**The Fullness of Pentecost**

By Pastor Ricky Kurth

A Baptist preacher’s dog was getting old and sick, so he went to the pet store to get another dog to cheer him up. But he told the salesman he had to have a *Baptist* dog, or his church board of directors would fire him. The salesman nodded, and opened the door to one of the dogs’ cages, and told him, “Fetch the Bible.” Amazingly, the dog ran to a nearby bookcase, located a Bible, and brought it to the salesman! The preacher was so impressed he bought the dog and brought it home.

That night his board of directors came over for a meeting, and the preacher showed them how his dog could fetch a Bible. One board member said, “Let’s see if he can do regular tricks too.” He looked at the dog and said, “Heel!” The dog put his paw on the sick dog and began to howl. You know. In an effort to *heal* him! The board member said, “That dog’s a Pentecostal—you’re fired!”

Well, as I’m sure you know, there are Christians who call themselves *Pentecostals.* And if you’ve ever wondered how they got that name, it comes from the first verse of our text in Acts 2:1-4:

**“And when the day of Pentecost was 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 all the house where they were sitting.**

**“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.**

**“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”**

Now if you know your Bible, you know that “Pentecost” was one of the 7 annual feast days that God gave the people of Israel to observe every year. And if you *really* know your Bible, you know that each feast day was a type of something that would happen to Israel in the future. For instance, the first feast was the feast of *Passover,* as we read in Leviticus 23:4,5:

**“These are the feasts of the Lord…the fourteenth day of the first month…*is the Lord’s passover.”***

We know that Passover was a type of the cross, for Paul wrote:

**“…Christ *our passover* is sacrificed for us” (I Corinthians 5:7).**

The Passover lamb was sacrificed for the people of Israel in time past, but the Lord Jesus Christ was sacrificed for Jews *and* Gentiles on the cross. The Lord even died on the 14th day of the first month, while the people of Israel were observing the Passover.

After Passover came the feast of unleavened bread:

**“…on the fifteenth day…*is the feast of unleavened bread…”* (Leviticus 23:6)**

Leaven is a type of *sin* in the Bible, so we know that this feast spoke of how Christ our passover was sacrificed for us *even though He lived an unleavened life.* That is, He lived His life without the leaven of sin. That means when He died, He must have died for *our* sins, for “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and He had committed no sins.

But there is more to the symbolism of the feast of unleavened bread than that. This feast also symbolized how we believers should rid ourselves of the leaven of sin in our lives *in response* to Christ being sacrificed for us, as Paul says in I Corinthians 5:7:

**“*Purge out…the old leaven*, that ye may be a new lump, *as ye are unleavened”* (I Corinthians 5:7).**

What that’s basically saying is that God *sees you* as sinlessly unleavened, so why not live that way? In the context, Paul is talking about purging the leaven of a grievous sinner out of the local assembly (v.2, 13). But it would be hypocritical to do that without deciding to purge sin out of your personal life as well.

Next came the feast of *firstfruits:*

**“…ye shall bring a sheaf *of the firstfruits of your harvest* unto the priest” (Leviticus 23:10).**

When they planted a crop, they were to take the first fruits of that crop and give it to the Lord. That’s a type of the *resurrection* of Christ, as Paul explained in I Corinthians 15:20:

**“…now is Christ risen from the dead, *and become the firstfruits of them that slept”***

Paul uses the past tense here to describe “them that slept,” for he was speaking of the saints who died before the cross under the law. They will eventually rise from the dead, *but Christ rose first.* He was the firstfruits of those saints.

And He’s *our* firstfruits as well, as Paul went on to say:

**“Christ the firstfruits; *afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming”* (I Corinthians 15:23).**

The Lord’ resurrection was the first fruits of believers in both programs. We just won’t rise at the same time as the Jewish kingdom saints.

