Spirit, "the whole face of the earth is renewed."

When God sends forth the Spirit chaos is changed into creation the Red Sea opens up to a highway of freedom.

When God sends forth the Spirit amazing things happen:

[Ask the congregation to join you by repeating the following]

barriers are broken,
communities are formed,
opposites are reconciled,
unity is established,
disease is cured,
addiction is broken,
cities are renewed,
races are reconciled,

hope is established,
people are blessed,
and church happens.

Today the Spirit of God is present
and we're gonna' have church.

So be ready, get ready...God is up to something...

[Read these yourself with no response]

discouraged folks cheer up,
dishonest folks 'fees up,
sour folks sweeten up,
closed folk, open up,
gossipers shut up,
conflicted folks make up,
sleeping folks wake up,
lukewarm folk, fire up,
dry bones shake up,
and pew potatoes stand up!

But most of all, Christ the Savior of all the world is lifted up...

The church began with great power and great outreach.

You might think, "Man, I wish I could have been there when all that was going on. That must have really been something. There's no doubt about it, it really was something.

The church that started on the Day of Pentecost, was ablaze with a fire that spread like a forest fire. New converts were added daily to the church. Miracles were a common experience. People were being healed by simply being touched by the shadow of Peter as he walked by.

Yes, it was a supernatural time for the church.

But listen to me today, God never intended for the church to start out in a blaze of Holy Ghost power and then become weak and anemic and ineffective. No sir!

Peter said.....

Acts 2:39 (KJV)

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

That means that the same experience that they had on the Day of Pentecost is available to the church today.

God doesn't want His church to be powerless and ineffective today. He wants it to be ablaze with the power of the Holy Spirit. The same power that was poured out in the Book of Acts.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since you believed?

If not, you need to. It's for you!

Don't be satisfied until you have experienced it for yourself.

We are going to have a Pentecost Sunday Celebration tonight at the Pasadena Convention Center. I want all of you to come to that meeting. And if you have never been baptized in the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in other tongues, come tonight with an open mind and heart and a desire to be filled!

Give invitation.