

Come Holy Spirit, We Need You!

The Holy Spirit in the Early Church Part 3

Key Scripture:

"When the Day of Pentecost had 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 the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ...--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." ... So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?" Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine." But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'" Acts 2:1-21 (NKJV)

The Holy Spirit at Pentecost: The day of Pentecost is the point in time when the Holy Spirit was given without reserve so that His gifts and power were released to fill His children. Before ascending to the Father, Jesus last instructions were to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit. One hundred and twenty prayed together day and night for the Holy Spirit to come as Jesus had promised. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost brought the fulfilment of two promises. One promise is in the Old Testament – Joel 2:28, which says "I will pour out my Spirit on all people", and one in the New, where Jesus says he will send another Counsellor, the Spirit of truth (John 16: 5-15).

Pentecost is from the Greek word 'Pentekostos', which means 'fifty'. It's the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week and in Judaism is called the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:16). Pentecost was an annual Jewish celebration of the first buds of the harvest. Thus, at Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit marked the first fruits of the harvest of millions of souls that continues through the ages. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marked the beginning of the "Church age" and a new era for believers in which we were equipped with the same power that enabled Jesus to preach the Gospel, heal the sick and raise the dead. The Spirit made it possible for the Church to go into to the entire world and make disciples of all nations.

In Acts 2:18,33 the word "poured out" is used in reference to the Holy Spirit. This word likens the coming of the Holy Spirit to "pouring rain—that which is freely given in great plentitude and which descends from heaven to earth as the rains." The book of Acts has been called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. The Church received the same Spirit that descended on Jesus to enable them to do the works He did and He promised that even greater works than He had done would the Church do when the Spirit came upon them. We can do nothing apart from the Spirit!

George Mueller, the well-known pastor who took care of the Welsh orphans in the 1800's wrote, "The Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost to the church in her collective capacity, to abide with her forever, and has not been taken away, notwithstanding our many failings. Just as the fiery pillar was not taken from the Israelites, notwithstanding their many provocations, so the blessed Spirit of God has not been taken away from the church. Moreover God has given His Spirit to the individual believer—to all who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But though the Spirit dwells in the church of Christ as to her collective capacity, and in the individual believer, nevertheless it is fitting and suitable and right on the part of the children of God that they should ask God again and again, and with great earnestness, that He would work mightily by His Spirit.

Digging Deeper in the Word:

There is no way to ignore the immediate change that took place in the lives of Jesus' disciples when they received the Holy Spirit. The bickering, jealousies, jostling for supremacy... the fear and uncertainties that characterized their lives prior to Jesus departure were forever gone. Instead, we see men full of the Word of God, preaching in boldness, ministering and sharing the Gospel. Even though they had walked with Jesus, listening to His Word spoken by His very mouth, they seemed to be completely mystified by much of what He said. Now they were filled with wisdom and understanding of the Word. They were able to boldly stand up to the Jewish leaders without fear. God does not change, so the effect the Holy Spirit had upon these common men, should have the same effect upon us! It is well worth our time to look closely at this moment in time that so changed the world!

1. Read Acts 1:1-8. What were the orders Jesus gave to the apostles? What was the promise? What did Jesus say they would receive from the Holy Spirit and what would they do as a result?
2. Acts 1:14-15 and 2:1 describe the relationship and prayers of this small group of believers. What characterized their behavior?
3. Acts 2:2-4 When the Holy Spirit came from heaven, how does the Word describe what happened?
4. Read the book of Acts. Mark the references to the Holy Spirit, the Word, prayer, and the numbers being saved. Do you note a pattern of how important each of these were to the salvation of many?

What is the Lord speaking to your heart?

Response to the LORD: