

Place: Lurgan Baptist 30:10:2001

Reading: Acts 2:1-13

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

5. WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES

On 31st October, 1517, a German monk, by the name of Martin Luther, nails his ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The Protestant Reformation is launched. On 7th December, 1941 Japanese aircraft attack Pearl Harbour, wiping out American air units. America enters the war. On the 16th July, 1942 at Los Alamos, New Mexico, a tremendous blast rushes out across the desert. A huge, mushroom-shaped cloud lifts heavenward. Nuclear weaponry becomes a reality. On the 11th September, 2001 the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York collapse after a terrorist attack. Thousands lose their lives. On the day of Pentecost the age of the Holy Spirit is inaugurated. What a difference a day makes. Now what do you know about the Holy Spirit ? The average Christian today is much like the Ephesian believers when the apostle Paul asked them in (Acts 19:2)

" Have ye received the Holy Spirit when ye believed ?
And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Many believers today do not understand the role of the Holy Spirit. Because of this they have not " harnessed," His power in their personal lives.

In our Lord's Upper Room Ministry in (Jn 14-16) Christ had much to say about the Holy Spirit. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to believers. Indeed in (Jn 14:20) the Saviour made special reference to " that day." The Lord Jesus had a specific day in mind when He made that statement the day of Pentecost ! Soon afterward the Lord Jesus went to the cross of Calvary where He died for our sins. He was buried in a tomb, and three days later He rose from the dead. Then, before He ascended back to heaven, He gave His disciples a commission. He said that " repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Lk 24:47) What a great honour, what a solemn charge, what a heavy responsibility. Can you imagine the disciples ready to go out and get at it ? But then Christ said, " " But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." (Lk 24:49) The word " tarry," actually means to " sit down."

Christ said in effect, " I'm sending you out to the whole world, but before you go, sit down in Jerusalem and wait there until you are endued with power from on high." The Lord was indicating to them that they must have a specific experience which would equip them for their assignment of carrying the gospel to the end of the age. When was this to happen ? " At that day," a specific day. The Lord Jesus was referring to the day of Pentecost, and this definite day is recorded for us in the second chapter of Acts. " And when the day of Pentecost was fully come " (2:1) What an amazing, astounding day. No ordinary, average day but one of the greatest days in the history of the world.

My this day completely changed the Christian enterprise. If this day had not occurred, then the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ would not have gone forth with such power and effectiveness ! What a difference this one

day made. I mean the disciples began the day of Pentecost weak, fearful, and ineffective, but they walked away from the day of Pentecost filled with the Holy Spirit, anointed to carry the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to shake up the whole of the Roman Empire. What a difference a day makes ! Now we want to look this at this difference making day. The day that heralded the Advent of the Holy Spirit.

(1) THE TIMING OF THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT

" And when the day of Pentecost was fully come."

(2:1) Now although Pentecost is an age which spans the period between the descent of the Spirit and the return of the Saviour it is also recognised in Scripture as an eventful " day." The Timing of the Spirit's Advent is significant. Notice the Timing of His Coming:

(a) In Relation to a DIVINE PERSON:

The Lord Jesus. You see, before the Holy Spirit could come at Pentecost:

1. The Lord Jesus must be CRUCIFIED:

The Master said to His disciples as the shadow of the cross fell across His path: " Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." (Jn 16:7) That " going away," meant nothing less than Calvary. My before the Holy Spirit could come historically or personally, the sin question had to be dealt with. Before the Advent of the Holy Spirit, the precious cleansing blood had to flow. (1)

2. The Lord Jesus must be GLORIFIED:

The Saviour had already predicted this when He said, " He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his longing for the presence and power of the Spirit of God in our lives. The Lord Jesus is glorified in our lives when He is made Lord of all. Then, and only then, does the Spirit fill us, flood us and flow through us to others ! (a)

(b) In Relation to a DIVINE PROMISE:

Look at (1:4-5) Now the question is, what was the promise of the Father ? It was the promise of the advent of the Holy Spirit. They needed the Holy Spirit, for their task was an impossible task.

Even with the Great Commission in their hands they would need more than willingness if the world was to be won. In the shelter of the Upper Room they could have no idea of the impossibility of the task, of the stubborn unbelief of men, of the entrenched vested interests of government, commerce, and religion that would oppose them, or of the cruel persecution that awaited them. The exotic atmosphere of Christ's presence with them around the table in their quiet meeting place was good, but they needed more. They needed " the promise of the Father." And it was John who best remembered, and recorded in his gospel, the Lord's previous long conversations with them in that same upper room about " the promise of the Father." He had said, " I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter."

