

## **“THAT OLD TIME RELIGION”**

# ***“The Pentecostal Church”***

## **Scripture Reading – Acts, 2:1-13**

*When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

*Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.*

*Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!”*

*Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine”.*

*‘Jesus told the disciples, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”.’*

**Luke, 24:46-49, NIV**

**This series, based on THE BOOK OF ACTS, is entitled ‘THAT OLD TIME RELIGION’.**

The reason I want to call this series ‘THAT OLD TIME RELIGION’ is because we need to look back in order that we might really look forward. The ‘old time religion’ needs to become the ‘new time religion’, because it is the ‘all time religion’. If we get back to the basics of life in the Early Christian Church, we will understand what the Holy Spirit can do in our hearts and lives today.

**THE BOOK OF ACTS is the story of success; the story of a church triumphant.**

It is the story of a small group of uncultured and generally unlearned people with meagre resources – very little money, no prestige, and no church buildings. This small group of people went out to tell the story of a publicly executed Jew. They went out against three obstacles – the imperial might of the Romans, the intellectual sophistication of the Greeks, and the religious bigotry of the Jews. They turned the world inside out and upside down for Jesus Christ.

C:\ My Documents\Word\Ministry\David Ellison\

The New Testament\Acts\That Old Time Religion\02 The Pentecostal Church

*The Acts of the Apostles is the story of a church on fire with evangelism and growth...*

## **“THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH”**

The Pentecostal Movement began in 1867 when the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Christian Holiness produced a notice which read: *‘We are summoning, irrespective of denominational tie, those who feel themselves comparatively isolated in their profession of holiness, that all would realise together a Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost’.*

Modern Pentecostalism began around 1901 when Agnes Ozman was filled with the Holy Spirit and received the gift of speaking in tongues during a prayer meeting at Charles Fox Parham’s Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. Parham was a Methodist minister at the time. Pentecostals point to THE UPPER ROOM experience of the gathered disciples of Jesus as described in **Acts, ch 2** as justification for their beliefs and practices.

The expansion of the movement came with the Azusa Street Revival, beginning April 9, 1906 at the Los Angeles home of Edward Lee, who experienced an infilling of the Holy Spirit during a prayer meeting. The attending pastor, William J Seymour, also claimed that he was overcome by the Holy Spirit three days later. On April 18, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES ran a front-page story on the movement. Within a few days, this small but growing congregation rented an abandoned church building and the Pentecostal Church had truly begun.

*However, I do not want us to look back only 100 years, I want us to go back 2,000 years and consider the marks of the real Church of Pentecost in Jerusalem and recorded in Acts, ch 2...*

## **1. A PEOPLE OF PROMISE**

*‘On one occasion, while Jesus was eating with the disciples, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit”.’*

**Acts, 1:4-5, NIV**

**I wonder how many people heard this promise.**

Paul would later record that the risen Lord Jesus once appeared to a group of about 500 disciples at one time. When Matthias was chosen to replace Judas as one of the twelve, 120 people met together in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. When the day of Pentecost came, how many people were present? The Bible does not tell us the exact number of people in the room.

**Jesus told his disciples to wait for a few days.**

Although he spoke about a few days, I wonder if they all continued to attend the prayer meetings in the Upper Room. It is quite possible that along the way some people would have dropped out – some may have been ill and unable to attend; some may have had visitors and preferred not to attend; some may have decided that nothing was going to happen any way and they were not prepared to wait around wasting their time any longer.

*‘Jesus told the disciples, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”.’*

**Luke, 24:46-49, NIV**

**The Day of Pentecost saw many visitors come to Jerusalem.**

Every male Jew within twenty miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to attend the Feast, which usually falls at the end of May or in early June. By that time, travelling conditions are at their best, so possibly more people came to the Feast of Pentecost than travelled to the Passover. This probably explains the roll of countries mentioned in **Acts, 2:8-11**. Never was there a more international crowd in Jerusalem than at the time of the Feast of Pentecost.

*How many disciples were missing because of the crowd?*

*How many disciples were missing because family and friends came to visit?*

*How many disciples were missing because they had lost heart and interest?*

*How many disciples were missing because they were disillusioned about Jesus?*

**When Jesus tells us to wait, it is a reminder that he is at work behind the scenes.**

## **WE ARE A PEOPLE OF PROMISE**

*‘You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.’*

**Ephesians, 1:13-14, NIV**

*‘The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that we belong to him and that he will do what he has promised. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment, a deposit, a validating signature on the contract. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith, proves that we are God’s children, and secures eternal life for us. His power works in us to transform us now, and what we experience now is a taste of the total change we will experience in eternity.’*

**“LIFE APPLICATION BIBLE”, Study Notes**

## **2. A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE**

*‘When they met together, the disciples asked Jesus, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”.’*

**Acts, 1:6-8, NIV**

**Throughout his ministry, Jesus laboured under this great disadvantage.**

The centre of his message was the Kingdom of God; but Jesus meant one thing and those who listened to him thought about something different. The Jews were always vividly conscious of being God’s chosen people. They took that to mean that they were destined for special privilege and for worldwide dominion. The whole course of their history proved that humanly speaking that could never be. It had its days of independence but it had become subject in turn to the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and then the Romans. The Jews began to look forward to a day when God would break directly into human history and establish that world sovereignty of which they dreamed. They conceived of the kingdom in political terms.

**The disciples had a strongly political view of the kingdom.**

Being loyal Jews, they longed for the defeat of their enemies and the final establishment of the glorious kingdom under the rule of the Messiah. They did not realise that there must first be a spiritual change in the hearts of the people. Jesus did not rebuke them when they kept asking about the future Jewish kingdom. However, the important thing is not to be curious about the future but to be busy in the present, sharing the message of God’s spiritual kingdom.

**The disciples did not understand the mission of the Messiah, the Christ.**

They did not understand the cross. A crucifixion was an awful sight. It was horrific. It was cruel. It was barbaric. It was awesome. People who were on Mount Calvary that day and actually saw Jesus die could have looked at the cross and completely missed what was going on. Not many realised that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Not many recognised that atonement was being made. Not many understood that God was laying on Christ the sins of the world and that Jesus, the substitute, died in their place. Not many, if any, understood it!

**The disciples wanted to know if Jesus would restore the kingdom to Israel.**

Jesus wanted the disciples to get their heads out of the clouds of prophecy, and get their feet on the paths of witnessing and soul winning.

*‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.’*

**Acts, 2:1, NIV**

**What a variety of people made up that first assembly of believers.**

There were men and women, apostles and ordinary people, and even members of the Lord’s earthly family. His family had not believed in him during his ministry, but they did come to trust Jesus after the Resurrection. Mary was there as a member of the assembly, participating in worship and prayer along with the others. The centre of their fellowship was the risen Christ, and all of them adored and magnified him.

**How easy it would have been for division in this beautiful assembly.**

The members of the Lord’s family might have claimed special recognition. Peter could have been criticised for his cowardly denial of the Saviour. Peter might have blamed John, because John brought Jesus into the high priest’s house. John might have reminded the others that he had faithfully stood at the cross, and was chosen by the Saviour to care for his mother. There was none of this. In fact, nobody was even arguing over who among them was the greatest.

The key word 'TOGETHER' is found over six times in Acts.

There was amongst these believers, a wonderful unity that bound them together in Christ.

*They were all together in one place... the Upper Room in Jerusalem.*

*They were all together in one mind... they had the mind of Christ.*

*They were all together in one desire... they wanted the fulfilment of God's promise.*

*They were all together in one activity... they were constantly engaged in prayer.*

***'May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.'***

**Romans, 15:5-7, NIV**

### **WE ARE A PEOPLE OF PURPOSE**

*We share the experience of sinners who have been saved by grace.*

*We take seriously Christ's commission of the Church to make disciples.*

*We share a common aim, a prime directive, to preach the Gospel and be witnesses.*

*We believe that God raised up THE SALVATION ARMY for a supreme purpose.*

*'A Salvation Army Corps is a band of people united together to attack and Christianise an entire town or neighbourhood.'*

**William Booth**

This statement, made in 1893, still applies today! This was the Founders' vision of what each Salvation Army corps should be. Therefore, you and I are part of Booth's vision.

***'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.'***

**Ephesians, 4:2-3, NIV**

*Assembled here with one accord, calmly we wait the promised grace,*

*The purchase of our dying Lord; come, Holy Ghost, and fill the place.*

**Charles Wesley, SASB 216:2**

## **3. A PEOPLE OF PRAYER**

***'When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.'***

**Acts, 1:13-14, NIV**

**Prayer plays a significant role in THE BOOK OF ACTS.**

*The believers prayed for guidance in making decisions and for courage to witness for Christ. In fact, prayer was a normal part of their daily ministry. Stephen even prayed as he was being stoned. Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans, and Saul of Tarsus prayed after his conversion. Peter prayed before he raised Dorcas from the dead...*

*Cornelius prayed that God would show him how to be saved, and Peter was on the roof praying when God told him how to be the answer to Cornelius' prayers. The believers in John Mark's house prayed for Peter when he was in prison, and the Lord delivered him both from prison and from death...*

*The church at Antioch fasted and prayed before sending out Barnabas and Paul. It was at a prayer meeting in Philippi that God opened Lydia's heart, and another prayer meeting in Philippi opened the prison doors. Paul prayed for his friends before leaving them. In the midst of a storm, Paul prayed for God's blessing, and after a storm, he prayed that God would heal a sick man...*

*In almost every chapter in THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, you will find a reference to prayer, and the book makes it very clear that something happens when God's people pray.*

**This is certainly a good lesson for the church today.**

Prayer is both the thermometer and the thermostat of the local church. The spiritual temperature goes up or down depending on how God's people pray. **John Bunyan**, author of THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS, said, "Prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge to Satan". In THE BOOK OF ACTS, you see prayer accomplishing all of these things.

*'At Pentecost they prayed for ten days and preached for ten minutes and 3,000 people were saved. We reverse it. We pray for ten minutes and preach for ten days and call it a revival. But, of course, we do not have the same kind of results.'*

**"SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION", International Mission Board Statement**

**A link between PRAYER and POWER and RESULTS seem to be firmly established.**

***'They devoted themselves... to prayer... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.'***

**Acts, 2:42, 47b, NIV**

*'The word PRAYER' has become an adjective to modify another word... such as prayer chains, prayer rooms, prayer requests, prayer calendars, prayer partner, or prayer bracelet. Prayer... it is not an activity that requires a room, a calendar, a partner, or a bracelet. It is not something that can only be done in tandem with a worship service, a Bible Study, or a meal. Prayer... is an activity that ought to be engaged, all by itself, as an all-consuming, all-out passion, and the top priority of every believer.'*

**Zeke Moore**

### **WE ARE A PEOPLE OF PRAYER**

*'In the average church we hear the same prayers repeated each Sunday year in and year out with, one would suspect, not the remotest expectation that they will be answered. It is enough, it seems, that they have been uttered. The familiar phrase, the religious tone, the emotionally loaded words have their superficial and temporary effect, but the worshipper is no nearer to God, no better morally, and no surer of heaven than he was before.'*

**A W Tozer**

***'Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire.  
I Thessalonians, 5:16-19, NIV***

*Spirit divine, attend our prayers, and make this house thy home;  
Descend with all thy gracious powers; O come, great Spirit, come.*

**Andrew Reed, SASB 217:1**

## **4. A PEOPLE OF POWER**

***'Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.'***

**Acts, 2:2-4, NIV**

*'We may never know precisely what happened on the Day of Pentecost, but we do know that it was one of the supremely great days of the Christian Church, for on that day the Holy Spirit came to the Christian Church in a very special way.'*

**R T Kendall**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME**

The Holy Spirit came like 'A VIOLENT WIND' – that signified the presence of God – and as 'TONGUES OF FIRE' – that signified the cleansing of God. With these outward signs came the Holy Spirit as an inward, invisible REALITY that demonstrated his presence by the transforming revolution in the lives of the disciples.

TONGUES OF FIRE symbolises speech and the communication of the Gospel.

FIRE symbolises God's purifying presence, which burns away the undesirable elements of our lives and sets our hearts aflame to ignite the lives of others.

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT FILLED**

*The baptism of the Holy Spirit means that I belong to his body.*

*The infilling of the Holy Spirit means that my body belongs to him.*

**The filling of the Spirit has to do with power for witness and service.**

We are not exhorted to be baptised by the Spirit, for this is something God does once and for all when we trust his Son. We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, for we need his power constantly if we are to serve God effectively. At Pentecost, the Christians were filled with the Spirit and experienced the baptism of the Spirit; but after that, they experienced many infillings of the Holy Spirit but no more baptisms of the Holy Spirit.

**Dwight L Moody** was annoyed when, after every service, two ladies said to him, *"We are praying for you"*. He thought they were hinting that they had something more than he had, some better experience. Some time later, God came to Moody in a great and powerful way. When he next preached, the women knew he had received the blessing they were praying for.

***'Amazed and perplexed, the crowd asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine".***

**Acts, 2:12-13, NIV**

Some of the people who were in Jerusalem reached the conclusion that the apostles were drunk – It tells us something of the spirit of excitement and joy that prevailed on that day.

*Although the Church was born in revival, it was born with a stigma... a sign of shame.*

### **Jesus endured the stigma of the virgin birth.**

The people in Nazareth knew about the relationship between Mary and Joseph. They knew Jesus was born to a betrothed but unmarried couple. They probably heard a rumour about angels and words about a virgin birth. It was a stigma. People could reject Jesus as the Son of God because of his background. Even the religious people of his day took great pleasure in addressing Jesus as an illegitimate son.

### **Jesus endured the stigma of death on a cross.**

The people in Jerusalem were aware of the Scripture that pronounced as cursed anyone who died on a cross. It was a stigma. People could reject Jesus as the Son of God because he was crucified.

***'Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.'***

**Ephesians, 5:18, NIV**

*'Tis fire we want, for fire we plead, send the fire!*

*The fire will meet our every need, send the fire!*

*For strength to ever do the right, for grace to conquer in the fight,*

*For power to walk the world in white, send the fire!*

**William Booth, SASB 203:3**

***The Holy Spirit did not come because the people of God had become more committed, more prayerful, or more spiritual.***

***The manifestation of the Holy Spirit was entirely a matter of grace, a gift from God, given to the Church at the pre-determined time that the Lord had decided from eternity.***