

# Pentecost

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to His disciples came upon the early believers on the day of Pentecost. Henceforth the church was empowered and gifted to fulfill God's purposes on the earth. The pouring out of the Spirit on all believers was the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Joel several hundred years before the day of Pentecost. Yet one of the earliest distributions of the Spirit occurred in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses to the other elders of Israel. The Spirit that came upon Old Testament believers on limited occasions for specific ministries was finally given to all of God's people on the day of Pentecost. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul discusses the day of Pentecost.

## SCRIPTURE READING

Acts 2–9

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the Old Testament background for Pentecost.
2. To discuss the role of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.
3. To discuss the role of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost.

## QUOTATIONS

*The New Testament church begins with the 120 who await the coming of the Holy Spirit. When he comes, he opens the floodgates by addressing Jews “from every nation under heaven” (v. 5). In all the different languages of these nations, the Holy Spirit*

*through the mouths of his people presents the message of the wonders God has done. From these thousands of Jews who have come from numerous places, God adds three thousand to his church. God's truth is no longer confined to the city of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost, the church becomes worldwide.*

—Simon Kistemaker

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- A. The day of Pentecost was a significant event in the history of redemption closely connected to the ascension.
  1. “Touching His human nature Jesus is no longer present with us. Touching His divine nature He is never absent from us” (Christian creed).
  2. Jesus promised not to leave His disciples comfortless, but promised to send His Spirit to them so that He would be with them until the end of the age.
- B. “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language? . . .’ And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others mocking said, ‘They are filled with new wine’” (Acts 2:1–10, 12–13).
  - People were amazed because they could understand foreign languages as their own language.
- C. “But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh”’” (Acts 2:14–17a).
  - In order to understand the supernatural phenomenon that occurred at Pentecost it is necessary to examine the Old Testament.
- D. “And the people complained in the hearing of the LORD about their misfortunes, and when the LORD heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the LORD, and the fire died down” (Num. 11:1–2).

- The Israelites begin to complain about their circumstances in the wilderness.
- E. “Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.’ Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of bdellium. The people went about and gathered it and ground it in handmills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste for cakes baked with oil. When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it” (Num. 11:4–9).
1. God provided the large body of Israelites that came out of Egypt with manna in the wilderness to eat.
  2. The Israelites begin to rebel in their hearts by longing for the foods they ate in Egypt even though they had lived in slavery there.
- F. “Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the LORD blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased” (Num. 11:10).
- God was angry that Israel had forgotten that He had led them out of Egypt in love with a mighty hand.
- G. “Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth, that you should say to me, “Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries a nursing child,” to the land that you swore to give their fathers? Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say “Give us meat, that we may eat”’” (Num. 11:11–13).
- Sometimes Israel’s leadership became so frustrated with the people that they asked God to take their life to be rid of them.
- H. “I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness” (Num. 11:14–15).
- Moses asks God to take his life rather than to lead the people anymore.
- I. “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Gather for me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you. And I will come down and talk with you there. And I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that

you may not bear it yourself alone. And say to the people, “Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the LORD, saying, ‘Who will give us meat to eat?’”” (Num. 11:16–18a).

1. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant and a charismatic leader.
  2. Moses’ leadership was exercised over the people by the power of God through an anointing of the Holy Spirit.
  3. Old Testament believers enjoyed many of the benefits of the Holy Spirit.
  4. Leaders had a special anointing of the Spirit that empowered them for ministry.
  5. Kings were anointed, prophets were inspired, and priests were consecrated all to symbolize the power of the Spirit.
  6. God decides to spread out the spirit that was upon Moses to the other leaders of Israel.
  7. At Pentecost the Spirit is spread even further to the whole community of believers.
- J. “And say to the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, and you shall eat meat, for you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, “Who will give us meat to eat? For it was better for us in Egypt.” Therefore the LORD will give you meat, and you shall eat. You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?””” (Num. 11:18–20).
- God will punish the Israelites with such an abundance of meat that they will quickly grow sick of it.
- K. “But Moses said, ‘The people among whom I am number six hundred thousand on foot, and you have said, “I will give them meat, that they may eat a whole month!” Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them, and be enough for them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, and be enough for them?’ And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Is the LORD’s hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not’” (Num. 11:21–23).
- The Lord reminds Moses that nothing is too difficult for Him.

- L. “So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. And a young man ran and told Moses, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, ‘My lord Moses, stop them!’” (Num. 11:24–28).
- The people realized that prophesying was an outward manifestation of the Spirit’s anointing.
- M. “But Moses said to him, ‘Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!’” (Num. 11:29).
1. This prayer of Moses later became a prophecy written down by the prophet Joel.
  2. The Old Testament believers received the Spirit only as a temporary empowerment for ministry.
  3. At Pentecost all believers receive the Holy Spirit to dwell within them always.
  4. Every believer under the New Covenant has been empowered by God the Holy Spirit.
  5. All believers are empowered by the Spirit with gifts, but not all have the same gift.
  6. The New Testament church is a charismatic church in that it has been empowered by the Spirit with the gifts it needs to spread throughout the entire earth.

## BIBLE STUDY

1. What is the Old Testament background of Pentecost (see Deut. 16:9–12)? How does knowing this background make this day appropriate for the birth of the Christian church and the anointing of the Spirit?

2. Acts 2 makes clear the broad scope of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as well as the worldwide scope of the gospel's advance. In verses 4–11 and 21, what indications are given for this expansion of the work of the Holy Spirit and the gospel?
3. How do the events described during Pentecost show a reversal of the confusion of speech that occurred at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11)? How are the blessings of these reversals continued in our day?
4. In Peter's sermon, he explained the signs they witnessed in terms of Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in the work of Christ. What fulfillment of Joel's prophecy is described in verses 14–21? What fulfillment of David's prophecy is described in verse 22–39?
5. What is the reaction of the Sanhedrin to the preaching of Peter and John? How do Peter and John respond in Acts 4:19–20? How does this inform our practice of obedience toward those in authority over us?

## DISCUSSION

1. In light of the Great Commission (Acts 1:8, Matt. 28:18–20), how does the event of Pentecost apply to your role in the ministry of the Christian church in our day?
2. How does Acts 2:23, 36 show the compatibility of God's sovereign purposes and human responsibility for their actions? Though Christ willingly offered Himself as a sacrifice, in what way are we personally responsible for His crucifixion?
3. How did the early believers give powerful testimony to the resurrection of Christ according to Acts 4:32–37? What actions can the church take today to give testimony to the resurrection of our Lord?

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

Bruce, F.F. *The Book of Acts*

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Johnson, Dennis E. *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption*