

The Pentecostal Experience
**Author: Dr. Doug Beacham, Jr. (As taken from Light for the Journey
published by LifeSprings Resources)**

Faith Declaration

We believe that the pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire is obtainable by a definite act of appropriating faith on the part of the fully cleansed believer 1, and the initial evidence of the reception of this experience is speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.

Bible Focus

“The promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” —Acts 2:39

Lesson Objective

To examine the connection between prophecy regarding the coming of the Holy Spirit and its fulfillment on the Day of Pentecost, and to be filled with the Spirit.

Global Outreach Emphasis

The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to tell the good news of Jesus Christ.

What’s This Lesson About?

Besides His work in justification, regeneration, and sanctification, the Holy Spirit is the agent who empowers believers for Christian service.² The next lesson will focus on various manifestations of the Spirit through signs and gifts. This lesson shows you how God’s plans for us have been fulfilled in the sending of the Holy Spirit

on the Day of Pentecost. You will discover that the Holy Spirit who was at work in the Old Testament is the same Holy Spirit at work in the church today.

The Power of the Word

1. The Spirit Promised Joel 2:28-32)

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

32 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved, For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, Among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

Nearly 800 years before the events of Acts 2, the Judean prophet Joel foretold a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In Joel's day, the prophecy related to a great agricultural calamity by which locusts destroyed the crops. Joel interpreted this as the judgment of God upon disobedient Judah.

The Joel prophecy that was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost contains three important themes that are significant for the church. The first is that the Spirit is poured out upon all believers with no distinctions in age, gender, or sociological status. "All flesh" that has turned to God will receive this mighty move of God. Thus, the Pentecostal baptism is not simply for a few but for all who will open their hearts to God's mighty presence.

The second aspect is that the Pentecostal experience is related to end-time preparation and judgment; that is, the Day of the Lord. For 2,000 years, the Spirit has been working through the church to prepare the church and the world for the return of Christ.

The third aspect is that the Pentecostal experience is deeply evangelistic. The news of coming judgment is not to condemn the world but to warn sinners to repent and call on the name of the Lord. A Spirit-filled church will be an evangelistic church concerned about its community and the world.

2. Promise Fulfilled (Acts 2:1-4)

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

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

The Day of Pentecost³ was an established holy day for Jews. In the Bible, this festival is variously called the Feast of 80 Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-22; Deuteronomy 16:9-12), the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16; 34:22), or the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26-31), and was the spring celebration of the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. It was one of the three Jewish feasts in which males were

required to come to Jerusalem. Pentecost followed Passover (which symbolizes salvation from sin) and is associated with the harvest (evangelism).

In Acts 2 we see the convergence of the three themes elucidated in Joel 2. First, the Holy Spirit came upon 120 followers of Jesus. There were men and women, rich and poor, Galileans and Judeans. They had been faithful to obey Christ and were in unity, prayer, and fellowship. Pentecostal power was not just for the twelve male disciples but was for everyone with a loving obedience of Christ.

Second, Peter immediately understood that what they had received was in fulfillment of Joel 2 (Acts 2:16-21). His preaching recognized the judgment of God against sin manifested in the death and resurrection of Christ (2:22-32).

Third, the Holy Spirit enabled Peter and the others to witness to the lost concerning salvation through Christ. This is the first purpose of the gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost, tongues were given as a way of sharing the gospel with people of other languages. Today, tongues may occasionally function in that way but more often, as the initial evidence, function to give us boldness to share our faith with those whom we meet as the Spirit gives opportunities.

Acts 2 shows that this experience was not psychologically induced by people. First, the sound came “from heaven”; that is, from beyond the group gathered in the upper room. The sound was like “a rushing mighty wind.” Jesus taught that the Spirit blows where He wills and is not under the control of people (John 3:8). The people actually saw the presence of the Spirit as tongues of fire which were upon each of them. Fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and indicates purity through the presence of God and His voice (Exodus 3:1-5; see **Word Power** for insights on speaking in tongues).

3. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-6)

Acts 19:1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard there is a Holy Spirit.”

3 And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.”

4 Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

The “Ephesian Pentecost” shows that the Pentecostal experience is a distinct theological and often experiential event in the lives of believers. Paul encountered godly men in Ephesus who were Christians with limited knowledge. They were followers of the baptism of John the Baptist described in Matthew 3:1-12. Jesus submitted to this baptism and began His earthly ministry from that point (Matthew 3:13-17). But there remained disciples of John who spread his message of repentance across the Mediterranean world.

It was such a group that Paul met during this visit to Ephesus. Their conversation led Paul to ask if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. This can refer to either: 1) the Holy Spirit living in them at conversion; or 2) the Pentecostal baptism. After teaching the full truth of salvation, Paul baptized these men in the name of the Lord Jesus.⁴

Paul then taught these men concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit and laid his hands upon them, praying for their personal reception of this experience. The men spoke with tongues and prophesied as signs that they had indeed received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Global Outreach Emphasis

The Holy Spirit empowers Christians to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. As we have seen from Joel 2 and Acts 2, the Pentecostal experience has as a primary object the enabling of believers to share the gospel effectively. Added significance comes when we realize that Acts 2 is the divine remedy to the confusion of language and division among peoples expressed in the tower of Babel incident (Genesis 11). In order to save humanity from its own self-destruction, God confused the languages.

But God’s redemptive will is to unite humanity under the banner of the cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives believers the capacity to tell the saving story of Christ to people of all languages. Even when the Spirit does not give us foreign languages to speak, He nonetheless enables us to speak with words and expressions that people can comprehend.

Word Power

GLOSSOLALIA

Pentecostal churches have historically held that glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is the initial evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This view is based on the recorded incidents in Acts where tongues accompanied the presence of the Spirit:

- Acts 2:4: Day of Pentecost, 120 people spoke in other tongues;
- Acts 8:14-19: although tongues are not specifically mentioned, some physical manifestation occurred because Simon saw evidence that when the apostles laid hands on the people, they received the Spirit;

- Acts 9:17: Saul (Paul) was filled with the Holy Spirit; although tongues are not mentioned here, the apostle indicated in 1 Corinthians 14:18 that he spoke in tongues more than any of the Corinthian believers;
- Acts 10:44-47: Gentile believers spoke in tongues when they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit;
- Acts 19:1-6: Ephesian believers spoke in tongues when they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 2:4 shows the relationship between the Holy Spirit and an individual in speaking in tongues. The Spirit gives the utterance. The Greek word translated “utterance” is also used in 2:14 where Peter preached the first Pentecost sermon and in 26:25 where Paul told Festus, “I am not mad ... but speak (utter) the words of truth and wisdom.” The word means “to enunciate clearly, to declare.” Thus, the utterance the Spirit gives has an evangelistic leaning and is not gibberish or mumblings. The Spirit gives something distinct to our own minds or spirits, and He expects us to obey His prompting.

We are “to speak” these other tongues which are in our spirit. This is the human cooperation: open one’s mouth and speak. The Greek word is the normal word for “speak.” It is an act of obedience to cooperate with the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit and declare what He gives us to speak.

This means that when a person receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the human will is not bypassed by the Holy Spirit. He invites us to cooperate in the release of His presence and power in our lives manifested through our obedience in speaking.

How do you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? First, know you are saved by the grace of God and receive forgiveness of any known sins in your life. Second, be committed to obey Christ and serve Him with your heart, soul, mind, and body. Third, ask the Holy Spirit, who already lives in you through faith in Christ, to manifest His power, enabling you to serve Christ more effectively. Fourth, as you confess His name and praise Him for His love and blessings, speak whatever He gives you.

ENDNOTES

1. The “fully cleansed believer” is a reference to sanctification. It does not refer to sinless perfection but rather to that attitude of heart committed to live in service and love to God. It implies a life oriented toward obeying God. As we saw in the previous lesson, sanctification has its beginnings in regeneration. A person who has accepted Christ as Savior may in the same moment appropriate victory over sin, love toward God through commitment to service, and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues. While justification, sanctification, and the baptism in the Spirit are distinct theologically, they are not necessarily distinct in time and personal experience. Although the Faith Declaration uses the phrase “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” sometimes writers draw a distinction between

the “baptism **of** the Holy Spirit” as referring to the Spirit’s work in justification and regeneration and “baptism **in** the Holy Spirit” as referring to the Pentecostal experience.

2. See Lesson 3 for additional information about the Spirit’s work in justification, regeneration, and sanctification. It is important to remember that the Spirit lives in our hearts when we accept Christ as Savior. When a new convert is baptized in water, he is baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3; Ephesians 4:4-6), and the Spirit is present as the guarantee of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13, 14). The Pentecostal baptism is theologically distinct from water baptism in that it is a spiritual baptism in the Spirit with emphasis upon empowerment.

3. Pentecost is the Greek word for *fifty*, indicating the number of days following Passover.

4. This should not be construed to mean that Paul did not baptize using the Trinitarian formula (“in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”). Rather, it denotes the fact that the spiritual experience of these disciples needed to be completed in the atoning work of Christ and not just repentance of sins associated with John.