

# **BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

**E Mail Address**

**[PKBedwell@hotmail.com](mailto:PKBedwell@hotmail.com)**

**Web Site Address**

**[Bedwellglobalministeries.com](http://Bedwellglobalministeries.com)**

**Expository Sermon**

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## **CELEBRATING THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Scripture Reading – Acts 1:4-8, 2:1-8.**

**Text Acts 2:1,4.**

### **Introduction**

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come.....all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...” In the calendar of the Christian church we are in season during which we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Pentecost was not invented by the Christian church. It was an event that God had planned from the beginning of time. Originally the Feast of Pentecost was the middle of three annual Jewish harvest festivals and it was “called either the Feasts of Harvest, because it was celebrated at the completion of the grain harvest, or the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost because it took place seven weeks, or fifty days (Pentecost means Fiftieth) after the Passover. This was when the grain harvesting began. Montgomery Boice points out that the Feast of Weeks was also the time in the Jewish year when the first sheaves of the harvest were presented, and so we see that the timing is symbolic. Those first sheaves were the first-fruits of a greater harvest. On the day of Pentecost when thousands of people believed and became part of the church, was the first-fruit of a greater harvest of souls that they were to see as the gospel moved across the world. The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was an integral part of the Old Testament

prophesies. It is clear that God planned for the Holy Spirit to come in the fullness of time. Luke tells that “when the day of Pentecost was **fully come**, the Spirit came and the disciples were all baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. This was God’s plan for His people that is why the prophets wrote about it. Ezekiel recording the words of God’s promise wrote, “I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Ezekiel 36:27.

Jeremiah confirms this prophesy recorded in Ezekiel, “This is the Covenant I will make with the House of Israel after that time” declares the Lord. “I will put my law in their minds and will write them in their hearts.” Jeremiah 31:33. One has written, “The Old Covenant gave the law which said, “This do and ye shall live.” But legalistically conforming to the law which was written on tablets of stone under the Old Covenant was a way of salvation that failed. “The promise was that the day would come when the laws of God would be written in the hearts and minds of men, so that they would live righteously, not only because they ought to, but because they wanted to.” The Prophet clearly stated God’s promise when he wrote, **“I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my laws,” or “I will cause you to follow my laws.”** The Old Testament directive was to

legalistically obey the law of God written down, but the New Testament message is that the Holy Spirit writes those laws in our hearts. Paul wrote that Jesus “condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be **fully met in us.**” Romans 8:3-4. Before Pentecost took place obeying the law was based on human effort. but after Pentecost the Holy Spirit gave inward power and motivation to obey the law. He promised to write those laws as a living fire in our hearts and **He “moves us” to follow those laws.**

What is so striking about what happened at Pentecost was the dynamic and dramatic change that took place in the lives of the disciples. This is what the Holy Spirit came to do. When the day of the Holy Spirit was ushered in,

Pentecost marked a new era in the purposes of God for the salvation of the world. Broadly speaking we might say that in the Old Testament the work of God the Father is most prominent. In the four Gospels the work of God the Son is most dominant, and in the Acts of the Apostles the work of God the Holy Spirit is most significant. The Day of Pentecost tells us that God has provided His Holy Spirit for ordinary people like you and me, to equip us to live holy and victorious lives and to be effective witnesses in our world. The message is unmistakably clear and we ought to make sure that we understand it. What God is saying, is that we face a world in which the spiritual forces of evil and the demonic powers darkness are formidable, malignant and overpowering, and we are completely weak and unable to overcome them with the “arm of flesh.” God knows that without the power of His Indwelling Presence we are doomed to failure and defeat. We cannot do God’s work without God’s power. Samuel Chadwick wrote that “The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. He fills the Body, directs its movements, controls its members, inspires its wisdom, supplies its strength. He guides into the truth, sanctifies its agents, empowers for witnessing. The work of the Church is to ‘minister the Spirit,’ to speak His message, and transmit His power. He calls and distributes, controls and guides, inspires and strengthens.” It must be clear that if this Gospel is to reach the four corners of the world, we will not do it merely with human energy, innovation, brilliance, surplus funds and technological expertise. If we only rely on these things, we will fail in our mission. Jesus said, “Without me you can do nothing.” Lloyd Ogilvie wrote, “It is a terrible thing to have passion with no power to live it.” God has provided the Baptism of the Holy Spirit for each of his born again children. The experience of the Holy Spirit in His fullness is for all. Peter made this clear in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:39. As we reflect and celebrate Pentecost, let me remind you of certain

fundamental truths that are inherent in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

## **1. THE SPECIAL PLACE OF PENTECOST IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION. Acts 1:4-5. 2:2-4.**

**I suggest to you that Pentecost had a special place in God's plan of salvation for mankind because it is,**

**a. Founded on the Divine promise. Acts 1:4-5.** The coming of the Holy Spirit was the fulfillment of the promise of God. Jesus made this very clear in Acts 1:4. "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the **gift my Father promised,** which you have heard me speak about." The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was not an afterthought of God. It was at the heart of His redemptive plan and mission in the world. We have already observed the Old Testament prophecies concerning the advent of the Holy Spirit. The prophet Joel declared, "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, caught up in the flow of prophecy told his listeners, "One will come after me who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Matthew 3:11. Jesus emphasized and underlined this promise when he said to His disciples, "I will not leave you alone as orphans, but I will send the comforter to you." (see John 14:18). On the day of Pentecost it was Peter filled with the Holy Spirit who recalled the Promise of the Father through the lips of the prophet when he declared "This is that which as spoken by the Prophet Joel. " I suggest that there is no doubt that Pentecost has a special place in God's plan of salvation because it was founded on a Divine promise. But this is also true because it was.