Can you see the genius of God in giving these feasts to the people of Israel *nearly 1500 years before these things began to happen?* The fulfillment of the final three feasts in Israel’s calendar has been interrupted by the dispensation of the mystery, but they too will be fulfilled after God’s prophetic clock begins to tick again after the Rapture puts an end to the age of the mystery.

But after those first three feasts came the feast of *Pentecost.* Now the word “Pentecost” doesn’t appear in the Old Testament, but have you ever been to the *Pentagon* in Washington, D.C.? My father took us kids there when I was a boy. It’s the headquarters of our nation’s defense, and with 6.5 million square feet of office space, it’s the largest office building in the world. It is so big, and has so many people working there, that it has six separate zip codes!

But they call it the Pentagon because that word means “five-sided,” and that’s what that building has. And the word *Pentecost* means *fiftieth.* The reason Israel’s fourth feast is called that is due to when it was observed:

**“…count…from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf…*fifty days…*And ye shall proclaim…an holy convocation…it shall be a statute for ever…” (Leviticus 23:15,16,21).**

Now Pentecost was a type of the coming of the Holy Spirit. You’ll remember that before the Lord died, He promised that He would send the Holy Ghost back to His disciples after He ascended into heaven, saying,

**“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter…*Even the Spirit of truth…*He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you…I will not leave you comfortless…” (John 14:16-18).**

Now the reason the Lord made that promise was that He understood the typology of Israel’s seven feasts, and He knew that every one of them had to be fulfilled. So after He died, He “shewed Himself alive…*forty days…*speaking of…the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:1-3). That means that after He rose from the dead on the 15th day of the first month, 40 of the 50 days before Pentecost had passed. That left the apostles 10 days to elect a new apostle to replace Judas, something that they did in Acts 1. And now here in Acts 2:1, the day of Pentecost had “fully” come. The full 50 days after the feast of firstfruits had passed.

But there was also a *symbolic* meaning behind Luke’s comment that “the day of Pentecost was fully come.” You see, the Jews had observed over *1400* Pentecosts since Moses had given the people of Israel those feasts in Leviticus 23, just as they had observed over 1400 passovers, and 1400 of the other feasts as well. But when Christ died, Passover had “fully come.” That is, the Lord fulfilled the *type* of that feast when He was sacrificed for us. And when He rose again, the feast of firstfruits was *also* “fully come.” And now with the coming of the Spirit, Pentecost was “fully come” as well. This Pentecost was the fulfillment of all those Pentecosts in the past.

So it’s no wonder that it came with “a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2). You see, in the Bible, the word “rushing” is associated with the Spirit:

**“...*the spirit* took me up, and I heard behind me a voice *of a great rushing,* saying….” (Ezekiel 3:12).**

And the word “wind” is *also* associated with the Spirit:

**“*The wind bloweth where it listeth*, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: *so is every one that is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8).**

Do you see how that verse associates the Spirit with the wind?

If you think about it, that just makes sense. If you know your Bible you know that the Spirit is the active member of the Trinity. That is, when God wanted something done, it was the Spirit that did it, in some invisible way that allowed you to see *what* He did without actually seeing *Him.*

Well, doesn’t that remind you of the wind? You can see what the wind does, but you can’t see the wind itself. You can see trees swaying, and clouds moving, but the wind itself is invisible.

How do you think I determine how much hair spray to use? I live near Chicago, a city that is nicknamed The Windy City. So each Sunday I look out the window to see how much the trees are swaying in order to determine how much spray it will take to tame the beast!

But this windy power of the Spirit of God can be used in two powerful ways. First, it can be used in a *constructive* way, as we see when God told Ezekiel,

**“*Prophesy unto the wind…*son of man, *and say to the wind*…breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied…*and the breath came into them, and they lived…”* (Ezekiel 37:9,1).**

Well that certainly soundslike a constructive way for the power of the Spirit to be used, doesn’t it? And that passage should remind you of the creation of man in the garden of Eden, where we read,

**“…the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, *and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;* and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).**

That’s certainly *another* constructive way for the Spirit of God to be used. And it suggests that *the wind of the Lord* is associated with the *breath* of the Lord. There’s a reason we say that we get “winded” when we run. Getting winded means that you are short of *breath.* Well, maybe you don’t, but that’s because you’re probably in better shape than I am!

But the Spirit of God can also be used in *destructive* ways, as we see in Isaiah 40:6-8:

**“…All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: *because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it:* surely the people is grass. *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:* but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”**

I’d call that a destructive way for the power of the Spirit to be used, wouldn’t you?

Well, as we’ll see in further studies of Pentecost, the filling of the disciples with the Hly Ghost here in Acts 2 was a *constructive* use of the power of the Spirit. But for Jews who *rejected* the message of the disciples, the Spirit will come on them *in judgment,* as we’ll also see as we continue our study. The Spirit is kind of like The Incredible Hulk that way. He’s a powerful guy, and you don’t want to make Him angry. You wouldn’t like Him when He gets angry.

Now when it says that the sound filled the house (v. 2), we have a picture of that in something that happened back in Solomon’s day:

**“…*the house was filled with a cloud...the house of the LORD;* So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: *for the glory of the Lord* had filled the house of God” (II Chronicles 5:13).**

Now if you think that’s *not* a picture of Pentecost, look at the *reason* the cloud filled the house:

**“…*an hundred and twenty priests* sounding with trumpets…the trumpeters and singers *were as one,* to make *one sound* to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD…” (II Chronicles 5:12,13).**

The cloud filled the house because of the *oneness* of the people within it. And if that “120” number sounds familiar, it is because that’s how many disciples the Lord had here in Acts 2 (cf. Acts 1:15). And when we read that the 120 priests were “as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD,” doesn’t that sound like how Luke describes the disciples here in Acts 2:1 when he wrote, “they were all with one accord in one place?”

I point all this out to remind you that Pentecost was a taste of the kingdom that God will someday restore to Israel. Don’t forget, when the apostles asked the Lord, “wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” they meant the kingdom *as it was in Solomon’s day*. You know, when the Jews will be “a kingdom of priests” (Ex. 19:6). So these 120 Jews at Pentecost were a taste of how the Jews will be priests in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

Of course, it was only a *taste* of the kingdom. That’s why Hebrews 6:5 says that they “tasted…the powers of the world to come,” i.e., the power of the world to come *in the kingdom.* And that’s why the house was only filled with *the sound* of the rushing mighty wind, and not the wind itself.

But now we have to ask why those “tongues like as of fire” sat on the disciples. To answer, let’s compare what happened to the disciples to something that happened to the Lord when *He* was baptized with the Spirit after being baptized with water by John the Baptist. At that time, we read that “*the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him”* (Luke 3:22).I personally believe that the Spirit settled on the Lord like a dove *to tell Him* that the power of the invisible Spirit had come upon Him. And these tongues of fire told *the disciples* that the Spirit had come upon *them.*

Why a *tongue* of fire? Well that was no doubt symbolic of how they would now be able to *speak* in tongues.

But why a *cloven* tongue of fire—and what does the word “cloven” mean anyway? Well, what do you say we let the Bible define itself? Look how that word is used in Leviticus 11:7:

**“…the swine, though he *divide the hoof*, and be *clovenfooted*…”**

As you can see, the word cloven means *divided.* Have you ever heard of a meat *cleaver?* A meat cleaver *divides* the meat. And once you use one on meat, the meat is cloven.

So why would the disciples be given *cloven* tongues of fire to wear? I mean, when you think of a cloven tongue, you don’t think of anything good. You think of how *serpents* have a cloven tongue, or how in the old Westerns the native American Indians used to say, “White man speak with *forked* tongue.” But the cloven tongues that God gave the disciples must represent something *good* instead.

And they do! But before we talk about what they represented, we have to first talk about what they *didn’t* represent, for there is a common misunderstanding about this. They didn’t represent what John the Baptist talked about when he said,

**“I indeed baptize you with water…but He that cometh after me is mightier than I…He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, *and with fire…”* (Matthew 3:11).**

Most Pentecostals say that John’s words there werea prediction of the fire on the heads of the disciples, probably because the Spirit is mentioned there as well. But we know that John *wasn’t* talking about Pentecost, for he went on to say of the Lord,

**“…He will…gather His wheat into the garner; *but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”* (Matthew 3:12).**

As you can see, the fire that John was talking about was a fire *of judgment.* It was the “flaming fire” of the Second Coming of Christ (II Thes. 1:7,8), the fire that will continue *after* the Lord’s Second Coming forever in the lake of fire. Remember, the Lord described hell as “the fire that never shall be quenched” (Mark 9:45).

So the ones who were baptized with the Holy Ghost are the ones that John said would be gathered into the “garner” or *barn* of the kingdom. But the ones who *refused* to be baptized with the Holy Ghost would have to be baptized with the fire of the Second Coming.

But that means that the fire that John was talking about is fire that you don’t want any part of! And yet our Pentecostal brethren can often be heard *praying* for John’s baptism of fire!

But if the fire that John was talking about *isn’t* the cloven tongues of fire described here in our text, what *are* those cloven tongues? Well, naturally they represented how God was about to *divide* their tongues, giving them the ability to speak in different languages.

But there’s more to it than just that. Generally speaking, if an animal was cloven-footed, it was considered clean and edible (Lev. 11:3). Now that was to teach God’s people in Israel to *divide* themselves from the Gentiles in their daily *walk.* Get it? Cloven *footed* animals taught the Jews to *walk* in a way that was *separate* or *divided* from the Gentiles. Remember, that was the reason God made some animals clean and some unclean. He told them,

**“…I am the LORD your God, *which have separated you from other people.* Ye shall *therefore* put difference between clean beasts and unclean…For I the Lord*…have severed you from other people…*” (Leviticus 20:24-26).**

God made some animals unclean to teach His people in Israel that *the Gentiles* were unclean, so He expected them to *walk separate* from them.

And God *also* expected the Jews to walk separate from sinners *amongst themselves*. He told them,

**“*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly*, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psalms 1:1).**

**“*Forsake the foolish*, *and live;* and go in the way of understanding” (Proverbs 9:6).**

And lest you think that that’s only a good idea for Jews, your apostle Paul says the same thing:

**“Wherefore *come out from among them,* and be *ye* separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (II Corinthians 6:17).**

But all this is why they were wearing cloven tongues of fire at Pentecost. It was to symbolize how the Spirit they were filled with would enable them to *do* what those verses required them to do—walk *separate* from sinners. Because you see, those believers at Pentecost *couldn’t sin.* Any study of early Acts will come up empty when it comes to finding any example of any sins committed by any of those disciples.\* This is why John wrote them, saying,

\*Ananias and Saphira proved they weren’t saved when they sinned in Acts 5.

**“Whosoever is born of God *doth not commit sin…*he *cannot* sin…whosoever is born of God *sinneth not…”* (I John 3:9; 5:18).**

Now what does that tell you about Pentecostals who claim to be filled with the Holy Ghost *today?* Most of them know that the filling of the Holy Ghost gave the disciples power to speak in tongues at Pentecost, and they have a way of imitating that gift that seems to fool a lot of people. But if you are going to claim to be filled with the Holy Ghost and have the power to speak in tongues, you’d better *also* be able to *abstain from sin.* It’s a little harder to fool people about that!

Of course, that didn’t keep some Pentecostals from trying. Back in the 1800s, some Pentecostal members of something called the Holiness Movement claimed to have attained sinless perfection. They hadn’t, of course, but at least they were trying to be consistent with how the Bible describes the believers at Pentecost.

Of course, there was no sign of cloven tongues of fire on the heads of the disciples during any time in the history of the Holiness Movement, or on the heads of any other believers since that time. That’s another thing that’s kind of hard to imitate—that is, without setting off the smoke alarms.

