

The Birthday of the Church



“There is something additional and unique about this ministry of the Holy Spirit that first occurred at Pentecost...now a believer was not only regenerated and indwelt to some degree by the Holy Spirit but, beginning at Pentecost and following, all who believe were simultaneously baptized by the Holy Spirit and made part of the one body.”

WALTER KAISER

INTRODUCTION:

The year was 1953. The date—June 2. The place was Westminster Abbey, London. The event was the coronation of Elizabeth II. At the age of 25—upon the death of her father, George VI, on February 2, 1952—Elizabeth, while in Kenya, became the first sovereign in over 200 years to accede while abroad.

Although Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1952, the coronation—celebration or public declaration—took place over a year later.

To mark the Queen’s coronation, every citizen in every village and town under the reign of England was given a gift. This massive distribution of the gifts was a monarch’s way of saying, “I have now begun to reign!”

The historic ascension and coronation of Queen Elizabeth helps us to understand what took place between the time the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ and what took place when the church was born at Pentecost. Jesus began to reign on the day of His resurrection (*Matt.28:18-20; Col.2:13-15*). Shortly thereafter, He ascended to His Father (*Acts 1:3-5, 9-11*). But it was on the Day of Pentecost that the celebration of His coronation was marked by a lavish display and unrepeated outpouring of extraordinary gifts on those under His kingdom’s reign.

LESSON AIM:

- The central aim of this lesson is to understand the inception of the church at Pentecost and what it meant for the church and then and what it means for us now.

THE INCORPORATION OF THE CHURCH

When was the church born and why does it matter?

- A. Read John 14:20. Jesus foretold of the day in which we would know that the His coronation had taken place. What was that day?

- ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

That day was the day of _____ . (Acts 2)

Although the people of God existed prior to the day of Pentecost, the church did not begin until that monumental event.

What does the Day of Pentecost mean? Pentecost means *fiftieth* because it was that many days from the Passover. Under the Old Covenant there were three festivals each year when every Israel male had to be in Jerusalem (*Deut.16:16-17*). Other feasts could be kept in one's hometown, but *Passover*, *Pentecost*, and *the Feast of Booths* all required a pilgrimage to the City of David. Pentecost under the Old Covenant was primarily an occasion on which to thank the Lord for providing the grain the people needed for survival (*Lev.23:15-22*). It was also a time to rejoice in the revelation of the Torah to Moses (*Ex.19-24; 34:22*).

- B. Read John 14:20 again. What would Christians understand as the result of what would take place at Pentecost?

- ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

The result: We would know something of the sacred and mystical union between *Christ and the Father* and *us and Christ* and *Christ in us*. "*I am in the Father...*" that's His *communion* with the Father. "*...and you in Me,*" that's our *union* with Christ. "*...and I in you...*," that's His *indwelling* presence in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. The point is that the only way of knowing this union would be when Christ diffuses His life in us by the personal indwelling and mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost marked the birthday of the church and the beginning of the New Covenant relationship under which every believer lives now.

- C. Read Acts 2:1-12. Let's carefully examine the event of Pentecost. After we have explained *what Pentecost means now*, we will identify key elements that took place on that day that never will be *repeated* and key elements that are *repeatable* (*namely, things that take place time and time again*). These key elements are meant to teach us what we might expect as God calls us together as His church.

- When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." ¹² And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

What does Pentecost mean from a biblical/theological standpoint?

1. Pentecost is a continuation of Christ's work.

- **Acts 1:1**—The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

2. Pentecost is an evidence of Christ's enthronement.

- **Ephesians 4:8**—Therefore it says,
 "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH,
 HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES,
AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

3. Pentecost was a fulfilment of Christ's request.

- **John 14:16-17**—I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. (Cf. Ps. 2:7-8)
- **Luke 24:49**—And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.
- **Acts 1:4-5**—Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," *He said*, "you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

What the Father promised when the Messiah came is that He would not merely *influence His people's lives outwardly* as John did with water baptism, but rather, He would *transform them inwardly* by the personal agency of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:1-5). This is what John proclaimed about Jesus...

