

PENTECOST – THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST

Objective

The children become acquainted with the happenings at Pentecost.

Contents

- The outpouring of the Holy Ghost and its initial effects (Acts 2:1–13).
- Apostle Peter's sermon (Acts 2:14–40).
- Pentecost, the birthday of the church of Christ.



Introductory Remarks

Like Easter (Passover) and the Feast of Booths, also known as the Feast of Ingatherings or the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth), Pentecost was the second of the three Pilgrim Festivals, which God had commanded the people of Israel to celebrate. The five books of Moses contain several references to Pentecost, although not using the term Pentecost, but Feast of Weeks, also known as the Day of the First Fruits or the Harvest Feast. In Hebrew it was called *Hag Shavuot*.

For centuries, since the time of Moses, this day was called *Shavuot*. But during the third century BC, Israel came under Greek influence. Around 250 BC, the holy scriptures were translated into Greek, because this language had become more and more significant in the area of the Mediterranean. For a long time already, Hebrew was only still being spoken by rabbis. Colloquially, the Israelites spoke Aramaic. Greek, however, provided opportunity for international communication, and also became more common among the Jewish people. This development led to the renaming of the pilgrim feast *Shavuot*, and calling it *pentekoste* (i.e., fiftieth day). What is being referred to, is the 50th day following Passover. The term Pentecost we are familiar with, is derived from *pentekoste*.

At first, Pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving, on which two firstling breads were to be brought as offerings. The last of the harvest, which started around Passover/Easter, had been brought in. Subsequently, the Jews no longer celebrated the feast of Pentecost only as a thanksgiving day, but also in remembrance of the covenant God had made with the Israelites at Sinai by proclaiming the commandments and providing the Book of the Covenant.

Assuming that on Pentecost following Christ's ascension all those mentioned in the first chapter of Acts were sitting together, one will find an interesting congregation gathered there. First, there were the Apostles. Meanwhile, Matthias had taken the place of Judas Iscariot. Joseph Barsabbas Justus, one of Jesus' faithful disciples, was also present, as were Mary, Jesus' mother, and the Lord's brothers, James, Joses (or Joseph), Simon and Judas.

Many others also, whose names are not mentioned, were together in one accord. In total there were approximately 120 men and women. Nothing is mentioned about the place where this happened, other than that it was in Jerusalem.



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Together they began to celebrate Pentecost, which had started already the previous evening. Since Christ's ascension they had spent every day together and prayed often (cf. Acts 1:14).

The events of Pentecost are described as follows:

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

Regarding the concept “wind” in this Bible text, it should be noted that, in Greek, the words wind and spirit have the same root; also the Hebrew word *ruach* has the meaning of both “wind” and “spirit”.

“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3–4).

“... to speak with other tongues ...” means that the speaker is conversing in a language he himself is not familiar with. This event expressed that God wanted to have the gospel proclaimed to all peoples. People with the most diverse mother tongues are together, hearing God's word.

The events in Jerusalem did not remain secret. In the city, there were thousands of visitors who had come for the feast. They had come from everywhere to observe the holiday in the temple in Jerusalem. On account of the rushing mighty wind, the crowd came together. And each one heard in his own mother tongue what the Holy Ghost had to say. Something like that had never happened before.

And what effect did this experience have on the listeners?

“And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12).

Others resorted to ridicule, and said:

“These men are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13).

Thereafter, Apostle Peter stood up. He raised his voice and put those with a nasty tongue in their place. At nine o'clock (i.e., the biblical third hour), surely no one will be drunk yet.

Then he commenced with his sermon.

First, the Apostle cited the book of the prophet Joel (Joel 3:1–5), and, with these words, explained the events, which the Jews had witnessed. The listeners were familiar with these scriptures. With this comment, Apostle Peter made it clear to them that the prophet's word had fulfilled itself before them. Thereby, a foundation had been created in their hearts, which the Apostle could link up with other words out of the Holy Bible. He connected these quotations with the sending of God's son, Jesus of Nazareth. If the one thing, which this Galilean said, was true, the other also had to be correct. The listeners were familiar with this line of reasoning from their services, and able to believe it.

Perhaps there also was the one or the other among the listeners to whom applied quite personally what the Apostle came to speak about next.

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (Acts 2:22–23).

