

The Church's Birthday – Pentecost
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
May 24, 2026

Text: Acts 2:1-13, 40-41

Purpose: To explain the doctrine, work and function of the Holy Spirit and help the church realize that on Pentecost, the church was born.

The minister's little six-year-old girl had been so naughty during the week that her mother decided to give her the worst kind of punishment. She told her she couldn't go to the Sunday School Picnic on Saturday.



When the day came, her mother felt she had been too harsh and changed her mind. When she told the little girl she could go to the picnic, the child's reaction was one of gloom and unhappiness.

"What's the matter? I thought you'd be glad to go to the picnic," her mother said.

"It's too late! the little girl said. "I've already prayed for rain."¹

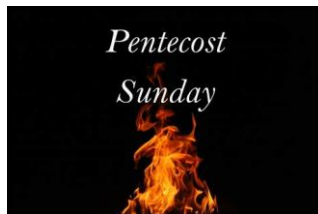
We smile when we think about how sometimes we get some things confused – we know this little girl wanted to go to the picnic, but because she wasn't able to go, she didn't want anyone else to go. Now that she can go, she is disappointed.

Sometimes we get the plans and ways of God confused.

One of the most confusing doctrines in the Christian Church today is that concerning the Holy Spirit.

Surprisingly, this is one of the most divisive issues among Protestant Churches today. More church splits have occurred because of a difference in interpretation concerning the person and role of the Holy Spirit.

Yet without a doubt the power of a believer comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the breath of the church. Without the breath of the Holy Spirit the church is dead.

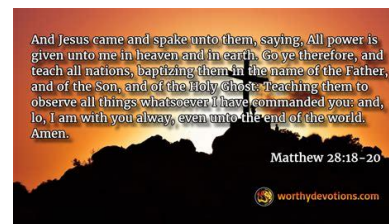


This passage that we are examining this morning is in the momentous fulfillment of expectations that Jesus promised. John the Baptist predicted that Jesus would baptize

with the Spirit. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as the gift of the gracious heavenly Father. After Jesus' resurrection, He spoke of the promise of the Father. (Luke 3:16, 11:13, 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5)

One of the key verses in the Book of Acts is found in Acts 1:8. In that verse, Jesus told His disciples what they could experience in the near future. In that passage He told them

where they would end up ministering in the future. He said, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”*



This command of Jesus found in Acts 1:8 along with Matthew 28:18-20 make up what is known as the Great

Commission. Matthew 28 says, *“And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”* The words that Jesus challenged the disciples with that day before He ascended back to the Father, also apply to us today. We are to be witnesses of Jesus Christ – starting in our home town, our state, our country, and around the world.

Jesus told them to go into Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father.

If you will remember, Jesus died on Passover. He was in the grave during the beginning of the Jewish holiday known as the



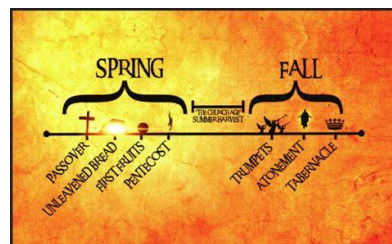
Festival of Unleavened Bread. On the third day, Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead on the beginning of the Festival of First Fruits. Jesus was our first fruit that was raised from the dead.

Jesus walked, talked, and ate with His disciples for 40 days after His resurrection from the dead. Then He ascended into heaven. The disciples went to Jerusalem to pray, fast, and anticipate the next great move of God.

The Festival of Pentecost was a holiday instituted by God fifty days after the Festival of First fruits. On Pentecost Jews also commemorate the giving of the Torah. (The first five books of the Old Testament) In the economy of God, the number 50 plays a special role. In the Book of Leviticus (chapter 25) Israel was instructed to tend their land for six years and on the seventh year to leave it untended. God would give them enough in the sixth year to last for two years. Every seventh period, or 49 years they were instructed to take the 49th year as a holiday and also the 50th year as the year of Jubilee. On the 48th year, God would prosper them enough to last for 3 years. (Leviticus 23:15-16)

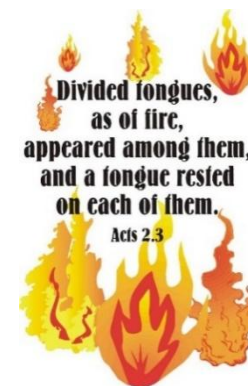


Another way to think about the various festivals is that the first four are in the spring of the year, while the last three are in the fall of the year. Pentecost is a special day because on that day Israel got the Law, while the church got the Holy Spirit.

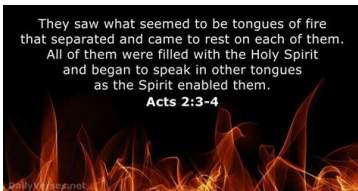


In verse one, we find the disciples anticipating a mighty work of God there in Jerusalem. *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”* (v. 1) When the day of Pentecost was fully come – when God was ready in His own time table, God acted. They were all in one accord and in one place. They were in agreement with one another. This is to be the condition of the heart that is necessary before the power of the Holy Spirit can work.

In verse two, we see that the Holy Spirit came suddenly in their midst. The Spirit did not discriminate one believer from another. He gave this gift to everyone there. *“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.”* The scripture did not say it was a wind, it says it sounded like wind. This supernatural presence of God filled the entire house.



Verse three tells us about what happened in that room. *“And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.”* I once heard a Pentecostal minister say that this was a physical manifestation of the Spirit of God that rested over the heads of each person in that room. Dr. J. Vernon McGee said that God was working through the two senses - the eye-gate and the ear-gate. The ear heard the Holy Spirit enter the room and the eyes saw the Holy Spirit resting on each of them.



Verse four notes that they ALL were filled with God's Spirit. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit*

gave them utterance." This is one of the most thrilling examples of God working for His own good through believers. God wanted His message to be sent out into the world and He chose these 120 individuals to tell the world there in Jerusalem.

Because of the great numbers of individuals in Jerusalem celebrating Pentecost from all over the known world, there was a great variety of languages represented. These followers of Jesus, men and women, went into the streets with the POWER of God indwelling in them telling all the people about Jesus Christ.

Some individuals teach that maybe the miracle was in the hearing of the individuals because in verse eleven it says they heard in their own language. On that Pentecost morning, I believe that they spoke in a language and dialect that was a known language. They were not speaking gibberish. They were not speaking in an unknown tongue as some insist. They were speaking a myriad of languages common to that region.

Verse five testifies to this truth. *"And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."* This was God's plan that every man out of every nation hear of the mighty works of God.

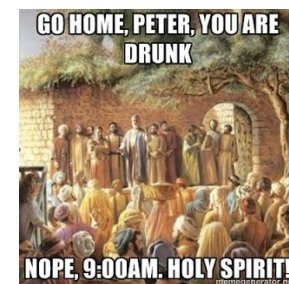
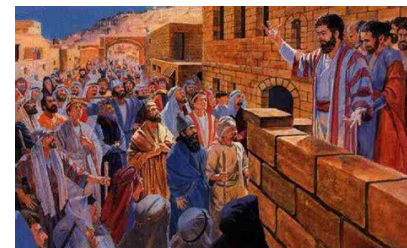
As word spread in Jerusalem, many came running to see what was happening. If you have ever heard a fire truck or

ambulance pass by your house with their siren blaring, then you know what I am talking about. Many people will come out of their houses to go see what is happening. Jerusalem was no different. They had to see what the commotion was about.

"Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, "What meaneth this?" Others mocking said, "These men are full of new wine." Acts 2:6-13 (KJV)



It was then that the Apostle Peter stood up and addressed the crowd with that compelling sermon calling to remembrance who Jesus was. That same Peter that denied Christ three times, stood among the people and reminded them of the miracles that Jesus performed. He scolded the people because they were the ones that put Jesus to death.

He boldly stood announcing that Jesus was no longer dead; that He was resurrected and is now alive in the presence of God the Father. He extended forgiveness of sin for those that repented and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. When Peter gave the invitation, over 3,000 people accepted the invitation and were added to the church.



Many people today want to experience that “Pentecostal Power” again. Some churches sing petitioning God to “Send down that fire once again.” God still breathes

His Holy Spirit in churches and on individuals today, but the next time God sends down his fire, I want to remind you, it will be in judgment upon the world.

This event that occurred in Jerusalem was around the year 30-33 A.D. After doing some research and comparing the date of Herod’s death in 4 BC, we can conclude Jesus beginning His ministry at the age of 30. Secular writers noting a special eclipse at the crucifixion of Christ, the consensus of many scholars was that Jesus’ death was either 30 AD or 33 AD. That special event that occurred in Jerusalem as described in Acts 2, was a one-time experience. If the date 33 AD is correct, then this would mean, Pentecost occurred 1993 years ago. This was the birthday of the church. The church as we know it today was not around before the Holy Spirit came.

You and I do not go through the process of being born again each year. We may celebrate our birthday, but we are not reborn every year. It would be just as silly for the wise men to return to Bethlehem the next year to seek Jesus. Many denominations and individual churches work themselves up

into a fervor to “get that same Pentecostal experience” that the Apostles experienced. What happened in Jerusalem was a one-time event.

Functions and Work of the Holy Spirit Today



The Holy Spirit is still active in the lives of believers today. The Holy Spirit performs several functions in our lives today. The **first step** towards receiving the Holy Spirit is regeneration. Peter told the people gathered there in Jerusalem that if they repented, they would receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that night in the garden in John chapter three that every person must be born again.

“Jesus answered, verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

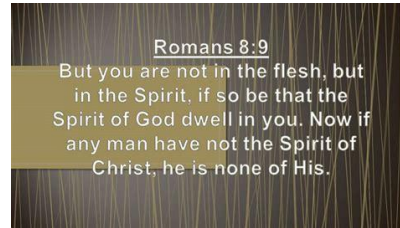
I have said repeatedly that Baptism by itself does not save you. But I do believe that baptism is an essential part of our complete identification with the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. I am sure that there are many individuals in churches across Kinston today that have been baptized but don’t have the assurance and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I am equally sure there are others that need to be baptized out of obedience to what the scriptures teach and what Jesus modeled for us. Without the Spirit of God, there is no salvation.

Maybe you have sat in church all your life and at times felt a tug at your heart to come forward and make a profession of faith in Christ. If you have ever felt that tug on your

heart, it is the Holy Spirit speaking to you. Listen and respond when the Spirit speaks to you. One day, God may stop speaking to your heart and you will become calloused to His Spirit and never come to Christ.

The **second step** after regeneration is the **indwelling of the Spirit**.

“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)



When we accept Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit comes in and indwells us. He cleanses us, forgives us, and makes us a new creature in Christ.

William Gaither wrote a song that reminds us of this truth – *“The Longer I Serve Him.”* The first verse and chorus of that song goes like this:

Since I started for the Kingdom,
Since my life He controls,
Since I gave my heart to Jesus,
The longer I serve Him,
The sweeter He grows.



The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows,
The more that I love Him, more love He bestows;
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

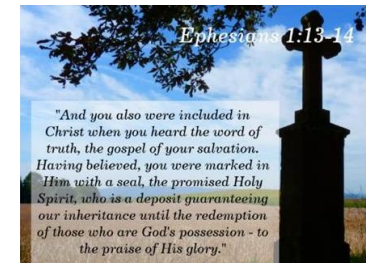
I have thought about this song this week. The longer I serve Him the sweeter He grows. Many people in this church today, have served Christ their entire life. They can attest to the sweetness and preciousness that Christ brings into their life now that they have given their heart and life over to God. It is the Spirit of God indwelling us that makes all the difference.

There are some individuals that I meet that I automatically know they have the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them. And there are others I am not sure about. It is because they have the Spirit of Christ and I have the Spirit of Christ that makes the difference in knowing.

Those that have the Spirit of Christ are of God. Those that don't are not in the family of God.

The **third function** of the Holy Spirit is to **seal us** into an eternal relationship with God.

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

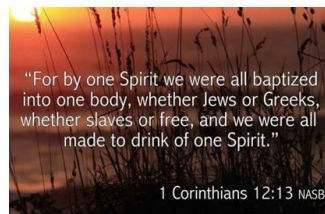


Our eternal salvation is sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the down payment for the future reward believers will receive one day. One day, God will sound the trumpet and the dead in Christ will be raised and we that are alive will join them in the air! When something is sealed, it is

preserved until the time it is needed. When we preserve a jar of fruit, it is sealed so that it may be eaten later. The Holy Spirit has sealed us – it is for our future redemption.

The **fourth function** of the Holy Spirit is to baptize believers. John the Baptist foretold of this baptism. Jesus repeated it in Acts 1:5, “*For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from hence.*” That day in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit placed them in the body of Christ.

Every believer since then, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, they are also placed into the body of Christ.



I Corinthians 12:13 says, “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*”

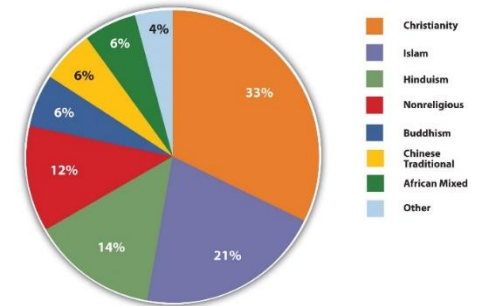
The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not a command for us, rather it is an act of God where believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, sealed unto the day of redemption, and placed into the body of believers, the church. This enables you and me for service.

After Peter stood up and told the gathered crowd about Jesus, there was a great response to the gospel. If we look down to verses 40-41, we read, “*And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this untoward generation.’ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*”



The church started as a 100% Jewish congregation of 120 individuals in the Upper Room. By the end of the day, over 3000 Greeks and Jews were added to the Church. Every day following, the number of believers were added to daily. In Acts 4:4 we see that over 5000 responded to the invitation to accept Jesus.

From that beginning, the message of Christ has spread across the known world. Within about 200 years, this became the most powerful force in the known world. Many Roman rulers tried to stamp out this



Jewish sect that followed Jesus. Over the next three hundred years, hundreds, maybe thousands were killed for their faith in Christ. In 328 AD, Emperor Constantine made Christianity the official religion. As of 2020 there were 2.382 billion people that identify as Christians worldwide. That means there are 31.7% of the people in the world that identify their faith as Christian.² Recent statistics for 2026 indicate that number may have risen to 2.6 billion Christians worldwide with it increasing to 3.0 billion by 2050.



Maybe you are here today and feel the Holy Spirit tugging at you to make a public commitment to Christ. Just as we celebrate today as the birthday of the church, today could be your spiritual birthday.

You only begin to live eternally when you commit your life

to Christ. Until that time, all your effort, work, or prayers are in vain. Trusting Christ is the beginning of a new life.

LET US PRAY³

As of 2020 ...

Religion	Adherents	Percentage
Christianity	2.382 billion	31.11%
Islam	1.907 billion	24.9%
Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist	1.193 billion	15.58%
Hinduism	1.161 billion	15.16%
Buddhism	506 million	5.06%
Chinese traditional religion ^[c]	394 million	5%
Ethnic religions excluding some in separate categories	300 million	3%
African traditional religions	100 million	1.2%
Sikhism	26 million	0.30%
Spiritism	15 million	0.19%
Judaism	14.7 million	0.18%
Bahá'í	5.0 million	0.07%
Jainism	4.2 million	0.05%
Shinto	4.0 million	0.05%
Cao Dai	4.0 million	0.05%
Zoroastrianism	2.6 million	0.03%
Tenrikyo	2.0 million	0.02%
Animism	1.9 million	0.02%
Neo-Paganism	1.0 million	0.01%
Unitarian Universalism	0.8 million	0.01%
Rastafari	0.6 million	0.007%
Total	7.79 billion	100%

Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies June 6, 2019

²[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_populations#Projection_for_2020_\(Pew_Research_Center,_based_on_2010_baseline_estimates\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_religious_populations#Projection_for_2020_(Pew_Research_Center,_based_on_2010_baseline_estimates)) [2]

³ Many quotes pulled from J. Vernon McGee's book on Acts chapter 2. Also, some from Handfuls on Purpose Vol. VIII page 124-126.