Now when we tell our Pentecostal friends that God is not filling us with the Holy Ghost like He did at Pentecost because God changed the program and made Paul the apostle of the dispensation of grace, those that know their Bible well ask about Paul’s words in Ephesians 5:18:

**“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; *but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).**

Well-versed Pentecostal often ask us, “If we’re not filled with the Holy Ghost today in the dispensation of grace, how come the apostle that you say is the apostle of the dispensation of grace tells us to be filled with the Spirit?” And you’ve got to be a smart grace believer in order to know how to answer that!

And the answer to that is: the filling of the Holy Ghost doesn’t always do the same thing that it did at Pentecost. For instance, when God told Moses to build the tabernacle, we read:

**“…the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel…*And I have filled him with the spirit of God*, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, *to work in all manner of workmanship”* (Exodus 31:3-5).**

The filling of the spirit *there* enabled Bezaleel to know how to build the tabernacle. Then, speaking of John the Baptist’s father, we read:

**“…Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, *and prophesied,* saying…” (Luke 1:67).**

Here, the filling of the Spirit enabled John’s father to prophesy as a prophet, just like all the Old Testament prophets before him, who *also* prophesied by the Spirit. Then, speaking of John the Baptist himself, it was said of him,

**“…*he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost,* even from his mother's womb. *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God*. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias…*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”* (Luke 1:15-17).**

The filling of the Spirit *there* enabled John to turn people to God, and get them ready for the Lord.

Then, after the angel told Mary that she’d give birth to the Savior, we read of her cousin:

**“*Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:* And she...said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb…And blessed is she that believed: *for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord”* (Luke 1:41-45).**

As you can see, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost to reassure Mary that God would “perform” all that He said He would to enable her to give birth to the Christ child while she was yet a virgin.

So the filling of the Holy Ghost does different things to men at different times. So if you meet someone of Pentecostal persuasion who says otherwise, you might want to ask him if he knows how to build a tabernacle. Ask *graciously,* of course, for you don’t win anyone to the truth by being *ungracious.*

So what does Paul mean when he says that weshould be filled with the Spirit? Well, at Pentecost being filled with the Holy Ghost caused men to speak in tongues, right? Let’s see what Paul says it causes men to do *today.* Look what Paul *went on* to say after saying we should be filled with the Spirit:

**“…be filled with the Spirit*; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; *Giving thanks always for all things…”* (Ephesians 5:18-20).**

The filling of the Spirit *today* doesn’t cause men to speak *in tongues,* it causes them to speak *in songs,* and to speak to God in words of *thanksgiving.* That’s what being filled with the Spirit causes today.

And Paul doesn’t leave us guessing as to how to *be* filled with the Spirit. He told the Colossians,

**“*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;* teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, *singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks…”* (Colossians 3:16,17).**

Now in Ephesians, Paul said that *being filled with the Spirit* caused men to speak in tongues and give thanks. Here he says that *being filled with the word of* *God* causes men to speak in songs and give thanks. Well, in math class they taught me that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. So if being filled with the Holy Ghost makes you sing and give thanks, and being filled with the Word of God makes you sing and give thanks, then being filled with the Holy Ghost in the dispensation of grace must be equivalent to being filled with the Word of God!

That means if you want to learn how to be filled with the Holy Ghost today, don’t look for a church where they’re speaking in tongues. Look for a church that’s teaching the Word of God.

You see, the filling of the Spirit today is a *goal.* It is something you must *strive for,* and only achieve after a lot of prayerful study of God’s Word, applying the details of the Word to your life. But that’s *not* what it was at Pentecost! At Pentecost, the filling of the Spirit was the fulfillment of God’s promise! All they had to do was *wait* for it (Acts 1:4). It takes a little more effort than that today, which is why what we believe isn’t that popular. But it is what God is doing today. And that’s where you want to be, isn’t it?