



Pattern of Pentecost

Adapted from "50 Days for Fire" series by Wayne Murray

What was the pattern of Pentecost prior to Acts 2? Theologians are varied on the response to this question. Consider the following sermon excerpt from a sermon by John Piper.

John Piper in his sermon "How believers experienced the Spirit before Pentecost" asked a question, "How did believers experience the Holy Spirit before Pentecost?" I can't think about it more than five minutes without saying, "So what?" Does anybody care? Would it make any difference for our lives today if we knew the answer? I think it will make a difference. I wouldn't bother with the question if I didn't. I want to show you ten ways the Old Testament saints experienced the Holy Spirit. But first let me tell you why I think it is so relevant.

Pentecost was a Jewish festival fifty days after the Passover. Jesus was crucified during the Passover celebration. Seven weeks later, on the day of Pentecost, the risen Lord Jesus fulfilled the promise he had made in **John 15:26**—namely, that he would send the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist had promised: The one who comes after me "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (**Luke 3:16**). So, at 9:00 on Pentecost morning, while the disciples were praying, "a sound came from heaven like a rush of mighty wind . . . and there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (**Acts 2:2–4**). Then Peter preached a sermon and said, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel, 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams'" (**Acts 2:16–17**).

In other words, Peter says, we have entered the last days: The Messiah has come, he has accomplished redemption on the cross, he has risen and ascended to the right hand of God, and the interval before he returns in glory will be marked by an incomparable outpouring of the Holy Spirit on men and women, old and young, slave and free, near and far. And the people of God in this period are to be a people born of the Spirit, baptized in the Spirit, filled with the Spirit,

empowered by the Spirit to bear witness to "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." We live in the latter days of the Spirit. We live in the days that Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel prophesied and longed to see. There are no more decisive turning points in redemptive history that must happen before Jesus returns to establish his kingdom. This is it. These are the days of Pentecost, the days of the fullness of the Spirit, the days of worldwide mission.

Now let me suggest an analogy to illustrate the experience of the Spirit before and after Pentecost. Picture a huge dam for hydroelectric power under construction, like the Aswan High Dam on the Nile, 375 feet high and 11,000 feet across. Egypt's President Nasser announced the plan for construction in 1953. The dam was completed in 1970 and in 1971 there was a grand dedication ceremony and the 12 turbines with their ten billion kilowatt-hour capacity were unleashed with enough power to light every city in Egypt. During the long period of construction, the Nile River wasn't completely stopped. Even as the reservoir was filling, part of the river was allowed to flow past. The country folk downstream depended on it. They drank it, they washed in it, it watered their crops and turned their mill-wheels. They sailed on it in the moonlight and wrote songs about it. It was their life. But on the day when the reservoir poured through the turbines a power was unleashed that spread far beyond the few folk down river and brought possibilities they had only dreamed of.

Well, Pentecost is like the dedicatory opening of the Aswan High Dam. Before Pentecost the river of God's Spirit blessed the people of Israel and was their very life. But after Pentecost the power of the Spirit spread out to light the whole world. None of the benefits enjoyed in the pre-Pentecostal days were taken away. But ten billion kilowatts were added to enable the church to take the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ to every tongue and tribe and nation.

So, here's my answer to why the experience of the Old Testament saints is valuable for us today. If these saints experienced privileges and powers in the Holy Spirit before the dam was opened, how much more should we in these billion kilowatt days experience these things or more. A survey of Old Testament spiritual experience is needed to wake us up to *our* privileges in these last days that were inaugurated at Pentecost. The church today is so sleepy that some of us have even fallen behind the Old Testament saints in our appropriation of what the Spirit has to give.¹

¹ John Piper, *How Believers Experienced the Spirit Before Pentecost*, February 19, 1984, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/how-believers-experienced-the-spirit-before-pentecost> (accessed July 5, 2017)

COURAGE

C1: When you think of the word Pentecostal what is your:

- Cultural definition
- Historical definition
- Denominational definition

C2: What is Biblical Pentecost?

C3: Read the following verses and answer the question.

Acts 2:1–4 (NLT) On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

- What are three things that you glean from these verses?

STRENGTH

S1: There are seven major feasts God instituted for Israel in the Old Testament.

- List the seven feasts.

- What significance if any do the feasts have for the Christian today?

S2: Read the following verse and answer the questions.

Leviticus 23:5 (NLT)

- What was the significance of the Feast of Passover?

- During which feast was Jesus crucified? What can you glean from that discovery?

S3: Read the following verse and answer the questions.

Leviticus 23:6 (NLT)

- What was the significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

- During which feast was Jesus buried? What does that speak to you?

S4: Read the following verse and answer the questions.

Leviticus 23:10 (NLT)

- Which feast is being discussed?

- What was the significance of the Feast of the First Fruit?

- Which feast was being celebrated when Jesus was resurrected from the dead?
What does that speak to you?

ENDURANCE

E1: Read the following verses and answer the questions.

Leviticus 23:15–16 (NLT)

- Which feast is being discussed?
- What were the Jews celebrating at the Feast of Pentecost? What does that speak to you?
- How many days was Jesus on the earth after His resurrection? How many days were the disciples in the upper room?
- What is the significant of the 50 days between Jesus' resurrection and the Holy Spirit outpouring?

E2: Read the following verses and answer the questions.

Acts 2:5–7 (NLT)

- How was the Feast of Pentecost fulfilled?
- Read **Genesis 11 (NLT)**. Write out the contrast between the event at the Tower of Babel and Acts 2 Spirit outpouring.
- Looking at the contrast, what thoughts come to your mind?

E3: Read **Acts 1:4-5 (NLT)** and **Acts 2 (NLT)**.

- After reading these verses, who do the gifts seem to target?

- From these verses, what are five things you can glean regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit?