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Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12

“Pentecost: Then and Now”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In the last study, Pastor Gary indicated his goal for the first few messages from the book of Acts was to answer three very important questions: 1) What is the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? 2) How do we receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? 3) What is the “evidence” for the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The teaching last week revealed that the purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to empower us for service and embolden us as witnesses.

This study will focus on the advent of the Holy Spirit, who came in great power upon the 120 disciples gathered in an upper room on the day of Pentecost. And, for all intents and purposes, the Church was born that day. Pentecost as an event was not something new to the Jews. It was a Feast they had practiced for more than 1,400 years. It’s just that God designated this particular Pentecost as the day for the outpouring of his Spirit.

Pentecost was also known as The Feast of Weeks (Jews call it *Shavuot* in Hebrew). It was celebrated seven weeks after the Sabbath of Passover, which would be 50 days, including that day. Pentecost is Greek for fiftieth day. It’s interesting to note that Jesus’ resurrection took place on the day after the Sabbath of Passover (Sunday). He remained on the earth 40 days until his ascension. Jesus told his disciples to wait “for the gift my Father promised” (the Holy Spirit), which means they waited ten days until the day of Pentecost. The 120 disciples had no way of knowing that the Spirit would come on Pentecost, they just waited and prayed.

From the vantage point of nearly 2,000 years, we can see why God chose to coordinate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the day of Pentecost. First, to commemorate the giving of the Law that Moses received from God on Mt. Sinai. Second, to celebrate the last of the grain harvest by offering two loaves of wheat bread made with yeast.

The parallels are quite interesting. First, Pentecost was the giving of the Law and now Pentecost was the giving of the Spirit. Paul said in **2 Corinthians 3:6–9**, “*the letter [of the Law] kills, but the Spirit gives life... Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory... will*

not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious [the Law], how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness [the Spirit]!” In **Exodus 32:26–28**, about 3,000 people died after Moses came down from the mountain with the Law of God. On the day of Pentecost about 3,000 people were saved. “*The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*”

Second, the offering of the last of the grain harvest was made by presenting two loaves of bread made from wheat; and it was the only feast where it was required that the offering had to be made with yeast. Yeast is a symbol for sin and yet God accepted the loaves of bread with yeast! So, we see that on the day of Pentecost God accepted sinners – a great harvest of souls “made with yeast,” if you will. We learn from this that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is available for *all* believers.¹ There is a connection of the baptism of the Spirit for believers all the way until the Second Coming of Jesus (**Acts 2:19–20**), which means the baptism and the gifts of the Spirit are still available today!

Gifts of the Spirit

1. There are several gifts of the Spirit mentioned in **Acts 2**, including speaking in tongues and evangelism.
2. The gift of healing is mentioned in **Acts 3:1–10**.
3. A partial list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is found in **1 Corinthians 12:1–11**.
4. There are, however, some solid, sincere Christians who believe some gifts of the Spirit have ceased to exist.
 - a. This position is based on a particular interpretation of **1 Corinthians 13:8–10** – “*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.*”
 - i. Adherents to this position would say the gifts are no longer necessary because “*perfection*” has come in the completed Word of God.
 - ii. This interpretation, however, is a fairly modern one, which seems to have been born as a response to the advent of the modern Pentecostal movement known as the 1906 Azusa Street Revival (Los Angeles, California).
 - iii. Prior to the turn of the century every Bible commentary explained these verses based on their context, and men like Adam Clarke, A.T. Robertson, Albert Barnes, William Burkitt, Matthew Henry, John Wesley and others are counted in this group.
 - iv. **1 Corinthians 13:12** – “*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully even as I am fully known.*” (Emphasis added)
 1. This Scripture is a reference to the perfected state of being in the Lord’s presence either when we die or when Jesus returns.

¹ **Acts 2:4** – “*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...*” and **Joel 2:28** – “*I will pour out my Spirit on all people...*” (Young and old, male and female = ALL!)

2. When we are in his presence, we will no longer need the gifts because we will have the Giver!
 3. When we have full revelation, we will no longer need interpretation!
 4. When we have a glorified body, we will no longer need someone with the gift of healing!
- v. John Wesley wrote in his journal on August 15, 1750: "...the grand reason why the miraculous gifts were so soon withdrawn was not only that faith and holiness were well-nigh lost; but that dry, formal, orthodox men began to ridicule whatever gifts they had not themselves, and to decry them all as either madness or imposture."²
- vi. Early Church Fathers wrote about the gifts of the Spirit in operation that they either experienced or observed, including men like Ignatius (35-100AD), Justin Martyr (100-165AD), Iranaeus (130-200AD), Tertulian (160-215AD – wrote a seven volume commentary on the person and work of the Holy Spirit), Cyrl of Jerusalem (300s AD) and Augustine (354-430AD).

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Acts 2:1-21, 37-41](#) to provide an overview of today's study.
3. Spend time talking about the individual gifts (a partial list) of the Spirit found in [1 Corinthians 12:1-11](#).
4. Read and discuss the interesting timing of Pentecost, celebrated since the time of Moses, with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
5. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 3:6-9](#) and [Exodus 32:26-28](#).
 - a. Is it your experience or observation that a lot of people try to gain righteousness and find life living by "the letter of the law"?
 - b. If people were honest, do you think they would admit that they've never been good enough?
6. Spend time talking about your thoughts and experiences regarding the gifts of the Spirit.
 - a. Does your church or denominational background hold specific beliefs about the gifts of the Spirit?
 - b. Do you consider the gifts of the Spirit to be a subject that's been overly emphasized by some churches and/or denominations?
 - c. Have you known Christians who emphasized the gifts of the Spirit in an unbalanced way?
 - d. After hearing this teaching, would you say that you now have a different understanding of Scriptures regarding the baptism and gifts of the Holy Spirit?
 - e. Why does this topic create such an uproar with some people, especially considering the fact that Jesus spoke about the baptism of the Spirit in [Acts 1:4-5, 8](#)?

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imposture>

7. Read and discuss the modern interpretation of [1 Corinthians 13:8–12](#) versus the correct interpretation based on the context of this Scripture.

8. Close your time by allowing everyone in your group to: ask God to help them come to a right understanding of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; be willing to let go of any teaching, denominational position, or religious training they've believed that would prohibit them from believing the truth of Scripture that teaches us that God wants to pour out his Spirit upon all people; embrace all that God has for them, nothing less and nothing more.

NOTE: Pastor Chuck Smith has written a book titled *Charisma vs. Charismania*, which may be a helpful resource for people in your group. I have the book available in Word format and will send it to K-Group leaders and hosts.