The Lord Jesus had also been at many a festival in Jerusalem. And pilgrims from all over the world saw and heard him there. Now Peter was able to proclaim to all that this Jesus had resurrected from the dead. And again he quoted the Holy Scriptures, this time from the Psalms, to verify that everything, which the hearers were at the moment being affected by, was part of God's plan of salvation, had been foretold, and now found its fulfillment. Statements concerning David which, until now, had no doubt been applied to him, were being newly illuminated through the light of the Holy Ghost, and, only in view of Jesus' resurrection, revealed their deeper meaning (cf. Psalm 16:8–11).

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

The combination of the various powers of the Holy Ghost did not remain fruitless. *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart”* (Acts 2:37). They were so moved that all they could do was ask:

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

What an effect of a single sermon! The listeners had the courage to ask what they should do. They had recognized that until now they had not done what would have drawn God's good pleasure upon them.

The answer, which they received regarding this from Peter and the other Apostles, is clear.

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

Pentecost was preserved as a Christian holiday, and is observed in remembrance of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. For us, as New Apostolic Christians, it is the birthday of the church of Christ. In 1980, Pentecost received a special distinction. For the first time, Chief Apostle Urwyler invited all the Apostles to a meeting in Zurich. From then on, there was an audio transmission of the Pentecost service to the congregations in western Europe, and in the following years, sometimes to other continents also.

During the service on Pentecost 1988, Chief Apostle Fehr officially assumed his new ministry.

On Pentecost 1990, 218 of 222 active Apostles were with the Chief Apostle in Vienna (Austria), impressive evidence of the unity within the New Apostolic Church. A quarter of a million children of God in 17 countries in western and eastern Europe were able to participate in this divine service through an audio-visual transmission via satellite. For many it was the first such transmission.

Since then, there is an international Apostles' gathering every three years to which all active Apostles of the world are invited.

Also, during the years in between, many Apostles are with the Chief Apostle at Pentecost.

Lesson Plan

Lead-In

Workbook, Exercise 1

The children read the “newspaper articles”. Afterwards, give the children time to imagine the sensation resulting from this.

Implementation

Teacher’s Presentation

Explain what significance Pentecost, which was also called the Feast of Weeks, has for the Jews.

The word Pentecost is derived from the Greek word *pentekoste*, meaning the fiftieth day. What is being referred to, is the fiftieth day following Passover (Easter). On this day, the Feast of Weeks was celebrated, which was one of the three pilgrim feasts God had commanded the people to celebrate, along with the Feast of Booths and Passover.

At first, Pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving, on which two firstling breads were to be brought as offerings. The harvest in the fields, which started around Passover/Easter, had now been completed. Subsequently, the Jews no longer celebrated the feast of Pentecost only as a day of thanksgiving, but also in remembrance of the covenant God had made with the Israelites at Sinai by proclaiming the commandments.

Jewish men, and those who had adopted the Jewish faith, came—some from very far away—to Jerusalem for the Feast of Weeks to bring sacrifices to the Lord in the temple. Therefore, at Pentecost, there were always many visitors in Jerusalem.

The Bible describes the events. A child reads

Bible

Acts 2:1–4:

*“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in **one** place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”*

Discussion

The children describe what was read in their own words.

Question Prompt

Ask the children what speaking with other tongues could mean?



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Teacher's Presentation

After the children have expressed their ideas, explain the following to them:

The people who had already received the Holy Ghost, began to speak in languages, which they themselves were not familiar with. This was a mystery to the rest of the people, who now heard their own language spoken. Some tried to make fun of it all by saying, *“These men are full of new wine”* (Acts 2:13), i.e., they are drunk.

Thereupon Apostle Peter stood up and explained that, at 9 o'clock in the morning (i.e., the third hour), surely no one will be drunk. Then he preached an impressive sermon. He explained to his listeners that God had raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, referring to the word in Psalms, which they were familiar with, *“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Acts 2:27; cf. Psalm 16:10).

He made it clear to them that these words foretold Christ's resurrection.

Bible

Acts 2:36:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

This sermon had a great effect. Read

Bible

Acts 2:37:

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

A child reads what Apostle Peter advised them to do.

Bible

Acts 2:38:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Question Prompt

Approximately how many people do you think followed the advice and had themselves baptized?

Workbook, Exercise 2

The solution to exercise 2 provides the answer to this question.

Question Prompt

For us, Pentecost is the birthday of the church of Christ. Why?

Discussion

- We commemorate the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.
- We remember the establishment of the first Apostolic congregation.