(Jn 14:16) My Pentecost was the fulfilment of a Divine Promise ! Pentecost was the logical outcome of all the activities of the Godhead since the fall of man !

In the Old Testament with the opening of human history it is mainly the Father who is revealed. Then " in the fullness of the time," Christ came, and it is the Lord Jesus who is mainly revealed in the Gospels. But on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came, and in the Acts and the Epistles He is mainly revealed for we are living in the age of the Spirit ! This is one of the reasons why we speak of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity. He is third in order of revelation. Now we are not saying that the Holy Spirit was not revealed in the Old Testament, because we have seen He is. But at Pentecost the Spirit of God came as He had never come before ! Pentecost was the fulfilment of a Divine Promise and Prophecy ! Look at what Peter says in (2:16-18) Peter is quoting here from (Joel 2:28) and he says " This is that "

Of course Pentecost was only a partial fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, for does Peter not speak here of " the day of the Lord." That day that is inextricably linked with the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ ! (Matt 24:29-30) So we see the Timing of the Holy Spirit's coming in (a) (b) and:

(c) In Relation to a DIVINE PLAN:

Do you see that word " Pentecost," in (2:1) ? In the Greek it means " fiftieth day." In the Old Testament God gave Israel a series of feast days. There were seven of these special days, and each day had some unique detail to add to the depiction of the coming of the Lord Jesus and His salvation work. These feasts are mentioned in (Lev 23:4) and I want us to look at three of them briefly.

(1) THE FEAST OF PASSOVER:

Do you notice what (Lev 23:4-5) says ? Do you recall that to escape the plague on the firstborn the Israelites had to kill a lamb and apply its blood to the doorposts and lintel ? Paul calls Christ our Passover. (1 Cor 5:7)

So not only was the Passover Lamb in (Exod 12) a picture of Christ, but it was also an indication that Christ would die on Passover the fourteenth of

Nissan, which corresponds to a day late in March or early April.

(2) THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS:

Have a look at (Lev 23:9-14) This feast was on the day after the Sabbath following the Passover the Sunday after Passover. The Feast of Firstfruits is a picture of the Resurrection of Christ. Paul says, " But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Cor 15:20) Just as the feast of firstfruits showed that the rest of the harvest would be good, so Christ's resurrection shows we will also be resurrected.

The Lord Himself said, " Because I live ye shall live also." (Jn 14:19)

(3) THE FEAST OF HARVEST:

Look at (Lev 23:15-16) So fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits came the Feast of Harvest, so called because it ushered in the harvesting period. (Exod 23:16) Now this feast is also known as Pentecost. The idea of the feast was to celebrate the completion of the harvest in advance. Now this feast predicts what happened on the day of Pentecost. Christ died on the Passover, rose on the feast of firstfruits, and made possible the enjoyment of those events on Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost to fulfil a Divine Plan. My the Holy Spirit could not have come on any other day than the day that was appointed. Pentecost was a predetermined epoch in the mind of God. The day of Pentecost would have come regardless of what the disciples did. My don't get the idea that the ten days of praying by the disciples in the Upper Room caused the day of Pentecost. This day was divinely appointed by God. Now this does away with the notion held in some circles today that you have to wait to experience the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, that you must go through stages to Pentecost. That you have to tarry, wait, and ask for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now it is true that the disciples did tarry in obedience to Christ's command, " but tarry ye " but don't stop there for they were told the precise spot, " Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem "

So if anyone tells us that they are tarrying for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit we have every right to ask, " Is it at Jerusalem ?" More importantly, we have every right to ask, " Is it necessary ?" That all depends depends on what ? Depends on whether or not the tarrying of the disciples caused the descend or Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The answer is NO ! My the Holy Spirit did not come on the Day of Pentecost, because the disciples tarried, prayed or met certain spiritual requirements. The Holy Spirit came on this day because thats when God planned for Him to come. He came on this day to fulfil a Divine Plan. " The gift of the Holy Spirit was dependant on the sovereign will of God, and not on the subjective condition of the recipients." The appointed day had arrived and the Holy Spirit came. (1)

(2) THE MEANING OF THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT

Now as we study the events of Pentecost, it is important that we separate the accidentals from the essentials.

