

### **1 – New Covenant setting**

We have already seen that with all these Feasts, we have needed to distinguish the occasion of them as a celebration, from the new meaning of them as they find themselves celebrated in the life death, resurrection and ascension and return of Jesus Christ.

We have found ourselves pointed continually to the New Covenant, in respect of Passover, Day of Atonement and now Pentecost. And this we see as we look at the occasion and the coming of the Spirit on that day upon the expectant waiting new community of the church.

### **2 - Joel's Prophecies.**

The book of Joel describes:

[a] *the locust plague.* A swarm of locusts is of devastating intensity. They ravage Israel's land and they are seen as God's army so they are a manifestation of God's judgment upon Israel. [Joel 1.15]. Offerings of worship cannot be made to the Lord, the farmers and the priests are in despair.

[b] *Meaning is imminent judgment.* The locust plagues are indicative of God's great judgment day of the Lord. The devastation of the locusts will be great.

[c] *Time of national repentance* There is time for national repentance.[1.14]. The land will yield once more. The priest should intercede. The swarms of the locusts will be swept away [2.18-20] and destroyed.

[d] *The coming of the Spirit.* Greater blessing than material prosperity however is coming – it has to do with God's spirit, who shall be sent down on all Israel. From the oldest to the youngest, high and low, the people will not have to depend on a few prophets, but that each will be a prophet in his own right. [2.28-29]. This will precede in Israel the coming of great portents in the sky and general world judgement.

[e] *World judgment.* The whole world nations are drawn into a valley of decision and the tables are turned. AS the nations of the earth rally for battle ion Jerusalem God's army of angels will cut them down like a harvest grain, and like a winepress crushed. 3.11-16a]

[f] *The golden age.* Israel finds herself protected by the Lord. When ancient enemies become a wilderness, Israel will find succour and care from God.

### **3 - Lord of the harvest [Mark 9.35-10.23 and Luke 10.1-20]**

As the Lord went about Israel He was deeply moved with compassion for the plight of multitudes, because He saw them as sheep who had no shepherd. He discerned this situation as a time for the harvest to come in; so that Israel, the lost sheep to which He had been sent, may be shepherded properly. It is this harvest of people that prompted Him to tell the disciples to pray that the Lord of the harvest might send out workers into the harvest, so that they may be reaped. This instruction to pray is recorded as just before Jesus calls the twelve [Mark] and the seventy [Luke] to go out into Israel and heal the sick and raise the dead and to announce the kingdom of God.

This image of the impending harvest controls our timing in the Pentecostal setting. It asks that we see Pentecost as a time when there will be a harvest of people coming into God's kingdom. When we see the expression "Lord of the harvest" we are to picture God as a landowner, who has among his men experts who can tell when the harvest is ripe. Jesus, in looking on the people of Israel, discerned the time for the harvest is ripe, and asked the disciples to pray that the Lord's harvest might begin by Him ending into the harvest the reapers.

He knew that they were sent as doves among serpents and that their reception would be mixed. He sent them entirely dependent on his provision, to be found among those they went to. They were to minister in grace, freely giving what they had been given, which was authority over demons and also to heal the sick and raise the dead.

### **4 – The Church as already there when the Spirit comes**

God had a definite plan in history. His revelation of Himself and his purposes are not general; they are specific as to time and place. They are received by special men and women. In the OT the revelation of God belongs to the nation which God has covenanted Himself with, to be their God and they are to reciprocate by being his people. And throughout the OT we see them as being put under judgment of God and also receiving his promises. This is what it means to be Israel. The people of God's own possession.

In the New Testament we see the coming of Jesus to Israel, to the members of God's own community. He has come to them at a time when they are experiencing the judgement of God. They

are resident in their land but are not in control of its government; they are taxed by Rome and are recently conquered by the Greeks before them.

Jesus comes to save them from their sins [Matt 3.2] and among them are those who are waiting for the consolation of Israel [Luke 2.25]. They are invited to repent by the Baptist's ministry and prepare for the coming of the forgiveness of sins to them. Jesus' preaching majors upon the coming of the kingdom of God to them, as seen in Himself, and they are invited to repent for the kingdom of God has drawn nears [Mark 1].

Jesus disciples are all drawn from Israel and they are the foundation upon which He says He will build his Church [Matt 16.18]. He makes clear that with his coming the new age has begun, because He promises, as He sends them out to do his bidding that He will be with them even until the end of the age. [Matt 28.20].

He gives them authority to go out into Israel Matt 10.1,40] making it clear that whoever receives them receives Him; whoever hears them also hears Him [Luke 10.16]. He makes it sure to them that whenever they gather together He is present in their midst [Matt 18.20] and He makes the promise of the Holy Spirit to be granted to them, as this is the promise of His father for them [Acts 1.4, Matt 18.20].

