

Acts 2: Birthday of the Church

Significance of the Day of Pentecost [v.1]

The Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, was the most *momentous* day in church history – the day the church was born. This was accomplished by the coming of the Holy Spirit from heaven. Thus, ten days after a divine Person *ascended* to heaven (the Son), another divine Person *descended* (the Holy Spirit) to take up His residence on earth in the **church**. Believers were indwelt by the Spirit, and thereby formed into *one body*, united to its risen, glorified *Head* in heaven (Christ). Believers therefore ceased to be a mere group of individuals, being welded into one living organism. This is indicated by the emphatic use of the word “all” and “one accord” suggesting a oneness of *mind, purpose* and *impulse* (cf. Acts 1.14; 2.46; 4.24; 5.12). Please note:

- In the NT, the word ‘church’ is a translation of *ekklesia* – a called out *gathering* or *assembly* of people. A local church therefore comprises a company of baptised believers gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, called out from the fellowship of the *world* into the fellowship of *God* and *His Son* through the **gospel**. The NT does not countenance any *unbaptised* or *un-gathered* believers. In NT language, the church is not a *building*, but a **people**. The Gospel Hall is our *place of gathering*, but not the church. The church must be a people rather than a building when it is described as having *emotions* (Acts 5.11), *legs* (Acts 9.31) and *ears* (Acts 11.22).
- The “baptism in the Spirit” of the day of Pentecost accomplished *two* great things. **First**, Christians became indivisibly linked to one another as members of a body (cf. 1 Corinthians 12.25-27; Romans 12.5). **Second**, Christians (as a body) were indivisibly linked to Christ, the Head, in heaven (cf. Ephesians 1.22-23; Colossians 1.18). These two points have reciprocal practical implications. **First**, believers are no longer solo individuals but belong to a *society* of Christians and function alongside them. There must be mutual care, sympathy and joy (1 Corinthians 12.25-26). Furthermore, every member of the body is vital. Though the body can survive without some of its members, its function is *impaired* (less effective) without them. **Second**, as those linked to Christ, each member of the body is responsible to express the mind, will and character of the Head.

All that took place on this special day of Pentecost was long promised in the word of God:

- The **feasts** of Jehovah present the prophecy of Pentecost (Leviticus 23.15-21). The day of ‘Pentecost’ (firstfruits of wheat harvest) was so-called because it fell *fifty* days after the feast of *firstfruits* (barley harvest). At the feast of Pentecost, a “new grain (meal) offering” was brought which comprised *two* wave loaves of two tenth deals. All was a picture of the *new* work of God, in which Jew *and* Gentile would be brought together on equal ground in Christ in the church (Ephesians 2.15). Hence the language of Luke, “when the day of Pentecost was fully come”, literally ‘being fulfilled’, which can mean simply ‘to arrive’, or refer to the completing of the interval of time between Passover and Pentecost. But the language also hints that the day long foreshadowed by the ancient feast was about to receive its complete fulfilment. Pentecost also points forward, in its far fulfilment, to the future joining again of *Ephraim* and *Judah* into one nation (Ezekiel 37.16-22).
- **John the Baptist** spoke of the Person of Pentecost. *Matthew 3.11: I indeed baptize you with (in) water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I... he shall baptize you with (in) the Holy Ghost and with fire.* In any baptism by immersion there is a person who baptises, a person being baptised and an element into which the person is submerged. On the day of Pentecost, individual members of the church were baptised in the Spirit, as sent by the Son (John 15.26; 16.7). The baptism in fire was not fulfilled at Pentecost. It is a baptism of judgment upon a “generation of vipers” and is separated by a period of 2,000 years from the baptism in the Spirit. *Matthew 3.12: He shall thoroughly purge his threshing-floor (Israel), and shall gather his wheat (true believers) into the garner, but the chaff (unbelievers) he will burn with fire unquenchable.*
- **Christ** Himself spoke of the period and purpose of Pentecost. *Acts 1.5: For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be (still future) baptised with (in) the Holy Ghost not many (ten) days hence.* The purpose of the baptism was to provide power for witness to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah. This was a message the disciples would take, ultimately, to the “uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1.8, cf. 2 Timothy 1.7-8).

According to Jewish tradition, the day of Pentecost marked the day the Law was given at Sinai, being *fifty* days after Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. On that occasion, the nation entered a covenant relationship of law – a “ministration of death” (2 Corinthians 3.7-9). It wasn’t long before disobedience slew 3,000 (Exodus 32.28). But now, in connection with the new covenant, the “Spirit gives life” resulting in 3,000 souls being saved (Acts 2.41).