The Holy Spirit Came (2:33) and the people heard the sound of rushing wind and saw tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit Baptised (1:5) and Filled the believers, and then Spoke as they praised God in various languages. The Spirit Empowered Peter to preach, and then He Convicted the listeners so that 3,000 of them trusted Christ and were saved. What a difference a day makes !

Did you notice that in (2:12) an important question is asked, " What meaneth this ?" What is the meaning of the Holy Spirit's Advent ? Let me suggest three things.

Firstly, Pentecost means:

(a) THE REALITY OF HIS PRESENCE:

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came in a real, new and special way ! Do you remember Christ's words ?

(Jn 14:15-20) " He dwelleth with you and shall be in you " Now when was that change going to occur ?

When would these disciples move from the experience of having the Holy Spirit with them to an experience of having the Holy Spirit in them ? Well, the Lord Jesus told them in (14:20) " At that day " This means that since the day of Pentecost, the church of the Lord Jesus collectively and believers individually have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is now a permanent resident in our lives ! You see, at Pentecost:

1. The Holy Spirit did a Baptising Work and Formed a Body:

Did you notice (1:5) Do you like birthdays ? I don't especially as I get older. Well, the day of Pentecost records the birthday of the church. The body of Christ, the church, came into existence through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In a sense, the Lord Jesus had two bodies. He had a physical body, but He also had a spiritual body. In (Lk 2) we have the account of the birth of our Lord's Physical body. In (Acts 2) we have the account of the birth of our Lord's Spiritual body the church of Jesus Christ ! What happened on the day of Pentecost was this ! These believer units were constituted a spiritual body by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and thereafter by this Baptism everyone upon believing in Christ is incorporated into the body ! Now through the Baptism of the Spirit the believer is put in Christ and made a member of His body ! 1. But:

2. The Holy Spirit did an Indwelling Work and Filled Believers:

By the Baptism of the Holy Spirit believers are put in Christ, by the indwelling of the Spirit Christ is put in believers ! Pentecost means that the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians individually ! " For He dwelleth with you and shall be IN you." (Jn 14:17) This means if you have received Jesus Christ as your Saviour the Holy Spirit has come to live in you. Paul says, " What ? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is IN you ?" (1 Cor 6:19) My to think that a member of the triune Godhead has condescended to take up residence in our hearts ! You, individually, are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God ! As you begin your day, do you acknowledge His presence ? In prayer do you invite Him to direct every activity and decision of your day ?

Since you are a Christian, God's Holy Spirit Resides in your heart, but does the Holy Spirit Preside in your heart ? The Holy Spirit of God is Present in your heart, but is He President in your heart ? The Reality of His Presence ! So, how many Pentecosts can you have ? Historically, there can only be one. There was only one occasion when the Holy Spirit of God baptised believers into the body, and the body of Christ, the church came into existence. The day of Pentecost can never be repeated, any more than Bethlehem can be repeated, any more than Calvary can be repeated. My Bethlehem was God With Us: Calvary was God For Us: Pentecost was God In Us ! (a)

(b) THE AVAILABILITY OF HIS POWER:

One cannot read about what happened on the day of Pentecost without realising that a new kind of power became available. Christ promised this power to His disciples. He promised that they would be " clothed with power from on high." (Lk 24:49) In (Acts 1:8) He said, " But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you " My if there was anything those disciples needed, it was power. They came to Pentecost powerless, they walked away filled with power. Do you recall

that after the Lord Jesus was crucified, they went into a room and slammed the doors shut. They were frightened by the possibility they might be the next ones to die on a cross. They had no peace, no contentment and no power ! But what a difference a day makes. For the power came on the day of Pentecost !

Charles Finney, the great evangelist once went into a factory near Whitesborough, England, during a series of meetings he was conducting in the area. A young lady who was at work recognised him, whispered some foolish remark to her companion and laughed. Finney stopped and looked at her with a feeling of grief. She stopped, her thread broke and she became so agitated that she could not thread her needle. She looked out of the window to try and compose herself.

At length she sat down, overcome by her feelings. Finney then approached and spoke with her, she soon manifested a deep sense of sin. In a few hours almost every person employed there was under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, so much so, the owner, though very much a man of this world, requested to have the place shut down and a prayer meeting held. His actual words were, " Stop the mill and let the people attend to religion for its more important that our souls should be saved than that this factory should run." In a few days the owner and nearly all the personnel employed in this establishment had been converted. My is this not what happens when we avail ourselves of the Spirit's power ? Pentecost means (a) (b)

(c) THE CONTINUITY OF HIS PERMANENCE:

Do you recall Christ's promise ? " And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." (Jn 14:16) For how long ? Forever ! The day of Pentecost in the Jewish calendar had been repeated many times. It had come and gone once a year, every year.

