

# Stories within Stories: The Gift of the Holy Spirit – *Isaiah 44:1-5*

**Introduction** – Today is the church’s observance of Pentecost, an eighth-day Sabbath celebration seven weeks after the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. While Jesus had instructed His followers to go and disciple the nations (Matt 18:18-20), He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem until they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:29, Acts 1:8).

**Pentecost, Old Administration** (Lev 23:15-21) – Pentecost isn’t named for the Day in which the Holy Spirit was poured out; this Christian celebration occurs on a day previously marked out in the Mosaic Administration. It was celebrated on the first day after seven Sabbaths following Passover. It was known as the Feast of Weeks (Lev 23) and also the Feast of Harvest (Ex 23:16) for it was the feast where the firstfruits of the Spring harvest were brought in. The faithful were to come to Jerusalem and present their offerings and partake of the feast on this day – which is why “*there were devout men from every nation under heaven*” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5).

**Corporate Nature of Pentecost** – This is good to keep in mind as we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. This occurred on a public, open, corporate gathering, at a time when all of the nations were symbolically represented. According to the promise, they were gathered in Jerusalem, and tongues of fire along with speaking in diverse tongues were the sign of the empowerment of the Church. The tongues were a reversal of the curse of the tower of Babel (Gen 10-11) and were signs to unbelieving Israel of her impending destruction (1 Cor 14:22, Is 28:11-19) for having rejected the Chief Cornerstone of the New Covenant. However, in the midst of this corporate curse, God was bringing in His firstfruits which was His sign of promise: the world was going to be saved.

**Individual Nature of Pentecost** – The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of life to dead people, for those who are to be saved must be born of the Spirit (John 3:5). Consider this gift. Without the work of the Spirit, no minister can hope to see dead bones come to life (Ezek 37:1-14). We can plant and water, but only God can bring forth the harvest (1 Cor 3:6-7). And the same is true for each of us individually with regards to living out faithful lives to God. We received this new life by the work of the Spirit, not some work within ourselves, and we can only complete this work if the Spirit is at work in us (Gal 3:1-3). All faithful Christians are Spirit-filled Christians.

**The Promise of The Holy Spirit** - Countless passages in the Old Testament promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the days of the New Covenant. Looking at this one in Isaiah 44, we can see both the corporate and individual nature of the promise.

**O Jacob, My Servant** (vv1-2) – God is not addressing an individual, but a nation. In the midst of prophecies of great judgment upon Israel there are these promises of redemption, revival, renewal, even resurrection. Jacob is God’s servant because He chose Israel to be His special people. He did so “*from the womb*” and so there is no room for any boasting of anything His people have done to earn this position of favor. Having brought them forth, He promises that He “*will help*” them. They are not only “*Israel*” but “*Jeshurun*,” an affectionate name, possibly even “*Beloved One*.”

**Hear Me Now** – Faith (for what God is giving) comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

**Fear Not** – Just as Jesus would say to His flock (Luke 12:32). God intends to give His kingdom to His flock.

**Pouring Out My Spirit** (vv3-4) – When the Holy Spirit is poured out like water on the land of Israel, there is a transformation of the whole land, the whole society. Fruitfulness can be found everywhere – even to generations (as Peter promised at Pentecost – Acts 2:39). *The restoration of nature symbolizes cultural flourishing* (Leithart). And this is what happened at Pentecost (Acts 2:41). By means of the preached Word and the promised Spirit, a new community of believers came into existence. The result of this work was four-fold. The congregation was devoted to the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship, to the Lord’s Supper, and to prayer (v42). Those outside saw the transformation and were astonished (v43). In the midst of the doomed city, the community held all things in common (vv44-45). The community overflowed in gladness together and God continued to add to their number (vv46-47). And like Pentecost, this was God’s Feast of the Firstfruits – there was much more to come.

**Individual Blessings** (Isaiah 44:5) – In order for there to be a godly society and culture, there must be many individual stories of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. We are those stories. We are examples of people who never could earn salvation and of whom no one would have thought we would be walking with God. Imagine a faithful Israelite hearing Isaiah and then being shown hordes of unclean Gentiles calling themselves “of Jacob,” each with a story all his or her own?

**Stories within Stories** – Eat her Bread and drink Her Wine, for this is Pentecost Sunday and the Feast is upon us. The Holy Spirit has been poured out and we pray that God would do so more and more upon the land and in our hearts. The result is a transformation of a people and the salvation of many being added to the number day by day, story by story.