

Act 2:1-12

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

The Third Most Important Holiday

Acts Chapter 2:1-12 records a very unusual event. In fact, it is one of the most unusual and important events in the Bible and one of the most important holidays in Christianity.

You already know about Christmas. That is the holiday when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a very important holiday because God’s Son Jesus Christ came to earth to live with us; to show us what God was like, and to teach us how to please God.

Easter is another holiday that I am sure you have heard of. When we celebrate Easter we are remembering that Jesus Christ died on the cross in our place to pay for and cleanse us from our sins, and that his death for our sins was accepted by God. Easter is when Jesus was raised from death by God and came back to life as proof that his death had been sufficient to pay for the sins of each of us in this world.

The holiday we will talk about today is possibly the third most important holiday in Christianity. It is called Pentecost.

What is Pentecost?

Pentecost was a Jewish celebration of the beginning of the harvest. We can read about Pentecost in both the Old and New Testament. In the Old Testament (Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:9-14) this holiday was called Shavuot (in Hebrew). It was celebrated 50 days after the Passover Festival (which took place a few days before Easter). In the New Testament it is called Pentecost which means "50 Days".

You and I, who live near the city, go shopping in a supermarket. We don't think much about the harvest but, for farmers, the beginning of the harvest is a very important time. The harvest means that there will be food for the whole year to come. You know how happy you are when you work and then finally you get paid. The harvest is like a payday that happens only once a year. If you only got paid once a year you would be very happy and relieved when payday came, wouldn't you? That is how Old Testament farmers felt on Shavuot/Pentecost. That is why it was a very special and important celebration for the Jewish people in the Old Testament, and in Jesus' time.

People who believed in the God of the Bible traveled from all over the ancient world to be in Jerusalem to give thanks to God on Pentecost.

What happened on Pentecost in the New Testament?

As we read in Acts chapter 2, many Jewish people from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Pentecost Holiday. Jesus disciples were also in Jerusalem. In Acts chapter 1 Jesus said this to His disciples: "Do not leave Jerusalem," "Wait for the gift my Father promised. You have heard me talk about it. John baptized with water. But in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 1:4-5) After saying that, Jesus left his disciples and went up to Heaven.

Soon after that, on the day of Pentecost, about 120 of Jesus disciples were together in a room when they heard what sounded like a rushing wind and saw what looked like tongues of fire over their heads. That is when the Holy Spirit began to live inside believers of Jesus. This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised to His disciples. Jesus had promised His disciples that he would not leave them alone, but would send the Holy Spirit to help them. The event we read about today was when the Holy Spirit came into the hearts of the believers of Jesus.

What is the Holy Spirit and what does it do?

The Holy Spirit is God's spirit. (Matthew 28:19) Just as God the Father and Jesus the Son are God, the Holy Spirit is also God.

The Holy Spirit is a comforter (friend) sent to us by God (John 14:26) so that we will not be alone.

The Holy Spirit is our teacher. He helps us understand God and God's will for us. (John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit is here to remind us of the things that God has taught us in His word the bible (John 14:26).

The Holy Spirit is here to give us power and ability to be able to tell others clearly and who God is, and what He has done (Acts 1:8).

Why did the Holy Spirit come to the Believers during the Pentecost Holiday?

In the Old Testament God was laying a foundation to help us understand many things that He would do in the New Testament. In the Old Testament many of the events and holidays were physical things that people could see and feel. Many of the things that happened in the New Testament were spiritual things, things that we would not see with our eyes or feel with our hands. So the Old Testament helps us to understand the spiritual truths in the New Testament through physical events.

In the Shavuot/Pentecost holiday God was teaching us that He provided, through the harvest, everything needed for our physical lives. Food was something that people could see and feel and enjoy. It was God's physical provision for our physical bodies.

God gave the Holy Spirit to believers on Pentecost because it was God's spiritual provision for our spirits. The Holy Spirit is not something that can be seen, but it is God's way of meeting all of our spiritual needs

How can we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

Maybe you are thinking "I would like to have the Holy Spirit living in me. I would like to have a friend and comforter with me all the time. I would like to have the Holy Spirit inside

me to teach me how to live in a way that pleases God. I would like to have the Holy Spirit to help me understand what God is saying when I read or hear about the Bible.”

The good news is that you can have the Holy Spirit of God live in you and give you all these blessings.

In Acts 2:38 God tells how this can happen. It says “All of you must turn away from your sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then your sins will be forgiven. You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

God wants to send His Holy Spirit into your heart today, but He only sends His Spirit into clean hearts, hearts without sin. We can have our hearts made clean by confessing or turning away from our sins and asking Jesus Christ to make our hearts clean.

Jesus promised to do this in 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

When your heart is clean by turning from your sins and believing in Jesus Christ, God promises to send His Spirit into your heart and live with you forever as your comforter, friend and helper.

Of course you will want to be baptized with water too because this is a physical action (like in the Old Testament) that shows how God has cleansed you from your sins and made you His Child.

So, this year as we celebrate Pentecost, please think deeply about the meaning of this very important holiday, and seriously consider receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit that God wants you to give to you.

June 17, 2011

Peter H. Blank, Jr.

Joshi Seigakuin Staff