

The Spirit and Kingdom Growth of Jesus (PENTECOST)

(Ezekiel 36:22-27) & Acts 2:1-13

“Lord God Almighty, we rejoice that you are the sovereign Lord who rules over all: may the nations of the world hear your voice and the peoples acknowledge you. Break down every barrier that stands in the way of the triumph of your Word. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel, and hasten the day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. We ask this in His Name and to His glory.” AMEN.

If we recall, Jesus, raised from the dead, appeared to the disciples and discussed with them the kingdom of God for a period of 40 days between His Resurrection and Ascension. Also during this time, Jesus commissioned His disciples to be His worldwide witnesses. Before the disciples engaged in this commission, Jesus commanded them to wait to be baptized by the Holy Spirit Who would: 1) Complete their instruction about the Good News of Jesus and the nature of His Kingdom, and 2) Empower them to proclaim and teach this Good News to others. In today's Bible reading, this is fulfilled at the Old Covenant Feast of Weeks; also called Pentecost.

Luke wants us to recognize that the promise of the Holy Spirit continues to fulfill all that Jesus came to accomplish that was promised in the Old Testament. The Book of Acts records the continuation of what Jesus began in Luke's Gospel, but Luke now recounts the continued fulfilling work of Jesus by His Holy Spirit through the Acts of the Apostles. We learn that the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, is the means by which the promised worldwide Kingdom of God's Messiah will expand to include all peoples, and this began through the witness of the Apostles. The beginning of this Kingdom Growth by the Spirit of Jesus through His apostles fulfills God's Promises in the Old Testament. Let's explore the fulfillment of these promises as we consider three things from today's passage.

1. **The Day Verse 1** (READ)

- a. Pentecost was initially a celebration of a full and completed harvest; a successful ingathering that God had graciously provided. At this time in the first century, the Feast of Pentecost occurred 50 days after Passover, so it began 10 days after The Ascension of Jesus. Fulfillment is Key for Pentecost, and this is what Luke wants us to see. What is happening here, at this particular Feast of Pentecost, is the beginning fulfillment of God's New Covenant

Promise of the Holy Spirit, and we learn that this is the Spirit of Christ for the growth of His Kingdom throughout the earth as the Son of Man. The growth of Christ's Kingdom began at Pentecost, and it involves a comprehensive ingathering of people from all nations throughout the world.

b. Here is the beginning fulfillment of the End-times ingathering of all peoples from every nation into Christ's Kingdom.

2. **The Event** *Verses 2-8*

a. The Sound and Sight (READ *verses 2-3*)

i. The violent wind and tongues of fire indicates a visitation from God characteristic of similar events in the Old Testament.

b. The Tongues (READ *verse 4-5*)

i. As the context of our passage indicates, "tongues" here means languages. Those gathered to celebrate Pentecost were from different nations, and they spoke the primary, native language of their home country.

ii. The God-fearing Jews present are the ancestors of the Israelites previously dispersed during the times of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. While Judah, which also included the tribe of Benjamin, had a Remnant return to the Southern Kingdom from Babylon under Cyrus, such was never the case for the Northern Kingdom and the 10 tribes associated with it.

1. Here is a representation of all the lost tribes of Israel re-gathered for restoration into one nation with one king as God promised.

a. *Ezekiel 36:24 and 37:15-23* (READ & Explain)

c. The Miracle (READ *verses 6-8*)

i. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to proclaim the Gospel in known, discernible human languages, which they had never learned, to those present, so they could clearly understand the Gospel of Jesus.

ii. This miracle undoes; it reverses God's intervention at the Tower of Babel when He confused the language, so they could no longer persist in their rebellious building project. (ref. *Genesis 11*)

3. **The Crowd** (*Verses 9-11*)

- a. The crowd is representative of peoples from every known nation under heaven at this time. With such a huge international representation, here we see the beginning reclamation of the nations previously disinherited by God at the Tower of Babel (ref. *Deuteronomy 32:8-9*).
 - i. These God-fearing Jews, converted at Pentecost, served as “Gospel seeds” when they returned home to their respective countries. There, the Kingdom of Christ continued to spread as Gentiles heard the Gospel in their native language from these converted Jews present at Pentecost.
- b. This Kingdom Fulfillment with the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as the Old Testament and Jesus promised, began in Jerusalem on this Feast of Pentecost. In one day, disciples of Christ and citizens of His Kingdom grew from 120 to 3,000 Believers, and it extended out to:
- c. **Samaritans Acts 8:14-17** (READ)
 - i. Rather than a faithful Remnant returning to the Northern Kingdom, there grew a mixed ethno-religious people with a corrupted means of worshipping Yahweh, and this made them despised by the Jews.
 - ii. Cook, “There was a long-standing division between Judea and Samaria. God, by delaying the Samaritans’ reception of the Holy Spirit, acknowledges this division, but also ends it. The Jew/Samaritan division is not to be tolerated in the church. The Jewish church in Jerusalem had to recognize that just as God had saved them, so he makes no distinction, saving the Samaritans in the same way.”
- d. **Gentiles Acts 10:39, 40, 42-48** (READ)
 - i. It is important to note here that the gift of tongues; of speaking in other recognizable human languages and dialects by the power of the Holy Spirit was unique to these circumstances in order to reveal; to show, the Jewish Apostles that Christ’s Kingdom is for all people who Believe. It began in Jerusalem with the Jews who spoke other languages representative of the nations from which they had come, but it is now spreading to all nations; the ends of the

earth. We must understand that for us, as Believers today, that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a once-for-all occurrence at the time of our conversion when regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the fullness of the Holy Spirit, regardless of ethnic background, nationality, or race. This is demonstrated in these passages.

- ii. Additionally, we must recognize that any special gifting of the Holy Spirit is for the building up of God's Church and flows out of this New Covenant empowerment by the Spirit in every Believer. Therefore, gifts of the Holy Spirit should *not* divide Members of the Church *nor* create distinctions among Members according to perceived Spiritual-gifts such as speaking in tongues. This would be contrary to the work of the Holy Spirit in the Acts of the Apostles.

So, our "take-away" thus far is that this Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2 fulfills the *Ezekiel 36:22-27* New Covenant Promise of the Holy Spirit. But, "What does this mean?" (READ *Acts 2:12*). Peter gives the answer in *Acts 2:14-40*. According to Peter, who quotes from *Joel 2:28-29*, it means "the last days" have arrived with this promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter concludes with what this means for those then and for us today *verses 36-41* (READ). What is described in these verses is our experience today upon hearing the Gospel and being converted. There is not a normative additional Spirit-baptism creating an upper-class group of Christians who speak and pray in tongues.

While many incorrectly regard Christianity as another world religion like any other, in truth it is the full revelation of God through His Son Jesus Christ Who came to give us life, and this new life comes through the Spirit-empowered proclamation of Christ's death for our sins, so that we may repent and receive forgiveness. For those who genuinely repent, we are sealed, indwelt, filled and empowered by the Spirit of Christ to share with others this Good News that gave us life. Every single Believer in Jesus has the prophetic empowerment of His Holy Spirit to proclaim repentance to all peoples for the forgiveness of sins. Are you confident in the power of the Holy Spirit to do the work for which Christ has commissioned you? Gospel proclamation is the means by which Christ's New Creational Kingdom continues to grow on earth as it is in heaven. May we rejoice in the fullness of our forgiveness of sins, in our Spiritual empowerment as Gospel heralds, and in the completeness of our saving citizenship in Christ Jesus our Lord. **AMEN.**