

PENTECOST - THE DAY AFTER

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Today is the day of Pentecost. I draw my scripture today from Acts 2. I'd also like you to put a finger in Leviticus 23 since we really don't adequately comprehend what is happening in Acts 2 without an appreciation and understanding for the events that are described in Leviticus 23. I especially single out for you some verses from Acts 2 first of all.

First, 2:1 and I'll read it in the literal Greek rather than in the translation that's given. "And in the filling up of the day of Pentecost." As if Pentecost was a container, a container from the Old Testament and it was empty. It was there as a symbol but the symbol had not yet been invested with meaning. Until the day of Pentecost. The King James puts it, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." The New International Version says, "The Day of Pentecost came." But both of them miss some of the nuance of phraseology and in the filling up of the day of Pentecost. The idea being that on this day of Pentecost described in Acts 2 what we begin to see is the day beginning to be filled up. That it will be one of the theses of this message that the day of Pentecost is never to be understood as a 24-hour day which was sort of a kick off to the birth of the church. That it just happened like a cosmic big bang to launch the church on its mission and then it never happened again. The day of Pentecost is meant to be a phrase, which describes everything from the birth of the church till the return of the Lord. The day of Pentecost is always in a state of being filled up, invested with meaning until the Lord himself returns.

In fact, another way of describing what the day of Pentecost or the era of Pentecost since day is a rather loose term which may describe not simply a 24 hour period of time but which may refer to a whole age. Another way to talk about the day of Pentecost is to say that it equals the last days. We use the phrase as Christians "last days" often meaning everything that's in our lifetime. The things which happened recently which seem to be preceding the coming of the Lord.

Yet from Acts 2:14 and on especially verse 17 which expands the events beginning in verse 14 we see that the phrase "the last days" was announced as beginning with the day of Pentecost. Where Peter explains the day of Pentecost by saying, "In the last days God says I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." So the last days is a rather precise term which means all the time intervening from that first pouring out of the Spirit until the return of the Lord. The last days as Peter develops it in verses 17-21 has an a.m. and a p.m.. The a.m. is the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh with sons and daughters involved, with maidservants and manservants. That is this outpouring of the Spirit is available to men and women. It's available to people in high social classes and low social classes. It's available to all. And that "last days" will be concluded with cosmic signs in the heavens. The moon will be turned to blood and the sun will be darkened before that great and glorious day of the Lord.

In other words there is going to be a tremendous violent upheaval. Maybe only in the nuclear age can we understand how the moon would be turned to blood and how the sun could be turned to darkness. Peter says that the world itself will melt with a fervent heat. If that doesn't sound like a thermo-nuclear blast. I would suggest in the scripture that is not some tyrant or president or Prime Minister pushing an atomic button. But that's when God himself brings the curtain down on the age. The very end of the last days is this cosmic explosion in the heavens. The end of the tribulation period. And then comes the great and glorious day of the Lord.

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So in verse 1, verse 17 and in verse 20 we have a reference to three different days. The day of Pentecost, the last days, and the great and glorious day of the Lord.

The day of Pentecost is beginning as the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church. That initiates and inaugurates the last days and contemporaneously together, both of them run together the last days and the day of Pentecost continue until that day when God brings the curtain down on human history.

To understand what is being filled up, the day of Pentecost we need to go back to Leviticus 23 for it tells us that there was something that God placed as a feast day within the Old Testament community, within the Old Testament covenant. In fact, Leviticus 23 gives us all the important appointments on God's calendar of time.

I have a little brown appointment book. I have a stack of these going back over the last half dozen years. One of the things is like about this little book is it tells me on an inside plate, U.S. holidays and special dates. In one glimpse I can see when all the important holidays of the year are going to be and it helps plan the schedule.

Leviticus 23 is God's little brown book that gives us on his appointment sheet of time all the critical things that are going to happen in the calendar of the ages. But in the calendar of any given year. In Israel's history there were seven important feast days. Holy days. Not holidays but *holy* days, which God meant to be kept because they were all prophetic. They pointed to a meaning beyond themselves.

The first one is Seder or Passover. That occurs on the fourteenth day of the first month in the Hebrew calendar. It was a lunar calendar. It was given to commemorate the fact that the children of Israel had been in captivity but God had told them to kill a lamb, a Passover lamb without blemish, apply the blood on the doorpost. When the death angel came by to take the first born he would pass over them if he saw the blood on the doorpost. It was a sign that they were coming out of captivity and being protected from death.

If someone in Israel had had a different idea they would not have been protected. God always dictates the term of salvation. We don't say to God, I disagree with you. I'm going to do it my way. Part of coming into God's community is saying, "Lord, if you say this is the way salvation is to occur, then that's the way it occurs." That's why John the Baptist when he sees Jesus says, "Behold the Lamb of God." Paul writing in 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Christ is our Passover lamb." So the institution of Passover in the Old Testament taught that it was a deliverance of God's people out of captivity into freedom. In the New Testament it becomes an internal celebration rather than an external holiday. It becomes an internal celebration of the fact that perpetually Christ has made atonement for us once for all on the cross. He has now ascended into the heavens to present his own blood on our behalf. We are kept by him.

So everyday of my life, in a sense, is Passover because Christ, my Passover lamb, has been offered and I have been brought out of captivity of sin and death into the liberty of being a child of God.

The second feast on the Leviticus 23 calendar – and I need to get them all before you to help us adequately understand Pentecost – is the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was instituted for 7 days and it began the day after Passover. That is, as sun was setting on Passover then that next

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day the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. It was a time when there was to be no leaven in the house. Leaven signifies corruption and sin. It also commemorated the haste in which the children of Israel had to prepare to leave Egypt. There was to not be any taking of something with them that required time.

Paul says this also has become a Christian observance for when we have come to Christ he has saved us in the Passover then there's a responsibility that we have. We are moving with haste out of this world into the world to come and we want to take nothing of the old world with us.

So Paul says "Purge out the old leaven from your life." What is the old leaven? Malice and evil, that of our nature which is unlike God we're to be involved in an active responsibility of pushing it out.

Then the third feast, the Feast of First Fruits comes the first day after Passover Sabbath, which is Sunday the first day of the week. It stood for the fact that the spring grain harvest was just beginning to ripen. But there was a law within Israel that no one could eat of the grain harvest – and by the way, Feast of First Fruits... I always got tripped up on that as a kid because I think of fruit as bananas and apples and oranges and stuff like that. But fruit was a grain harvest. Before anybody could eat of the harvest there had to be an offering, a cutting of a batch of that grain and it was brought to the Lord in the temple and presented. It was waved before him signifying that the first of everything belongs to God. Only when it is given to him can we then participate in the benefit of the harvest ourselves.

The very morning that Christ rose from the dead, the high priest with his group of people around him, they were out in a pre selected field at the crack of day began to rise and they were cutting down the feast of first fruit. They were cutting down that first grain of the spring harvest.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that "Christ is the first fruits of them that slept." In other words none of us participate in resurrection life unless and until he himself has it first. He is the first of the harvest. Then we follow in afterward.

Then there comes this fourth feast which brings us to Acts 2. The Feast of Pentecost, the last feast of spring. The seven feasts of Leviticus 23 the fourth feast, is the culmination of the spring feast. There's a period of four months before we get to feasts five, six, seven which are fall feasts.

But where as First Fruits was the beginning of the harvest and grain, raw grain was presented to the Lord, Pentecost meaning fifty in the Greek language. The Jewish people call it *Shavuot* which means "weeks". Feast of weeks. There's seven weeks plus a day between first fruits and Pentecost. The symbol of Pentecost in Jesus' day was that all the spring crop is now in. All the harvest is completed. So two baked loaves are presented to the Lord. Not raw grain but baked loaves with leaven. Suggestive of the fact in the New Testament sense that we are the produce to the harvest and when we're presented to God we're a mixed bag! Both spirit and flesh. Leaven and dough.

But the harvest, the day of Pentecost is a day, which marks the gathering in of the crop. It's another reason why I'm suggesting to you that the day of Pentecost is not simply a thing that happened long, long ago and it was kind of the cosmic big bang of the church. There's some people who look at the day of Pentecost that way. They say all those things you read in the book

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of Acts – signs, miracles, gifts of the Spirit and the like that was for the apostolic age – misunderstanding the fact that Passover is for all Christians. Unleavened bread is for all Christians of all times.

First fruit is something that Christ did for us that we might always remember it. Pentecost also is something that we perpetually take part of. It is an internal observance not simply an external day. Pentecost is that gathering in of the spring harvest. Jesus, in the gospel of John, says, “Say not four months and then comes the harvest. Today is the day of harvest.” There are four months between the fourth feast and the fifth feast.

The fifth feast is the fall feast. *Rosh Hashanah*, the Feast of Trumpets. Followed quickly by *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. Followed by Tabernacles or *Sukkot*. That ends the calendar year.

I would suggest to you that in Jesus’ first coming he fulfilled the first four and now comes the fall when the Lord will sound the trumpet, gather his people home, *Rosh Hashanah*. There will be open in Israel a cleansing *Yom Kippur*. They will look upon him, *Zachariah* says, whom they have pierced. Then we will forever tabernacle with him, the Feast of *Sukkot*.

So Pentecost, in terms of its historical derivation, is a day which marks the ingathering and completion of the spring harvest. It has this a.m. when God’s Spirit is being poured out on all people including us. God is accessing the non-rational side of our personality – dreams and visions. The church isn’t going to be built simply because people have good ideas. Because they set down in committees and chart out programs. Because they get their calendar and say this is what’s going to happen this year. The church of Jesus Christ is going to be built by people who listen to the Holy Spirit and who move out in ways that no human reason or rationality could articulate. God is going to be revealing things to them in prayer. God is going to be getting them out on the front edge of experience and God is going to be accessing the subconscious side of our personality.

If I understand anything why for example they spoke in other tongues on the day of Pentecost it is that God is already kicking them into this realm of relating to him where we’re not simply relating to God on a basis of a normal, straight-line rationality. But we are caught up in the experience of God himself.

So Pentecost comes. It’s meant to always be kept in the church. We’ll always need to be filled with the Spirit.

I was getting Sunshine his dog food this morning. Sunshine’s our poodle dog. I really don’t like to dirty up forks scooping out dog food out of his can so I tried to use last night’s fork. I had failed to wash off last night’s fork. I took the fork and I noticed all the dog food from last night that was left on the tines of the fork. I thought nobody would want to eat that dried up stuff. Then when I took the aluminum wrap off the can I saw the dog food was nice and moist. The difference was the food in the can had been kept moist and therefore was eatable. That which was on the prongs of the fork had dried out.

I thought of that. That’s life isn’t it? We let things set out without keeping them moist they dry up and don’t become unusable. The potter working with clay must continue to keep the clay wet in order for it to be used.

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That's what it is in terms of the filling of the Spirit. That's why water terms are used of this day of Pentecost. Like the Spirit being *poured out*. Do we just have that once in our life when we become a Christian and the Spirit comes upon us and we receive the baptism of the Spirit and we get all wet? If I know anything about life it's there are times when you're drying out. The sun is caking you and it's a struggle. Talk about struggle to live! When we struggle to go through problems what the Holy Spirit wants us to do is to keep full because he wants to keep pouring out water upon us to keep us alive and pliable and usable for his purposes.

On this inception of the day of Pentecost, on that first day, the a.m. of the day when the Spirit is being poured out upon all flesh and I believe we are still really in the a.m. although I think it's late in the morning. We're getting ready for the p.m. of the day. The blood and fire and vapor of smoke. But in that a.m. there are some tremendous directional changes that take place. One is that the disciples are lifted upward in their direction. The first thing that happens in the day of Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out is immediately the disciples get caught up in praise to the Lord and begin speaking to him in languages they've never previously learned.

What are they saying when they are speaking with other tongues? What is this business of speaking with other tongues anyway in languages that have not been previously learned? It is as Acts says: speaking the wonderful deeds of God. It is the language of prayer and praise in which our heart like a gushing stream is released unto God in an overflow out of our normal English, out of our normal language, whatever language we speak. Outside of that. It is an overflow of life that comes as a result of being watered, poured upon by the Spirit.

What God wants to do with this church and us personally is first of all catch us up into his presence and be lost in wonder and adoration and praise. The world will never be reached by a church that is dried out. A church that goes along with glumness and heaviness. So God gives us delight and says, Be open to me. Be poured upon by me. Be caught up into my presence. In that sense I truly want to be a Pentecostal Christian.

I regret that the word "Pentecost" has gone through so many different meanings. It seems like there are no pure words left. I used to think that the words "Christian Center" was a pure word. That's why we began using it 15 years ago. There are so many flaky doctrines going on in different Christian centers that I wonder if we ought not to find a new name that nobody else is using. The word Pentecost has come to mean evangelists that are flaky and people that are calling out healings when they're actually listening to things on their earphones. Pentecost is almost a term that has become reserved for flakes. That's regrettable. That's why I'm taking the time today to try to define it from the scripture. It is that period of ingathering when God goes after the world by using his church and says the first thing the church has got to do is be caught up into my presence and be as the hymn writer says, lost in wonder, love and praise. God moves us upward.

Then God moves us outward rather than inward. Rather than getting us in a quest for some ego satisfaction God says there's a world out there. There were 120 on the inception of the day of Pentecost. In Palestine at that time there were four million people living in Palestine it's estimated by demographers. I figured out the ratio was one Spirit filled believer for every 33,000 people. It's estimated there were at that time 250 million people living in the Roman world and there were 120 Christians, 120 Spirit filled believers to meet that 250 million. One Christian to a ratio of 2.8 million people. That's a world out there! And God is not going to reach them

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independent of his church. One day the harvest was to begin with 3000 people coming in. Which means if we're to be Pentecostals we can't be people who simply set back and observe and let somebody else get involved in the nurture and care and discipling and praying for and giving and teaching work. We can't let that to somebody else.

In the early church when 3000 came in one day I've often would like to have been in that church. Three thousand people added to any church in any day that's a lot of responsibility. I think what they did was broke everybody up into small groups and there was about one Christian for about every 30 new people. I think they just gave everyone a Bible study. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you be willing to risk. And willing to extend yourself and willing to care for others. The Holy Spirit is always moving us outward rather than simply inward. He catches us inward by lifting us upward but then he moves us outward.

Then I think the church was not only moved upward and outward but I think it was moved forward rather than backward. When the day of Pentecost came there were 120 disciples who had demonstrated their faithfulness to the Lord. I think maybe they would have had two responses that would be very natural. We were witnesses to all the great miracles of Jesus. Let's give our time now to building a monument to wherever he did a great deed. Let's make monuments to Jesus and let's just set here and remember the good old days. The tendency is to look backwards. To memorialize and enshrine that which has happened in the past. What the Holy Spirit does on the day of Pentecost is pull us forward. As great as the days were of Jesus' ministry on the earth, it's only just begun. In his ministry in the flesh on the earth it is only the beginning as Luke says in Acts 1:1 of what Jesus began to do and teach. The exciting days are always just ahead.

I say that to all of us who may have the tendency in our life to look back to some particular time we felt closer to God than at other times. We tend to want to camp and dwell in that place and God is pulling us on instead. The Holy Spirit pulls them forward and doesn't let them get into this mentality of isn't it wonderful to be in the small group of 120 where we know everyone's name and we get all these 3000 people in the church and it isn't going to be cozy like it is now. Jesus has never said the church is to be cozy like a country club. It'd be a place that is teeming with people who bring into that situation their life problems and their hurts and needs, who are converted but go through a process of change and metamorphosis and we must be there helping, guiding, praying, instructing, teaching, exempling. That the church of Jesus Christ may be all it should be.

Pentecost says the church never measures success by how many people are inside the walls. It measures its work by how many people are yet to be reached. It's wonderful that 120 were all in one room. When I'm in Israel I love to go to that place that commemorates the Upper Room although it probably is not the original. But every time I'm in that room I say to myself, Because these 120 were faithful to the Lord and let the Holy Spirit move in their life after that day the church never again could get in a single room. And it will never again get in a single room until we all are in Jesus' presence. And he is preparing a banquet hall that is big enough for the whole body of Christ. Wow! I get excited when I think about that. There is a great banquet hall being prepared in which the church again will all be in one room. But until that time the Holy Spirit wants to come upon us and give us a good soaking so that we are caught upward, go outward, and move forward. Because the day after Pentecost is the day of the Lord.

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And the day of the Lord is the culmination and collection of all those events, which embrace all the feasts. It is the ending with God's dealings with man on earth. It is the ushering in of the new heavens and the new earth. The day of the Lord is the day when God judges the world and the day before the day of the Lord is Pentecost right now. Right now. And when we read the scripture therefore in Acts 2 I find that everything in Acts 2 is repeated in the life of the church except the sound of the mighty rushing wind and the fiery tongues that sat on their heads. Everything else that occurs on that day is repeated through the book of Acts. It's been repeated wherever people have been hungry for God.

I encourage us to be in that sense. In the scriptural sense Pentecostal people who know that the day of Pentecost is not simply about getting a metaphysical spiritual experience. You talk about the in ward trip you're on. But it talks about the power that the Holy Spirit gives so we can go out and be witnesses for him in the world. Because Pentecost relates to the harvest and equipping people to be powerful witnesses for him in that harvest.

Father, as we close this message today we do so with a request that we as your body of people in this place might be all filled with the Spirit and that the harvest you have in this community of men and women, young people and boys and girls will not remain on the vine ripening and rotting. But that you'll give us the power through the Holy Spirit to be caught up in you, to extend beyond ourselves to them, to look forward rather than backward. Fill us Lord with your Spirit we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.