

The Spirit of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-4 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Today is Pentecost Sunday, but there is more of a chance that the Catholics (and others who follow the traditional church calendar) will remember to observe it than most Pentecostals you know. That's really odd when you consider that the Apostle Paul and the early disciples attached great significance to Pentecost. During his third missionary journey, Paul hurried to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost (Acts 20:16), and he told the Corinthian church that he planned to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Corinthians 16:8). Paul had Pentecost always on his mind; he marked time with it; it provided a sacred rhythm for his spiritual life. He was, without a doubt, the ultimate Pentecostal.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

1 Corinthians 16:8 But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.

Before the coming of Christ, Pentecost was a joyful Jewish festival celebrating the wheat harvest fifty days after the first fruits offering. It also commemorated the day Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. But the Old Covenant version of this holiday was just a foreshadowing of the great spiritual ingathering that occurred after the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the first followers of Jesus. This time, the law of God wasn't engraved on tables of stone – it was inscribed on the hearts of men by God's Spirit. This time, 3000 people didn't die because they reached out and touched the sacred mountain – 3000 people lived because God's Spirit reached out and touched them! Pentecost was heaven's inauguration ceremony for the church, complete with rushing wind, flames of fire and an astounding display of speaking in other tongues. In that moment the men and women gathered in the upper room were visibly endued with supernatural power – and 3,000 people were converted in response to Peter's preaching. What happened on Pentecost is the defining pattern for God's church – then and now!

There had always been a Pentecost in Jewish theology – but this year the day of Pentecost “was fully come” (“was being fulfilled”)!

Acts chapter two is literally the birthday of the church, the very first time people were ever baptized with the Holy Ghost, the first time people ever spoke in tongues, the first time anyone asked “What must we do to be saved?” and the first time anyone ever preached how to obey the gospel.

Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Hebrews 10:16-17 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

Acts 2:12-18 ¹² And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, **What meaneth this?** ¹³ Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. ¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ **But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;** ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

WHAT MEANETH THIS? THIS IS THAT! What you are seeking is what Joel prophesied! Joel just said that God's Spirit would be poured out – he never even mentioned “speaking in tongues.” It was Peter who connected the dots from Joel's prophecy to Isaiah's prophecy ...

Joel 2:28-29 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

Isaiah 28:11-12 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.

1 Corinthians 14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

THIS (speaking in tongues) IS THAT (outpouring of God's Spirit)!

When the New Testament church began on the Day of Pentecost, the disciples spoke in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

Simon the Sorcerer observed "evidence" when the Samaritans received the Baptism of the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-20).

Cornelius' household, who were gentiles, spoke with other tongues when they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:44-48).

Paul had this experience (Acts 9:17-18), for he spoke with tongues more than anyone in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 14:18).

Believers who had only experienced John's baptism were re-baptized and spoke with tongues (Acts 19:1-6).

YOU DON'T RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST THROUGH YOUR HEAD, BUT THROUGH YOUR HEART! YOU MUST BE HUNGRY FOR IT!

John 7:37-39 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The "BELLY" bypasses the "BRAIN" ☺ because it is a work of God!

A study three years ago by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found a neurological parallel between what worshipers experience when they speak in tongues and what actually transpires physiologically in the brain. Scientists took brain images from worshippers as they were speaking in tongues and as they were singing. Comparing the two images, the researchers discovered that the frontal lobes (the willful, thinking part of the brain) were quiet, as were the language centers. Scans of people practicing meditation or participating in other spiritual practices differed sharply. "We noticed a number of changes that occurred functionally in the brain," comments Principal Investigator Andrew Newberg, MD, Associate Professor of Radiology, Psychiatry, and Religious Studies, and Director for the Center for Spirituality and the Mind at the university. "Our finding of decreased activity in the frontal lobes during the practice of speaking in tongues is fascinating because these subjects truly believe that the spirit of God is moving through them and controlling them to speak. Our brain imaging research shows us that these subjects are not in control of the usual language centers during this activity, which is consistent with their description of a lack of intentional control while speaking in tongues."

Speaking in tongues is a noncognitive, nonrational communication with God. It is not antirational, but is an immediate contact with God that does not include human words, nor can it be expressed in human words. This experience results in added faith in God, increased power and gifts for ministry, increased emotion and passion, and an enhanced awareness of God's presence in the life of the Pentecostal believer.

For thousands of years, Pentecost had been in Hebrew theology (they could quote it) but not in their experience.

Habakkuk 1:5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

Acts 13:41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

Electricity hasn't changed, but our concepts have changed – so we're doing things with it that have never happened before. We changed our capacity to conduct it. That's what happened in the New Testament and what is happening now with the Holy Ghost – God is doing new things!

*A decade ago, Pentecostal scholar Vinson Synan presented a paper to the Evangelical Theological Society entitled, "Policy Decisions on Tongues As an Indicator of Future Church Growth." Synan demonstrates that Pentecostals have been dramatically more successful in planting and growing churches than those who have rejected the Pentecostal understanding of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the necessity of speaking in tongues. His statistics are drawn from the development and spectacular success of Pentecostal missions in the 20th century. Other scholars are drawing similar conclusions. Philip Jenkins, distinguished professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, recently wrote a new book, *The Next Christendom*, in which he demonstrates that the growth patterns of the Pentecostals will make the 21st century a Pentecostal century. Pentecostal ministry is not slightly more effective. It makes a dramatic difference. The baptism in the Holy Spirit provides a significant amount of power for supernatural ministry resulting in striking accomplishments for the Kingdom.*

THIS (speaking in tongues) IS THAT (outpouring of God's Spirit)!

In Acts 19 at Ephesus, Paul didn't ask, "Do you believe there is a Holy Spirit?" They could have answered that right. But he asked, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And when he prayed for them, they spoke in tongues like every other New Testament believer!

The Church and its doctrines did not produce Pentecost; Pentecost produced the Church and all its doctrines. It was not the preaching of the Apostles that brought down power from on high; rather, men full of the Holy Ghost spent the rest of their lives trying to explain what God did!
Experiential Pentecost, not doctrinal Pentecost, is the apostolic model. The right doctrine will always follow the right experience.

Pentecostal preaching of DOCTRINE may ensure that we BELIEVE in the Holy Ghost. But only Pentecostal preaching of spiritual HUNGER ensures that we will RECEIVE the Holy Ghost. A believed-in Pentecost is good, but it was a received Pentecost that turned the world upside down. And it still works that way – God wants to pour out His Spirit!

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Speaking in tongues is the INITIAL and UNIVERSAL evidence of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But for you that have already received this gift from God, please note that there were two other signs that accompanied the original Day of Pentecost – **WIND and FIRE**. These are not meant to be experienced as “personal evidence” in every believer, because (1) they had already happened in the Old Testament, and (2) they never happened again in the New Testament. However, this is the “FIRST MENTION PRINCIPLE” at work – the first time anything happens in Scripture, its character is “set” by God. For example, the first time the devil appears in Genesis 3 he is a serpent, and the first time worship happens in Genesis 22 it is with a sacrifice.

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WIND – the breath or presence of God (God’s anointing resting on us!)
FIRE – a refining influence, burning up sin (holiness is not a side issue!)

Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:**

True Pentecost has both wind and fire – and we will not see Day of Pentecost harvest without both. Pentecost is more than just tongues!