But now it " was fully come." (2:1) The Holy Spirit had come to stay. That's the difference Pentecost made.

Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon special people at special times, but the Spirit of God could be withdrawn. He was withdrawn from Saul (1 Sam 16:4) The Spirit was withdrawn from Samson (Jud 16:20-21) David when he confessed his sin of marital infidelity prayed, " Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

(Ps 51:11) But what a difference a day makes. For on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit of God came to dwell in His church and in believers and Christ said, " He'll be with you forever." His presence is now permanent instead of temporary internal instead of external !

As you read through the rest of the Acts, you will see the continuity of the Spirit's permanence. In the next twenty six chapters, the Spirit of God is mentioned in sixteen of them. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on several occasions. (2:4 4:8, 31) The Holy Spirit of God gave wisdom. (6:10) He called people into service (13,2 24) Believers experienced the comfort of the Holy Spirit (9:31) The Holy Spirit guided people. Do you recall that in (Acts 16) the Holy Spirit said to Paul, " Paul, you can't go that way. Go this way." My the Spirit of God will guide you. He'll be with you forever. He will lead you to lost people. Do you recall that it was the Holy Spirit who led Philip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, " Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." (8:29) My when you get up in the

morning, do you pray and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to lost people ? He's in your heart. He's given you the power. And He is with you permanently ! So we've noted (1) (2)

(3) THE BLESSING OF THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT

For surely the story of Pentecost is the record of the Spirit's ministry in blessing the lives of thousands of people. Notice for example there was:

(a) THE BLESSING OF REPENTANCE IN THE WORLD:

As Simon Peter stood up and preached before thousands of Jerusalem citizens and people from many distant lands. Who ? Simon Peter ! The Simon Peter who was by the fire the night the Lord Jesus was arrested ? Yes !

You talk about fear ! Do you remember what happened ? One little servant girl totally intimidated the rugged fisherman. Three times he denied he even knew the Lord Jesus Christ. But after Pentecost, Peter looked these people right in the eye and declared, " Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." (2:23) My as Peter delivered this powerful message they " were pricked in their heart," (2:37) and three thousand of them were saved. Preach before thousands without fear. What a difference a day makes. Why such a difference ? Why such a service ? There is only one explanation the power of the Holy Spirit !

Is this not what we need in our church services ? Is this now what the preacher needs every time he stands to preach the gospel ? Do you pray that he might know the power of the Holy Spirit that as he speaks hearts will be " pricked," and souls will be saved ?

The late Vance Havner once said, " We are not going to move this world by criticism of it nor conformity to it, but by the combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God." We ought to be praying, " Lord, take the Word, Spirit of God set it on fire." (a)

(b) THE BLESSING OF REVIVAL IN THE CHURCH:

For surely revival is nothing less than a church filled and flooded by the Holy Spirit ! Will you have a look at these early believers for a moment. Notice they had:

1. A FEARLESSNESS to SPEAK for Christ:

" But Peter, standing up with the eleven lifted up his voice " (2:14) Fearlessness had replaced fearfulness

2. A JOYFULNESS to SING for Christ:

" They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." (2:46) Do you remember Paul and Silas ? In jail ! Praising the Lord !

3. A HOLINESS to SHINE for Christ:

Peter and John were so filled with the Holy Spirit that even their critics, " took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." (4:13)

4. A WILLINGNESS to SACRIFICE for Christ:

" For as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them down at the apostle's feet."

(4:34) You see, when the Spirit of God controls, the spirit of self-sacrifice is immediately evident.

5. A READINESS to SERVE for Christ:

The apostles said, " Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost " (6:3) My if you know " revival," in your soul, you'll not have to be coerced to serve the Lord.

6. A STEADFASTNESS to STAND for Christ:

For in the midst of persecution Peter said, " We ought to obey God rather than men." (4:29) Finally,

7. A YIELDEDNESS to SUFFER for Christ:

Stephen, " being full of the Holy Ghost kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge." (7:60) Revival in the Church and Repentance in the World, the Blessing of the Spirit's Advent !

What a difference a day makes ! Historically, there will never be another Pentecost. Experientially, we need the power of the Pentecost, we need to be like these early believers " filled with the Holy Ghost." (2:4)

" O fill me with Thy fulness, Lord
Until my very heart o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word
Thy love to tell, Thy praise to show."