It won't surprise us then that as the Holy Spirit falls upon them there is, taken from among the Jewish audience of the apostles the addition of 2000 souls. But they are seen as "added to the church" which is already there before the Pentecostal falling of the Spirit.

### **5 – The Church has its origin in Christ**

The church is not an arbitrary construction. It is not formed by individual men using their own initiative, authority or insights. It is Jesus Christ Who is Lord of the Church and not the church as Lord of Christ.

[a] The Church has no reality apart from Jesus Christ. It is not the church because it believes on Christ; then its existence would depend on their faith. That would be to define Christ by the church; whereas the reverse is true.

[b] The Church derives from the Word Who became flesh. So there is no revelation of the incarnate Christ that is welcomed outside the Church. To know and to yield to who Christ is means that one has entered. "Extra ecclesia nulla salus" = there is no salvation outside the church.

[c] So the church is the body of Christ, drawing its one life and direction from its head. She is the group of people in the world who are distinctly for Jesus Christ.

[d] The life of the children of God is always life for Jesus' sake because it is dependent on His word. So there is no autonomous life in the church, the church lives with Christ as the body does with its head and lives by growing up in to the Head.

[e] Because the life of the body of Christ is dependent on the incarnate word of God then it has a common life. It is the organic life of a community. By belonging to Christ we belong to all who belong to Him. The church as the body of Christ is as a single indivisible whole.

All this means that Acts 2 cannot be understood without Acts 1. For there is recorded that there were men and women who were conscious of a promise of the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ. They had the promise of the Spirit and they expected it because they were already on Christ's side. He said expressly to them that they would be baptised in the Holy Spirit "not many days hence".

### **6 – Pentecost is not the birth of the Church, but its empowerment.**

In this respect we need to distinguish the authority of the church, which was given to it by Christ from the empowerment of the church to carry out its commission for which the authority had already been given. The distinction between ἐξουσία = authority and δυνάμις = power is necessary to understand what Jesus meant as it is recorded in Acts 1.8. He speaks there of the reception of power to carry through the command to be His witnesses in Judea and on into the whole world.

This is also helpful in thinking about the day of Pentecost as well. It was a day when the Church of Jesus Christ, already loyal and committed to Him was empowered to carry out a world wide task which was to begin at Jerusalem. Later, when the same Holy Spirit falls on other groups of people it is for them the time of their addition to the church; and that of people who had not previously been so in their experience.

Later, when Peter recounts the falling of the Holy Spirit on the house of Cornelius and those gathered there he refers to it being like it was for the apostolic band "just as also he fell on us at the

beginning" [Acts 12.15]. By the beginning he means not of them being the church, but as the time when "the work"[Acts 13.2] of the empowered church began; which was the day of Pentecost.

## **7 – The programme; times and epochs.**

During the 40 days between the Resurrection and the Ascension there was much talk of the things of the kingdom of God [Acts 1.3]. They had asked him a question as to whether at this time He was to establish the kingdom of Israel. This was a nationalistic question and refers to earthly rule of the people of God. He does not rebuke them in a way that would convey that this is a wrong question, but He does say that the timing of the events and the general programme is not in their hands to know because these are matters which the Father has fixed by his own authority. This the sort of answer that an obedient Son would give and we have intimations of it in Mark 13,32-36 in relation to the day of the coming of the Son of Man.

What He does direct them to is the next thing *for them*. Which is to wait for the endowment of power to carry out His directions already given to them.

## **8 – Acts 2**

### **[1] The coming of the Spirit from heaven. [verse 1-4].**

[a] the time was Pentecost day and they were gathered in one place

[b] wind and fire are seen in regard to the physically observed events. There is something which the people 'see and hear' [verse 33]. We have already noted the parallel with Elijah and Elisha incident. Wind, spirit, breath, are all expressions of the spirit of God and the fire appears as "tongues" which expresses a judging utterance which is consistent with the apostolic preaching which follows. These tongues are seen by others as resting upon them.

[c] "filled with the Holy Spirit" is connected with the speaking of other tongues and it is expressly said that the Spirit gave this utterance. In Luke we see that the expression "filled with the Spirit" is usually followed immediately by an action which is connected with the such a statement. It expresses that the action following was expressly the work of the Spirit and that the "filled" idea conveys that the person is operating not with something upon, but out of something which is also within.

[d] "other tongues" is clarified by the witness of the hearers.

### **[2] The impact on the surrounding crowd of visitors and residents [5-13]**

[a] they are devout Jews from every nation under heaven. Here we are drawn first to think of the Joel reference which has the promise of pouring out of the Spirit on people of God.

