

What does this mean? (Acts 2:1-21)

>>>>A British newspaper ran a contest about what it means to be British! This was the best answer:

Being British is about driving in a German car to an Irish pub for a Belgian beer, and then travelling home, grabbing an Indian curry or a Turkish kebab on the way, to sit on Swedish furniture and watch American shows on a Japanese TV.

And the most British thing of all? Suspicion of all things foreign!

Today's reading is not about what it means to be a British or Australian for that matter but what it means to be Christian.

What does this mean was the question posed by the members of the crowd when they heard uneducated Galileans speaking in their own language in such a way that they seemed to have been born there.

What does this mean? is still the question that is asked by many Christians as we celebrate Pentecost today.

Pentecost was a divinely planned event; it was no mere afterthought with God. The coming of the Holy Spirit was as much a part of the redemptive plan as was the incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament we see Pentecost in history, in type and in prophecy. Pentecost was a solemn festival of the Jews. There was a series of seven of those annual feasts which, like the whole of Israel's divinely appointed ritual, were "a shadow of good things to come"

The fourth of the solemn feasts is called the feast of Weeks, or Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21).

Notice the time element. The joyous season of the grain harvest lasted seven weeks, and on the day of the seventh sabbath, “fifty days” to be exact, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated. In rabbinic literature it is also called “The Feast of the Fiftieth Day.” Now we begin to see more clearly the deeper significance of Israel’s solemn feasts. The Greek word for “Pentecost” means fiftieth, and it was celebrated the fiftieth day from the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was “the day of Pentecost” (Acts 2:1) when, by the descent of the Holy Spirit, Jew and Gentile were made fellow heirs and of the same body (Ephesians 3:6).

We dare not overlook the fact that this very truth is seen in the feast itself. The following postscript is often overlooked with great loss, “And when you get in the grain from your land, do not let all the grain at the edges of the field be cut, and do not take up the grain which has been dropped in the field; let that be for the poor, and for the man from another country: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:22). The expression “to the poor and to the stranger,” naturally reaches outside the assembly of Israel to the Gentile, a fact set forth in Isaiah 66:19.

So, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down, the mighty baptism of Jew and Gentile into one body took place (I Corinthians 12:13).

Through the prophets the Lord prepared the way for the Spirit’s coming. Perhaps the best known prophecy that prepared hearts for Pentecost is to be found in Joel 2:28-32. At least Peter had no difficulty in explaining what had happened. He said, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). Peter was telling his listeners that what took place on the day of Pentecost was predicted by the prophet. Of course Joel’s prophecy was not fulfilled then and there in its fullest sense, for its complete fulfilment is closely connected with the restoration of Israel, when Messiah’s earthly people will be redeemed. However, the dispensation of the Spirit had its beginning at Pentecost. It is fast moving to a close, when all Israel will share in the outpouring of the Spirit.

The day of Pentecost was the day of the Holy Spirit’s coming into the world. Luke does not attempt a description of the Holy Spirit, but he does deal in greater length with the effects of His presence on that day. We are not going to try here to put into words a description of Deity, but there are some facts which are pertinent and which should be considered.

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the coming of a Person. The term, “the Holy Spirit,” is the name or title of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, and is used to distinguish Him from both the First Person, who is the Father, and from the Second Person,

who is the Son. There are many other names used in Scripture to describe and designate the nature and work of the Third Person, and in every instance they refer to one and the same Person, the Holy Spirit.

Referring to the Holy Spirit as the *Third* Person does not imply that He is less important than the Father and the Son, but it does suggest that He is the last-revealed personality of the three. Pentecost introduced the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and from the Book of Acts to The Revelation, the Holy Spirit functions as the direct agent between God and man. The purpose of Pentecost was to introduce Him to man in a new way.

The Church, too, was being formed and anointed by God's eternal presence. Pentecost was the guarantee of the presence of the Holy Spirit. He came to indwell and possess the hearts of believers. We insist in placing the emphasis upon *Him*. What happened at Pentecost? The Spirit came.

We see a mighty unfolding in the Book of the Acts. Pagan powers are smitten, the lame are made to walk, the dead are raised to life, and thousands of souls are born anew. Never before were men possessed with so great an impulse to speak out for Christ.

Never before, had there been such a readiness and voluntary willingness to suffer for Christ. Never before had a group so large known such enthusiastic and intimate fellowship. The world was to witness a new thing. Rather than deny Jesus Christ or each other, the disciples chose to take their lives into their own hands and go forward in Christ's name even unto death. They commenced their witness in Jerusalem, branching out to Judea and Samaria, and in due course pushing out toward the uttermost part of the earth. And how did this new constraint come? There can be but one answer--the Holy Spirit had come to abide.

God's purpose is to draw women, men and children to Himself and make them like His Son, Jesus Christ. To this end Christ gave Himself. But in so doing He did not complete the task. The process of producing God-likeness is still going on today, and it is the primary work of the Spirit to accomplish this.

Undoubtedly the disciples were somewhat startled when Christ commissioned them to go forth into all the world and present His Gospel to all men. If they were bewildered at His command,

they had a right to be. But He anticipated their fears and eased their burdened hearts when He added, "After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

At Pentecost, that is exactly what took place. The Holy Spirit came. Now, for nearly two thousand years, men have defied suffering, sorrow and death in order that Christ's transforming Gospel might reach all men and fashion them into His likeness. Not all who have heard have believed, by any means. But some have and in every instance a work has been wrought, not by the disciples themselves, but by the Holy Spirit who came at Pentecost.

We need to recognize the Pentecostal Person in the ministry today. There is a prevailing impotence that none can deny, and all because the Person of the Holy Spirit is lost in a program about Him. We have emphasized the program and the personnel behind it, but we have shut out Him who alone can produce lasting results. The works of the flesh can never produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the life-line of power in the Church. The coming of the Spirit was the commencement of the Church. By the Spirit the body of Christ was formed, and by Him it is held together.

Too little attention is being given Him, and because He is not recognized there is no power in service. We need to invite the Holy Spirit to come and take possession as He did on the day of Pentecost and in the days and years after. When we permit the Holy Spirit to take possession of the Church today, we can expect glorious results.

Today the church and Christians have to rediscover what it means to be Pentecostal!

A Baptist preacher and his wife decided they needed a dog. Ever mindful of their congregation, they knew the dog must also be Baptist. They visited an expensive kennel and explained their needs to the manager, who assured them he had just the dog for them.

When the dog was produced, the manager began giving it commands. "Fetch the Bible," he commanded. The dog bounced to the bookshelf, scrutinized the books, located the Bible, and brought it to the manager. The manager then said, "Find Psalm 23". The dog, showing marvellous dexterity with his paws, leafed through the Bible, found the correct passage, and pointed to it with his paw.

Duly impressed, the preacher and his wife purchased the dog. That evening a group of parishioners came to visit. The preacher and his wife began to show off the dog, having him locate several Bible verses. The visitors were amazed.

Finally, one man asked "Can the dog do normal dog tricks too?"

"Let's see" said the preacher. Pointing his finger at the dog, he commanded, "Heel!"

The dog immediately jumped up on a chair, placed one paw on the preacher's forehead and began to howl. The preacher turned to his wife in complete shock and disbelief. "We've been swindled! That manager sold us a Pentecostal dog!"

So what does it mean to be Pentecostal? What does it mean to be a people birthed by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

A close look at the story of Pentecost gives us some clues.

1. The Holy Spirit had free reign to work.
2. The Holy Spirit filled the believers with His presence and power.
3. The Holy Spirit empowered the believers to speak about God and what He has done through a special language called tongues and through preaching.
4. The Holy Spirit empowered believers to heal the sick
5. The Holy Spirit convicted people about their need to turn away from the present life of disaster and turn back to God (called repentance)
6. The Holy Spirit was the driving force of the early church leading them out of their comfort zones into a world that needed Jesus.

Pentecost was not the start of a denomination but start of the church of Jesus Christ where Jesus was head of the Church and the Holy Spirit was the driving force of the church and Christians.

What does this mean for you and me today? What does it mean to be Pentecostal?

- The Holy Spirit is to have free reign in our life to work His way.
- The Holy Spirit is allowed to fill our life with His presence and power.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to speak about God and what He has done through our witness and testimony, through prophecy and a special God language called Tongues and through our preaching.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to heal the sick
- The Holy Spirit convicts people about their need to turn away from the present life of disaster and turn back to God (called repentance)
- The Holy Spirit is the driving force of our church, leading us out of our comfort zone into the community that needs Jesus.

What does it mean? Every Christian is Pentecostal: a child of Pentecost! You and I are Pentecostal! Amen.

Walking Free: The Lord continues to provide people who need help. Our month is easily filled with people who are struggling with their lives. God is gracious and brings healing but the clients still need to change their thinking and behaviour and that is a challenge! We continue to have 24+ ministries per month. God brings an array of people to our doorstep and it is a privilege to pray for them.

We had 52 people for our seminar *How to deal with the Devil*. It is amazing that people are coming and we are meeting a need for teaching and instruction. Our next seminar is Overcoming Giants on June 27 where we will help people overcome the giants of fear; rejection; insecurity; worthlessness; shame; worthlessness; defilement and deception.

The New beginnings course is taking shape slowly as we sift through the material to find the right material to use.

The ministry at Toowoomba is seeking God about a new direction. Robyn has decided to focus on the ministry at Citilife. She has indicated that she feels her time at Walking Free has ended. We thank Robyn for her contribution since Walking Free started in 2007.

Praise God for His provision.

- Thank God for our wonderful sponsors who enable this ministry to continue.
- Thank God for the response to our seminars. Pray for our next seminar *Dealing with the Devil*
- We pray for God's direction and provision at Toowoomba.
- Pray for our clients as they seek God's freedom and healing for their lives.
- Pray for the monthly prayer meeting on the first Thursday of each month and for those who come: Nena, Margaret, Lesley, Diana, Ann.

Please pray for people at Toowoomba who have faithfully supported us: Hal and Debbie, Robyn and Jamie, Jenny, Desley, and Craig.