

Pentecost Sunday

The Start of Something New

Dear Church Family

Hope you are all well on this 9th week of lockdown. We have made it this far, and we can see the Government starting to relax a few of the lockdown restrictions.

This week is Pentecost Sunday, the beginning of the Church as we know it, with the introduction of the Holy Spirit. Before we get to the account of Pentecost, we need to look back at the end of the Gospels to see what was happening to gain a better understanding of what lays ahead.

Some commentators have suggested that the Bible is split into 3 volumes as the Old Testament is volume 1, where we see the work of Father God. Volume 2 is the Gospels, where we see the birth of Jesus, and His finished work **'When He had received the drink, Jesus said "it is finished" with that He bowed His head and gave up His life'** John 19:30. Volume 3 starts at the Book of Acts, where we can read about the continued work of Christ through the Holy Spirit, empowering people to be witnesses of the Gospel.

One commentator said about the book of Acts, as the **'Acts of the Lord Jesus through His people, by the Holy Spirit, for the accomplishment of the Father's purpose'**.

You may or may not know that Luke wrote the book of Acts. Although Luke was a Doctor, he was also an historian and was very particular in the 'exact truth'. Although the Gospels we see Jesus performing miracles, but also talking to His disciples, but them not understanding what Jesus meant. For example: Jesus says, **"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men". But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it.** Luke 9: 43

Further on in Luke, Jesus took the twelve aside and told them, **"We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.** Luke 18:31.

The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what He was talking about. Luke 18:34.

The disciples were confused most of the time. At the end of the Gospels, there was not only confusion but also in fear of what might happen, they seemed lost.

The book of Acts sees the entry of the Holy Spirit and a total transformation of the disciples and the elect, at that time about 120 people. Before the Holy Spirit blessed the people, they had to elect a new member on to the team, as Judas left a vacancy. As it was written in Psalm 109:8 **'May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership'**. After lots were cast Matthias was added to the eleven apostles, Acts 1:26.

The Greek word *pentekoste (hemera)* meaning fiftieth day after the second day of Passover. It is the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. Pentecost is the Greek name for Shavuot, the spring harvest festival of the Israelites, which was happening when the Holy Spirit came.

So why do I share this with you, I hear you ask?!? Well it struck me that there had to be an order of things before the Holy Spirit descended. Not for God's sake, but for people at the time. Peter had to come into his own and shake off the guilt of denying Christ three times when Jesus was arrested. The other apostles needed to be in the right place at the right time, for the witness of the Holy Spirit's arrival. Jerusalem was packed with people for the Shavuot festival, maximum affect.... the stage was set.

What is God saying to you in this time of lockdown? Is He turning His people to look at Him? Are we as Christians expectant of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Spirit of God, You are the breath of creation, the wind of change that blows through our lives, opening us up to new dreams and a new hopes, new life in Christ.

Forgive us our closed minds which barricade themselves against new ideas, preferring the past to what You might want to do through us tomorrow.

Forgive us our closed eyes which fail to see the needs of our world, blind to the opportunities of service and love.

Forgive us our closed hands which clutch our gifts and our wealth, for our own use alone. Forgive us our closed hearts which limit our affections to ourselves and our own.

Spirit of new life forgive us and break down the prison walls of our selfishness, that we might be open to Your love and open for the service of Your world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May God bless you all this Pentecost Sunday.

Blessings

Mike