

**Sermon Notes of
Assistant Pastor Fred Stevens's Sermon on May 31, 2020:**

"Pentecost Celebrations (Acts 2)"

[In today's sermon on Pentecost, Assistant Pastor Fred Stevens on Zoom shows us in more detail what was happening back then in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, but also the impact and significance for us today.]

Notes

Introduction:

- Pentecost is day that commemorates new things.
- Now spiritually speaking, we are continually moving forward step by step in our own personal and collective walk with Christ.
- There are many things to celebrate about concerning Pentecost as we'll see.

- This pandemic gives us opportunities to review the risks we now face, including even going grocery shopping.
- We also are learning to filter for quality info on the internet concerning this pandemic.
- And we're also getting back to our foundations of family life.

- During this time, a recent six-week on-line Bible study with his wife, Maryann taught him that there are layers and layers of meaning in scriptures.
- More insight into those layers can give us more understanding of the various scriptures.

Purpose:

- So, Fred is going to share with us some of the insights he has been studying about concerning Pentecost with us.
- This, then, will help is to gain more insight about the day of Pentecost and what actually was taking place back then.
- And hopefully this will help us to gain a greater understanding of the meaning of Pentecost in our lives today.
- Now let's read the entire chapter 2 of Acts and then we'll comment about various sections.

Acts 2 (NKJV), When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5) And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6) And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7) Then they were

all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? 8) And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

9) Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11) Cretans and Arabs – we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” 12) So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” 13) Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”

14) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15) For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16) But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17) ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. 19) I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20) The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 21) And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved.’

22) “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know – 23) Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24) whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

25) For David says concerning Him: ‘I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. 26) Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27) For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28) You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

29) “Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30) Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31) he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32) This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33) Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

34) “For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35) Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

36) “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” 37) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

38) Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39) For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

40) And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” 41) Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. 42) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43) Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44) Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45) and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

46) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Overview:

- What a memorable and amazing day that was.
- Verse 1 begins by saying, “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come.”
- The words “fully come” stand out, especially considering the Jewish traditions.

Background of Pentecost for the Jews:

- From Leviticus 23, it was called “the Feast of Weeks” because you counted 7 weeks and a day – 50 days.
- It was also held simultaneous with the Spring Harvest.
- During the Spring Harvest, offerings of two loaves were made, one for the Gentiles as well as one for Israel.
- And of course, there was some controversy as to how one counted those 50 days.
- So, during the ages, the Jews often kept Pentecost on two consecutive days.
- And so in Acts 2, we see that this was a big holiday with 2 days being celebrated and so many people attended it.
- This day was celebrated, of course, on various religious and ceremonial levels.
- But it was also celebrated on various cultural and historical levels.
- It was an amazing time for all of these people to be in Jerusalem.
- For example, some of the Rabbis taught that King David died on this day and was also born on this day.

- There was also a rabbinical teaching that on this day, Moses came down from Sinai with the Law.
- Thus, those who believed this, saw the two loaves that were offered represented the two tablets Moses carried with him.
- We've also seen in the Gospels, that the Jews also had a longing for deliverance and longing for the coming of the Messiah as promised by the prophets.

Background of Pentecost for the disciples:

- 50 days ago, their world had been shattered by Jesus' arrest, trial and horrific crucifixion.
- They were shattered in believing what Jesus would be doing as opposed to what really happened.
- They were emotionally quite disturbed.
- And then Jesus miraculously appeared to them multiple times in various locations 40 of these 50 days.
- And, thus, the disciples were totally astonished by this.
- And they were thinking, what's going to happen next.
- And Jesus tells them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for what is going to happen, which will astonish them.
- The disciples and the followers of Jesus were gathered here in Jerusalem with a feeling of excitement and expectation.
- They were wondering as to what would happen next, meaning that they were open to what could happen next.
- So, they were gathered together in unity of purpose and in praise of God.

Notable points from the story:

- We need to note that in account there was not a wind blowing but it was a sound like the wind.
- It was a sound heard by more than just the disciples and believers of Jesus – it was a sound that the whole city of Jerusalem heard.
- And that sound must have been moving and pulling the people who were in Jerusalem on that day in the direction of where the disciples had gathered.
- We also need to note that there wasn't actual fire, but rather "tongues of fire" that came upon the disciples and followers.
- It was some kind of glowing, some kind of blessing that came upon all the people there not just the disciples.
- And when the Jews in Jerusalem were led to them by the moving sound, they saw these people who had this glow on their heads.
- And then these people began to speak and were heard by Jews in their various languages.
- This reminds Fred of the story of the "Tower of Babel."
- And it also reminds him that God is the God of verbal communication.

- God used here the miracle of understanding languages to get across an incredible point about His involvement.
- This showed that God came to be involved, not just with the leadership, but with everyone in the community.
- This event changed things – because here, we see Peter, who 50 days ago had denied Jesus 3 times, now deliver boldly a message about Jesus, being led by the Holy Spirit.
- Peter was learning to step forward and to step past his past and to step beyond his mistakes and accept the grace of God and His forgiveness.
- Even though Peter told them that they had killed Jesus, he also brought to them God's grace not retribution, as well.
- Then Peter mentions David to them, who were on their minds because of their celebrations.
- Peter also mentions the prophet Joel, who talks about the coming of the Messiah.
- These two men were very important to the crowd listening to Peter.
- This is why they were moved and touched in their hearts to what else Peter was telling them.
- They were so moved, that they asked Peter, "What shall we do?"
- And the result was that they were baptized and then the visitors would have all gone back to where they came from, being a new person, filled with spiritual zeal.

Conclusion:

- Thus, this was the beginning of a new age.
- We see that God made Pentecost a new celebration.
- It showed that God's relationship wasn't just coming on the leaders, but on all of the people.
- We also see the believers in Jerusalem came together with even more unity than before.
- They now came together in unity of purpose because they saw their lives completely dedicated to the service of God.
- Even though they had different gifts and talents, they worked together to serve God.
- So, the focus was not David, nor the Jews, or the giving of the Law, but the focus was on Jesus.
- As we see, the believers were fully devoted to Jesus and their focus was totally on Jesus.
- And the more they were focused on Jesus, the more He could do through them.
- We see that before the Day of Pentecost, these were challenging times and reasons to be afraid.
- But now, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, this was the time to speak up about forgiveness, to speak up about grace, to speak up about devotion to Jesus.
- Jesus is the one who is alive and is sending us the Spirit to empower each one of us.

- And it's amazing that putting our focus on Jesus is so relevant for us today, in our individual circumstances.
- So today, we can celebrate not only the traditions, we can also celebrate what the coming of the Spirit means to us individually.

(Closing prayer)