

After Pentecost – Acts 2:36-47

Introduction – Jesus had instructed His apostles to wait in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit. Ten days after His ascension, as Jews and God-fearers from surrounding nations gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), Jesus proved again He was good to His Word. The Holy Spirit came in a rushing wind, tongues of fire, and the proclamation of Christ's kingdom and Lordship in foreign languages that baptized the church as the New Covenant temple for all nations. Things would never be the same; the world had been turned upside down (Acts 17:6). We are the heirs and co-workers of that powerful day.

The Epistle of the Holy Spirit – Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they were his epistle, validating his apostleship and the gospel, but more importantly, proof of the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:2-3). The Word is a powerful tool when the Holy Spirit takes it and drives it deep into the hearts of men. And this is what happened as Peter, full of that Spirit, preached the Word (Acts 2:36). He concluded, *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."* What happened next revealed the work of nothing less than the Holy Spirit given to a people, confirming the work of the Apostles. This also set the pattern of what follows after Pentecost and the growth of the church.

Cut to the Heart – The wonderful effect of the Spirit upon Peter and the preachers of the gospel was seen as he preached, and now the effect by the Spirit upon the hearers was manifest. This was the rod of Christ's strength sent out of Zion (Psalm 110:2), the exalted Redeemer riding forth conquering and to conquer (Rev 6:2). It had begun; hearts were pricked and questions asked (v37). Two demands were given: Repent (that inward turning away from sin and to belief in God of His Son for forgiveness and salvation) and be baptized (that outward identification of our union with Christ in His death for our sins and justification in His resurrection, marking one as a disciple/follower of Jesus – v38).

For the Sake of the Promise – The promise of the Holy Spirit, of the indwelling life of Jesus in us, and of new hearts, all preached by Peter from the Old Covenant about the New, now was coming forth. It had been promised to families and not simply individuals (*"to your children"*) but the promise was now to be manifest much further (*"to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call"* – v39). Today was the day of salvation and so Peter exhorted them to separate themselves from the *"crooked generation"* that had denied Christ (v40). True to the promises preached, the Word was received gladly and three thousand souls were added (v41). *"Were added"* is important, for *"when we take God for our God, we must take His people to be our people."* – M. Henry.

And So it Continued – The apostolic ministry continued with much preaching and teaching, fellowship, the practice of the Lord's Table, and prayers (i.e. worship services) – v42. Signs and wonders accompanied the apostles' teaching (v43 – see 2 Cor 12:12) which brought forth great fear (and most likely more conversions). In these initial days with so many foreigners visiting, they shared all in common, caring for one another's needs (vv44-45). The fellowship was regular, daily, and continual (v46) and not simply a one-time event. This was a testimony to the people around them (v47) such that more and more were being saved.

The Apostolic Ministry – The book of Acts is an account of the ministry of the Apostles, particularly Peter and Paul, as the gospel spread to the ends of the known world. More importantly, it is an account of the work of the Holy Spirit, for the apostolic ministry would come to an end in one generation. But the norms for evangelism and discipleship were established and passed on for all future generations.

The Spread of the Good News – That which makes the Church distinctive is the Word of God made alive by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers who are bound together in familial fellowship. One commentator noted that of thirty seven references to the growth of the church in the book of Acts, *"twenty four link growth with the preaching of the Word of God"* – Motyer. A Word-centered, Spirit-transformed church would be the tool of God to spread the kingdom of God.

After Pentecost and the Apostolic Age – As Paul neared the end of his ministry, he did not pass on apostolic authority (nor did Peter or any other apostle). Rather, as he writes to Titus, he left faithful men in regions like Crete to *"appoint elders in every city as I commanded you"* (Titus 1:5). Timothy, never set aside as an apostle, but trained to be a pastor, is told to *"stir up the gift of God which is in you"* (2 Tim 1:6-7). Timothy was to *"hold fast the pattern of sound words"* received from Paul, and was to do so *"by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us"* (2 Tim 1:14-15). There was a true difference between an apostle and pastor-teacher-elders. But they had the same Word and depended upon the same Spirit.

The Same Spirit-empowered Word (2 Tim 3:16-17) – Timothy, pastoring in Ephesus, was to continue in the work of preaching the Word. This remains central in the work of evangelism, discipleship, and fellowship. It is profitable – that means it works; it is efficacious. It is profitable for teaching (what is right), for reproof (what is wrong), correction (how to get right), and training in righteousness (how to continue on the right path).

After Pentecost – There would not be another generation of apostles. There would not be the signs, miracles and wonders that accompanied them which established the foundation of the church. But what we build on, we build on with the same materials: Word and Spirit. We declare the Word and we pray for the Spirit to do His work. And so, in the greatest sense, Pentecost never ends. *drh6/8/14*