[b] they heard the sound and then heard, in their own dialect, what was being said. Their response is one of amazement. Here, the judgement of the exile, where the people are condemned to hear things in strange tongues they don't understand is also reversed. [See Paul's use of this idea in 1 Corinthians 14 in rebuking the church about improper use of charismata where the ungifted persons cannot follow the meaning of the utterance. This he makes clear is contrary to the general edification that prophecy should bring.]

This is perhaps also a reversal of the judgment of the Babel where God confused the languages of the people because of their desire to reach Him for themselves and make a name for themselves

[c] To this miracle of hearing there is the added miracle that the people speaking are obviously those who do not speak those languages naturally, for they all have a Galilean accent, discernible to the hearers.

[d] The content of what is heard is concerning the great works of God. A matter to which Peter will refer in his speech and relate it to God's attending of Jesus.

[e] They ask what it means, referring to verses 6-8.

### **[3] Peter's identification of the "last days" of the Joel prophecy as being fulfilled**

[a] we are to understand that Peter is speaking alongside the eleven and so his speech is representative of them and apostolic in a general way.

[b] He addresses the locals, for they know of Jesus; so Peter assumes that the attesting miracles of Jesus are known to his hearers. Later, he will bring it together for the visitors as well [verse 36 "all Israel"].

[c] He states that they are not drunk, this being unlikely for it is 9am; but that this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel. He is not telling us that he has been reading Joel and applying it to a circumstance, rather he has recognised that what the Spirit's coming, as having been received from the Father and sent by Jesus [v.33], shows is that the days that Joel [2.28-32] has prophesied have now arrived.

[d] This interprets the coming of the Spirit as an action within the whole programme of God with reference to His own covenant people, the Jews.

[e] This period of the "last days" is now made clearly dependent upon the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. That is, his going up into heaven and the pouring forth of the Spirit has now set in train the action which Joel had prophesied concerning Israel.

#### **[4] Concerning Jesus of Nazareth**

[a] Father bearing witness to the Son

A man attested to you by God. Notice that the miracles of Jesus are not seen to be his own but as the work of God through Him in such a way as to attest to Who He is. Relational model at work here, not the aggrandisement of a man. This is the Father bearing witness to His Son [John 5.24-47].

[b] The cross: in the sovereignty of God and the accountability of man

He was delivered up by the plan and foreknowledge of God. You nailed Him to a cross by your own godless agents and put Him to death.

[c] The resurrection: God raised Him up again. This justifies Him in the sight of those who killed Him. Also, it was God putting an end to the agony of death since it was impossible for death to hold Him in its power. The implication is that God released Him from the agony, but not as a favour but because the nature of the case was that He could not be held by it.

David spoke of this resurrection, but not concerning himself [Psalm 16.8-11]. David was prophesying concerning Jesus, who is of David's line. [See also

[d] The ascension as an exaltation to the right hand of God. Where Jesus has received from the Father, [for it was the Father's promise] the Holy Spirit and has poured forth this which they are seeing and hearing. This cannot apply to David.

[e] Let all the house of Israel know for certain; Lord and Christ. The speech now turns to the whole of the people and they need to know that God has vindicated Jesus and made [in the sense of "declared"] Him Lord [= God] and Christ [= Israel's Messiah]; and this person is one and the same as "this Jesus Who you crucified".

#### **[5] The response of the crowd**

They ask, "Brothers [i.e. brother Jews] What shall we do?" This response tells the apostles that they have received the conviction of their sin of unbelief about Jesus the Nazarene from the Holy Spirit. And that the One they crucified who ascended to the Father is actually righteous, and that Satan has been judged because the death could not hold Jesus [John 16.8-11]. In response to this perception which they have about these folks, the apostolic answer about what to do is stated.

#### **[6] What they should do now they have conviction of the Spirit.**

[a] Repent - concerning their unbelief about Jesus the Nazarene

[b] Be Baptised in His name for the forgiveness of their sins. This baptism is not a collective baptism, but must be entered into by each person separately.

[c] They should then expect to receive the gift, which is the Holy Spirit Himself.

#### **[7] He encourages them with an exhortation concerning their Jewish heritage.**

[a] the promises of God are to them and their children. They are also to anyone who is afar off [=Gentile] whoever the Lord our God shall call. [Notice the double perspective of "call on the Lord" verse 21 and the Lord will call verse 39].

[b] they should save themselves from being lumped together with the generation which is currently rejecting Jesus

#### **[8] The ones who accepted what he said**

[a] were baptised and were added to the believers that day.

[b] They attended to the teaching of the apostles, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers.