

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

NOTES 4

ACTS 2:1-4

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

Jesus had told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until power came on them. He didn't explicitly say when this miracle would happen, but He told them it would be "not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). Pentecost occurred ten days later.

A little-known fact is that the formula for observing the Feast of Pentecost in Israel was very specific, with the feast day always occurring on the first day of the week. Leviticus 23:15-16 says, "You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the Lord."

The Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Harvest, was one of the three mandatory feasts when all male Israelites had to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem. Even in Israel this feat prefigured the fulfillment. We who have the Holy Spirit in us are said to have the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Romans 8:23) because our indwelling is the down-payment of our future glorification. This phenomenon of having the first fruits of the Spirit is unique to the church. Only with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit did this promise become fulfilled.

Moreover, the feat was always celebrated on the first day of the week, just as it was fulfilled at Pentecost. The precedent is strong for Christians to meet together on Sunday. After all, the shadow of the Feast of Pentecost always occurred on the first day of the week, and the church was born on the first day of the week. God fulfilled His promise to His people on the first day of the week. Since no day is designated as holy time in the new covenant, the symbolism of meeting on the first day is profound in view of the history and fulfillment of this particular feast of Israel.

HOLY SPIRIT AS WIND

The story of humanity begins with God's fashioning Adam and breathing the breath of life into him. Adventists have insisted that this act of God was nothing more than giving Adam the ability to breathe, thus bringing his lifeless body to life. The story, which appears in Genesis 2:5-9, says that God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living creature.

The Adventist rendering of this story ignores the larger biblical context that reveals those who are "living" are not merely physically alive but are spiritually alive. This understanding, however, depends upon the recognition that each human has a spirit, an immaterial part of himself which is either alive to God or is dead to God.

God said, in Genesis 2:17, that if they ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would die "in the day that [they

ate] from it". They did, indeed, die the day they ate—they died spiritually. Their spirits were disconnected from Life, from God, and they died even though their bodies remained alive.

The very first reference to humanity includes God breathing the life of His own Spirit into Adam to make him a living soul.

Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones describes Israel's bones coming together and then being brought to life by God's breath. They came together, "bone to bone", and sinews and flesh appeared upon them, and skin covered them. But they had no breath. God then said to Ezekiel, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live" (Ezekiel 37:9).

They came to life, and God then explained to Ezekiel what He was the vision is about. The bones represent the whole house of Israel, and they are dried up, cut off, and without hope. God tells Ezekiel to prophesy and tell Israel that He will raise them from their death, from their graves, and He will put His Spirit within them. They will live, and He will place them in their own land (Ezekiel 37:11-14).

The "breath" to which Ezekiel was to prophesy, asking it to return to the bones of Israel, was the Holy Spirit.

In the famous passage of Jesus talking to Nicodemus at night (John 3:1-8), Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to wind. First, he tells Nicodemus he must be born again in order to see the kingdom of heaven. Then, when Nicodemus asks how this is to be, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Then Jesus defines the way the Holy Spirit works in people: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The book of Ecclesiastes also identifies the Hebrew word "ruah" as "spirit" and "wind". The NASB, in Ecclesiastes 11:5, says, "Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things."

The same verse in the ESV, also considered an accurate word-for-word translation of the original texts, says this: "As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything."

Wind and breath, the invisible but powerful movement of air, is one of the persistent and powerful symbols of the "spirit" or "Spirit" found in the Bible.

HOLY SPIRIT AS FIRE

Fire is also a recurring symbol for the presence of God throughout the Bible. When Moses encountered God in the desert when he was herding sheep in Midian, he witnessed a voice emanating from a burning bush that was not destroyed (Exodus 3:2).

Over and over God identifies Himself as a “consuming fire” of judgment and protection. Those who are godless or in rebellion fear the fire and “everlasting burnings” (Is. 33:14). God, as a consuming fire, destroys His enemies and the enemies of His people. He is a jealous God and will not tolerate forever divided hearts and syncretism in the worship from His people. The Old Testament uses fire frequently as a symbol of God’s presence and judgment. (For examples, see Deut 4:24; Deut 9:3; Is 33:14; Lam 2:3.) Hebrews 12:29 also uses this imagery.

John the Baptist connected Jesus with this same symbol of fire, making it clear that He would not merely be speaking for God but would be God and would be bringing the presence of God to individual. He said, “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

In this prophecy John clearly refers to the fact that Jesus would bring judgment to the world.

The symbol of fire represents God’s judgment as well as power and supremacy over all creation. When the Holy Spirit appeared at Pentecost with tongues of flame, the symbol had at least two foreshadowings. First, the coming of the Holy Spirit would give God’s people the ability to speak the gospel even in tongues they did not know if necessary, as happened that day in Jerusalem. Second, the gospel, which was the apostles’ and every believer’s commission to proclaim, would be the source of judgment in everyone’s lives. Jesus’ judgment of sin on the cross would become the means of believers’ being set free from sin. Moreover, those who do not believe will remain subject to judgment.

Additionally, those who preach and teach the gospel would be establishing God’s judgment on sin and His establishment of righteousness to all who believe (Matt 16:19; 18:18).

PROPHECY FULFILLED

When the Holy Spirit appeared on the waiting apostles and disciples, this event fulfilled Jesus’ promises to them. He told them they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and would receive power then to be His witnesses (Acts 1:4-5, 8). After His famous “walk to Emmaus” with the two believers to whom He opened Scripture and explained how He had to fulfill all that had been written about Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, He told his disciples He was sending “the promise of my Father upon [them]” and ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:44-49).

Moreover, Jesus promised His disciples that He would ask the Father, and He would send them “another Helper” who would “be with [them] forever”. This Helper would be “the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.” Then Jesus made a powerful and reassuring statement: “You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17). Jesus was telling his disciples that, although they would experience the Holy Spirit much more powerfully and intimately than they ever had before He completed the atonement,

they would recognize Him and know Him. He had already been at work with them.

Then Jesus made a further promise: “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:25-26).

Pentecost culminated Jesus’ ministry and revelation of God to His people. It was the seal of His finished work and of His forgiving and imputing righteousness to all who trust in His blood and resurrection life.

At the time of the event, Peter further explained that the completely new phenomenon people witnessed was the fulfillment of God’s promise given through Joel that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, that men and women, young and old, would prophecy, dream dreams, and see visions. His Spirit would be poured out on His people (Acts 2:16-18; Joel 2:28-29).

The unprecedented gift of tongues demonstrated when the Holy Spirit came was the initial sign that God Himself was doing something new. God gave those first believers the ability to teach and preach the gospel to people of every language. Thousands of people were crowding Jerusalem from distant countries. Since Passover and Pentecost were three of the required feasts for Israelite men to attend in Jerusalem, the city was full of people who had come to celebrate these two back-to-back convocations. They heard the apostles speaking the good news of Jesus in their own languages.

The initial demonstration of the Spirit’s power was the enabling of the apostles to be able to be Jesus’ witnesses and thus to bring the message of salvation to men and women from all over the world. The first purpose of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Jesus, and He gifts believers with the ability to clearly speak and teach the truth.

Jesus has told His disciples that they would speak in new tongues (Mark 16:15-18). Moreover, Paul discusses the gift of tongues in detail in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and also 1 Corinthians 14:20-22. He explains that this gift, like all other gifts of the Spirit, is for “the common good”. Moreover, he explains that this gift, like all the others, is given to people “as he wills”. In other words, we cannot assume that all believers will all have the gift of tongues or any other particular gift. They will be given by God to each person according to His own will and assignment.

God clarified, however, that the primary purpose of His Spirit being poured out was the establishment and building of His church by the declaration of the gospel with power. Something new was happening—something never before experienced. God was indwelling His people, making them the physical manifestation of His presence on earth. He was building His kingdom with individual people as His living stones, and these people, alive with His own Spirit, would proclaim Him to those who didn’t know Him.

Pentecost initiated a new “people”: humans born of God, transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God’s own Son (Col 1:13). By a miracle of Almighty God, we also have been made alive by His Spirit and brought into His church to be His witnesses.

MEDITATE

Praise God for making you alive by His Spirit and for gifting you for His service. Thank Him for being your Teacher and identity and Life. Praise Him for being your Substitute and your Hope. Ask Him to continue to ground you in truth and root you in reality, to bring to you the work He has already prepared for you to do!

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

4

ACTS 2:1-4

FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP BIBLE STUDY

STUDY

1. The Day of Pentecost always fell on the 50th day after the Sabbath of Passover week. What other names was this festival called, and on what day of the week did it always occur?

Leviticus 23:15-17 _____

Deuteronomy 16:9-12 _____

Leviticus 23:14-17 _____

2. Suddenly, “there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.” What precedent is there for the Holy Spirit representing Himself with moving air such as breath or wind?

Genesis 2:5-9 _____

Ezekiel 37:7-14 _____

John 3:1-8 _____

Ecclesiastes 11:5 (see esp. ESV) _____

3. What is significant about the appearance of “tongues of fire” when the Holy Spirit came?

Exodus 3:2 _____

Deuteronomy 4:24 _____

Deuteronomy 9:3 _____

Isaiah 33:14 _____

Lamentations 2:3 _____

Hebrews 12:29 _____

Matthew 3:11-12 _____

4. What promises/prophecy was fulfilled when they all were filled with the Holy Spirit?

Acts 1:4-5, 8 _____

Acts 2:16-17 _____

Joel 2:28-29 _____

Luke 24:44-49 _____

John 14:15-17 _____

John 14:25-26 _____

5. The coming of the Holy Spirit brought the startling phenomenon of speaking “with other tongues”. What was the immediate purpose of this gift, and why was it the initial manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s power?

Acts 2:5-13 _____

Mark 16:15-18 _____

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 _____

1 Cor 14:20-22 _____

MEDITATE

How did the Holy Spirit change you when you were born again? How is God manifesting His power in you in ways you know are not natural to you? If you have not experienced this transfer from being in Adam to being alive in Christ, ask the Lord Jesus to forgive your sin and to save you, to be your Lord and to be in charge of your life. Praise Him for being your Life and your Substitute and your Hope. He is faithful!

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” 1 Peter 2:24-25, NIV