

Acts 2:1-13; 38-41
Leviticus 23:15-22

June 8, 2014
Pentecost Sunday

Authentic Pentecostalism

Today: This is Pentecost Sunday

The term “Pentecostal” conjures up a variety of mental pictures, past experiences, and even understandings:

- For some—a badge of honor, confidence and pride in a distinctive heritage that is used to measure one’s religious experience and fervor (this has been mine).
- For some—a list of rules that apply to skirt and hair length, the use of make-up and jewelry, external holiness codes and a theology that denied the existence of the Trinity.
- For some—a religious fervor gone fanatical or out of control, an almost cultic relinquishing of one’s personal self-control to the “spirit”.
- For some—a once valid expression of worship or prayer that was reserved for a time and people two millenniums ago.

Note: For these reasons I hesitate when people call and ask if we are a Pentecostal church.

Our first text provides important backdrop to today’s message: Acts 2

- Apostles gathered in upper room for 10 days after the ascension of Jesus
- Judas replaced and now they pray in one accord and wait for the “Promise of the Father.”
- Powerful descent of the Spirit of God that led to the 120 speaking in tongues, “the wonderful works of God.”
- This event was misunderstood—thought they were drunk
- Peter’s sermon explained—3,000 saved
- The story of the Church begins to unfold!

To begin with:

I. What do we mean when we say the “Church.”

A. The confession of the Apostle’s Creed-“I believe in the holy catholic church.”

1. Catholic (little “c”) means comprehensive or universal
2. Ignatius of Antioch (early 2nd century) “where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic (universal) church.”
3. The body of Christ, throughout all generations, all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ
4. Not the same as the Roman Catholic Church (was not such thing until Constantine in 313 and not until the 4th or 5th century was there a Pope —Leo or Gregory)
5. It’s the cloud of witnesses (Jesus prayed for this unity)

B. The Church is **Invisible YET Visible**

1. Truest sense the Church is **invisible** because we cannot see or know the condition of people's hearts. Only the Lord knows! (2 Tim. 2:19..."The Lord knows those who are His."—**The Church as God sees it!**)
2. **The Church is also visible**—it is the Church as Christians on earth see it...all who profess faith in Christ and give evidence of that faith in their lives.

C. The Church is **Local and Universal**

1. Local—congregations
2. Universal—the church of the firstborn, the communion of the saints

D. What are the **MARKS** of the Church?

1. Word rightly divided
2. Sacraments rightly administered

II. **When and how was the Church born?**

A. Pentecost was the birthing of the Church

1. Jesus had promised it (Matt. 16:18)
2. This birthing of the Church was the significant event at Pentecost (not fire, wind, or tongues)

B. **It was the Spirit baptism that brought the birth of the Church**

1. People had been anointed and filled with the Spirit prior to Pentecost (even in the OT)
2. Jesus had promised 10 days prior that He would baptize
"For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:5)
3. Peter testified (in home of Cornelius) that what happened at Pentecost was Spirit baptism.
"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.¹⁶ Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' (Acts 11:15, 16).
4. Spirit baptism is what birthed the Church and what makes it grow!
For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13)

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:4,5)

So Pentecost was the birth of the universal Church:

Sadly—**The modern Pentecostal church has sought and found their identity and distinctiveness in the event of Pentecost without even considering the “back story” to Pentecost!**

- As a result, we have isolate ourselves from others in the Church
- We have become proud and at times arrogant, claiming a superior experience
- Have sought to repeat the event rather than apply the truth behind Pentecost

III. **What is the Back Story of Pentecost (it is rooted in the Jewish Festivals and Celebrations)**

A. **Seven holy seasons/festivals** of the Jewish calendar and outlined in Leviticus 23

1. **First four are close together and the second three are close together**

2. **First cycle of four is where we will focus our attention**

a. **Passover**-14th day of 1st month (celebrate God’s deliverance from Egypt)

b. **Feast of Unleavened Bread**-began the day after the Passover, lasts seven days. Commemorated the hasty flight from Egypt. There was no time to leaven the bread.

c. **Feast of First fruits**—the day after the Sabbath following the Passover (16th day of the month—the first day of the Week. Priest would make a wave offering of the first grain! **Note:** Jesus was the first fruits of the resurrection and the first day of the week was resurrection day!

d. **Feast of Weeks** -50 days after the wave offering of the wave grain.

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:15, 16)

B. **Feast of Weeks** (50 days—“Pentecostos”)...fiftieth

1. 7 weeks plus one day from the wave offering

2. Fifty days after the resurrection was the Day of Pentecost (birth of the Church)

C. **The celebration of the Feast of Weeks**

1. Bring from your houses 2 wave loaves

2. Baked with flour and leaven (this was the ONLY time leaven was allowed in the offerings)

3. These wave offerings along with the elaborate sacrifices (7 lambs, one bull, 2 rams for burnt offering and 1 kid as a sin offering, along with 2 male lambs as a peace offering)

The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. (Leviticus 23:20)

D. **Important Picture**

1. **For 1400 years the Passover lamb**

2. **The Feast of Unleavened Bread**

3. First fruits wave offering
4. Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)
 - a. Jesus is now the Passover Lamb
 - b. He is the first fruits from the dead
 - c. 50 days later Pentecost

This is the back story for the Day of Pentecost—the day that the Church was born!

IV. What does the back story to the day of Pentecost teach us about authentic Pentecostalism?

A. The authentic Pentecostal Church is totally dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the life of the Church.

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor. 15:45)

1. First Adam (Spirit of God breathed in him)
2. Last Adam (Spirit anointed Christ before ministry)
3. Body of Christ birth with the work of the Spirit
4. Cannot begin in the Spirit and expect to do God's work without the Spirit (Zechariah 4:6)

B. The authentic Pentecostal Church is made up of broken and flawed people.

1. The leaven always represents sin and evil
2. Only time it (leaven) is allowed
3. It is not our righteousness but our brokenness that makes room for the work of the Spirit (Peter, James, John, Thomas, all there at Pentecost)

C. The authentic Pentecostal Church must stay immersed in the redemptive work of Christ.

1. The priests, the burnt offerings, especially the sin offering
2. Awareness that it is the blood of Christ NOT our giftedness or charisma that brings us into spiritual holiness and effectiveness

D. The authentic Pentecostal Church must recognize the Spirit's purpose of unity

1. Two loaves....not one waved by the priest
2. The Church was not just Jewish (it was Jew and Gentile made one)
3. It is people of different color, tradition, gender, race that makes up the true Church

E. The authentic Pentecostal Church must live out its destiny of passionate evangelism

1. The wheat is representative of evangelism and salvation
2. Wheat and tares (Matthew 13...wheat represents the gathered church)

Do you not say, "There are still four months and then comes the harvest"? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! (John 4:35)

3. The Spirit was given for this purpose on Pentecost (Acts 1:8)

F. The authentic Pentecostal Church must share its blessing with the poor.

“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 23:22)

1. The most generous with our resources
2. The most generous with our love
3. The most generous with grace

Conclusion: Authentic Pentecostalism is not exclusive religion

1. It is broken and flawed people
2. Dependent on the Holy Spirit
3. Confident in the work of Christ
4. Seeking and welcoming all who call on the name of Christ
5. Pursuing the lost
6. Ministering to the poor!