- **Matthew 3:11**—As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

And therefore, at Pentecost we have something very UNIQUE and UNREPEATABLE happening. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would be poured out in such a way, so as to identify all who believe with His kingdom's reign!

Abraham Kuiper, the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands described what took place at Pentecost like this:

"Pentecost was like the Mayor of a great city opening a water system that had been produced and all of the houses of the city suddenly find themselves flooded with this water. But every time a new house is built, it is connected to the water system and enters into the experience of this running water. It is not like opening day, but it is an ongoing participation in what took place then."

Has your life been founded upon foundation of Jesus Christ (*Read 1 Cor.3:11; Eph.2:19-20*)? Those who hold fast to the Gospel and persevere in the faith are called, "His house"—"*for Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and boast of our hope firm until the end.*" (*Heb.3:6*).

Have you tapped in to the water supply? Are you experiencing in your life now the "running water" of the Holy Spirit's presence? Share one example or evidence.

What was UNIQUE from the day of Pentecost which does not happen again?

1. There would be an *audible* and *visible* manifestation of the coming of the Spirit.

- **Acts 2:1-3**—When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

What was the audible manifestation?

What was the visible manifestation?

Does this happen every time the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the believer?

2. The Apostles would *speak the Gospel* in a language they have never learned.

- **Acts 2:4-11**—And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. ⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

If you trace the pronoun “they” back to chapter 1:12-26, the “they” refers to the Apostles and the one hundred twenty gathered in the Upper Room. Those who stood to preach were the Apostles and so this unique ability seems only to be given to them. There are two other occasions—in Acts 10:46 and 19:6—where “speaking with tongues” (*foreign languages*) occurred. However, this was not a *prescriptive* event (prescribed for every Christian and every church), but rather a descriptive event and confirmation that the Holy Spirit was being given to the Gentiles who believed in the same way that He was given to the Jews who believed (*Acts 10:47-48; 11:15-18*).

What was REPEATED from that day? There are three things which took place then that happen again and again as the Lord Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to His people in salvation.

1. When the Spirit comes He comes to *empower His servants for witness*.

- **Acts 1:8**—but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

The Apostles were already witnesses. They had seen *His ministry*, witnessed *His miracles*, *His life*, *His crucifixion*, *His resurrection*, and *His ascension* (*1 John 1:1-2; 2 Pet.1:16-18; Acts 1:9-11*). So, why did they need POWER to be witnesses?

They needed power because although they could speak about *what they had seen*, their words would be powerless to *awaken* dead sinners and bring them to *faith* in Christ without the power of the Holy Spirit. In other words, people will only feel the consequences of preaching by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is why we need power as well. Bearing witness to facts will not save anyone. Words alone will not convince dead and darken sinners to repent and believe. We need the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel facts (*events, commands, and promises*) and to make them live in the hearts of those who believe. (*Cf. Ezek.37:1-11*)

- **1 Thessalonians 1:5**—for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.
- **Romans 1:16**—For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- **John 16:8-11**—And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

Are you convinced that your witness for Jesus Christ is foolishness without the power of the Holy Spirit?

If so, then *we should pray that the Spirit would do in us now what He did then*—empower us as witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ! According to Acts 2:4, “*they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak...*” Now the question is...

What happens when an individual is filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered for witness?

In other words, *what does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we are witnesses?*

Dr. Sinclair Ferguson says, "When an individual is filled with the Holy Spirit, one's heart is overcome with such love and admiration *for Jesus*, and *faith in the Lord Jesus* that you want to stand up and *speak about Him*." That's exactly what happened with Peter in Acts 2:14ff.

2. When the Spirit comes, He comes to empower us for witness, while simultaneously and primarily *exalting the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Survey parts of Peter's spirit-filled message on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2:14-36*) and write down what he is exalting about Jesus Christ.

- **Verse 14-16**—But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. ¹⁵ For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:
- **Verses 22-24**—Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. ²⁴ But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.
- **Verse 29-33**—Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT *one* OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID HIS flesh SUFFER DECAY. ³² This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.
- **Verse 36**—Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."

This is exact what Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would do in John 16:14—"*He will glorify Me...*"

Application: When the Holy Spirit fills you with power for witness, *you stop talking about yourself and start talking about the glories of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

3. When the Spirit comes He brings *conviction of sin*.

Read Acts 2:37—Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

What does it mean to be "*pierced to the heart?*" It means to be *wounded in conscience*. It means to be convicted of sin. Think about how these words were fulfilled to the letter on the day of Pentecost.

- **John 16:8-11**—And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness,

because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

The Spirit's work is to bring conviction. The word "convict" has a primary and secondary meaning. Its primary meaning is *to expose or to convince of wrong ways*. To reprove of some error. The secondary meaning is *to convince by cogent arguments and ample evidence*.

Look back at John 16. What three things does the Holy Spirit bring conviction about according to verses 8-11? Explain.

- S _____
- R _____
- J _____

It is not the AMOUNT of conviction that is the important thing, it is whether there is ENOUGH conviction to make *you turn to Jesus Christ*. When the Spirit is working in our lives, He shows us that we need more than personal improvement or a Sunday School education; we need *salvation*—and this is only found in Christ. (Cf. Acts 4:12)

REVIEW:

- When the Spirit comes, He comes to *empower us for witness*.
- When the Spirit comes, He comes to *exalt the Lord Jesus Christ*.
- When the Spirit comes, He comes to *bring conviction of sin*.

4. When the Spirit comes, He comes to create a living church.

What was the effect of Spirit's work?

- **Read Acts 2:42-47**—They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The central effect was...

- Devotion to *Jesus Christ and His teaching*.
- Devotion to *one another in affection and love*.
- Devotion to *sharing communion*.
- Devotion to *seeking the lost*.

This is what it means to be incorporated into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will not *glorify Himself, me, or you*, but He will glorify *the Lord Jesus* and make us a living church. How does a "living, true church" look?

- Devotion to Jesus Christ and His teaching
Are you resolutely committed to Christ and His Word no matter the cost?
- Devotion to one another in affection and love
Are you serving the local church body with your gifts and attendance currently and consistently?
- Devotion to sharing communion
Not just the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, but the burdens, duties, and joys of fellow believers.
- Devotion to seeking the lost
Are you intentionally seeking to bring the unconverted to Jesus Christ that they might be saved?

APPLICATION:

If you were asked:

- When was the church born? What would you say?
- How is one incorporated into the church? What would you say?

Now in your own terms, in light of what you have learned in this chapter:

- Why does the birthday of the church matter?



HART-TO-HEART

Jody Hart, *Editor and Director Mountaintop Resources*

The Church, Alive

The birth of the church, a monumental day,
The Spirit came with power upon the earth.
Unique in what the Apostles would say,
Sounds and sights of the Spirit came forth.

The Spirit is still moving in our midst
His purpose to exalt and empower.
Exalting the Lord Jesus—all glory is His—
Empowering the church, that we may never cower.

Do you sense the conviction of sin?
The Spirit is whom impressed that upon
Your heart and mine. Affections to win,
Lives lived for Him, sealed for the time of our dawn.

Do you find love in your heart for those who don't know?
The Spirit placed that love there.
And the compassion to go, to take time to show
A lost world how to live without fear.

Is your heart fully devoted to all Jesus said
And who He is and He Himself?
Any commitment, all desires to be led
By the Master are received as spiritual wealth.

Do you cherish His church, all those for whom Christ died
And have you committed yourself to their good?
The Spirit does this work, one done deep inside.
Their worth shown upon a cross of wood.

Any hope that we have to live for His name
Is only realized by the Spirit's moving.
Let us lean in to Him and pray for His fame
As vessels surrendered to His doing.

ANSWER KEY:

THE INCORPORATION OF THE CHURCH

A.

That day was the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2)

What was UNIQUE from the day of Pentecost which does not happen again?

1.

What was the audible manifestation? a noise from heaven like a violent rushing wind

What was the visible manifestation? tongues as of fire

Does this happen every time the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the believer? no

What was REPEATED from that day?

3. **When the Spirit comes He brings conviction of sin.**

Look back at John 16. What three things does the Holy Spirit bring conviction about according to verses 8-11?

- Sin
- Righteousness
- Judgment

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