**b. Focused On The Divine Presence. Acts 2:4.** The focus of Pentecost is not the unique and unusual phenomena that took place. The blowing wind! The tongues of fire! The many languages! The focus of Pentecost was on the person of Holy Spirit. Dr Campbell Morgan wrote "THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT' is central and essential; this is the supreme word in the record.' It

is men in the church who have made more of the signs that took place at Pentecost than the Person of God the Holy Spirit. It is the flesh that revels in the sensational and looks for the sign. Today good people are shunning the wonderful personal experience of God the Holy Spirit because of the weird unscriptural signs and strange revelations that are taking place today in many areas of the evangelical church. Anything that is addition to the word of God and detracts from our focus on the Holy Spirit is spurious and must be unconditionally and unilaterally rejected. The Holy Spirit is not a sign; He is not just an attribute, or an inanimate object, a benign Influence or a fleeting emotion. The Holy Spirit is a person not to be used for our advancement or exaltation. He is God Himself. At Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit invaded a waiting expectant praying church and filled His people with the power of His Holy Presence. In that moment the Holy Spirit was no longer a promise from the lips of God's men and God's Son – He was no longer a prophecy inscribed into the scrolls of Jewish writings - He was no longer a future hope burning in the hearts of God's people, but a living reality dynamically transforming their lives. The scriptures tell us that 'suddenly a sound like the blowing of violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.' Acts 2:2. Everything that that took place at Pentecost revolved around the Person and Presence of the Holy Spirit. This is why Pentecost has a special place in God's plan of Salvation. To ignore this truth is to ignore the central meaning and purpose of Pentecost. Second we celebrate Pentecost because of

## **2. THE SPECIAL PURPOSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT BEGAN AT PENTECOST. Acts 2:1-8.**

Just as Jesus came as a historical reality on a particular day, and was born in a particular place and came for particular redemptive purpose, so the Holy Spirit came as a historical reality on a particular day, to a particular place for a particular purpose. He came on a mission from the throne of God. Acts 2:2. The word tells us that "He came from heaven." This purpose began on the day of

Pentecost and has continued down through the centuries. He is fulfilling this purpose right now all over the world. And the good news is that the Holy Spirit is here to stay order to fulfill His special mission in our world.

Having established this fact we ask the question “What is His mission? What is the purpose of His coming? Jesus spelled it out to His disciples in His last address to them before He went to the cross. This discourse is found in John chapters 14-16. Jesus tells them that when the Holy Spirit came into the world, He would be active in many areas in His relationship to the Christian and in the world. First

**i. He would convict men and women of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. John 16:8. Second,**

**ii. He came to be a counselor with us forever. John 14:16. Third**

**iii. He will guide us into all truth. John 16:12. Fourth**

**iv. He came to witness to and uplift and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. John 16:14. Fifth**

**v. He is our teacher. John 14:26.**

It was on the day of Pentecost He embarked on this mission and so fulfill the ministry He was commissioned to do. The disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Would you note the kind of atmosphere into He which came. The scriptures make clear that they were all joined together constantly in prayer. The Holy Spirit will only come to fill, bless and anoint where there is prayerful unity. It is not without reason that the scriptures tell us that the unity was complete. One in spirit! - One in love! - One in purpose! – One in desire! - One in mission! They were all joined together in obedience to the command of Jesus.(see Acts 2:14-17)

Now in what way did the Holy Spirit fulfill His purposes in the lives of these

disciples? In what was He active? Let me highlight two symbols that clarify His working in the hearts of those early believers. It is abundantly clear that the activity and operation of the Holy Spirit bore the fruit of,

**a. Purity of Heart. Acts 2:3. “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire**

**that separated and came to rest on each of them.”** This was a fulfillment of the words of John the Baptist who said that Jesus would, “Baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Matthew 3: 11. The use of fire in the scripture describes the character and presence of a Holy God.. The prophet Isaiah called Him the “Spirit of Burning.” The work of fire in the scriptures is to purge. The writer to the Hebrews declared that “our God is a consuming fire.” Fire purges and purifies. The Spirit of God, because of who is, will neither compromise, tolerate nor co-exist with sin. The purpose of the work of the Holy Spirit when He fills us with His Presence, is to purify our hearts from all sin. The inclusion of the Holy Spirit in His fullness in our hearts means the exclusion of sin. How do you get rid of the air in a glass, simply by filling it with a liquid? A. W. Tozer said that the “Holy Spirit is first a moral flame.” And so when He fills us anything contrary to His Nature must go. The Apostle Peter in Acts 15:8-9, reflecting on what took place at Pentecost declared that God put no difference between the Jews and the Gentiles, “giving the Holy Spirit to them even as He did to us. He put no difference between us and them for He purified their hearts by faith.” Acts 15:8-9. The disciples themselves needed this cleansing - cleansing from envy - position seeking – carnal fear – carnal temper and the carnal tongue, before they could embark on upon God’s mission to bring the message of salvation to the world. Carnality must be purged before we can be effective channels of God’s blessing in our world. The prophet Malachi reminds us in poetic language using striking metaphors to make this truth clear. He portrays the Messiah as one who “shall suddenly come to His temple. He is like a refiner’s fire. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and will purify the priests – the Sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver. That they may offer to the Lord offerings of righteousness. Malachi 3: 2-3. The thrust of the Prophet’s message is that the refining, purifying fire of God’s Spirit is the basis of righteous offerings and service towards God.

General Booth founder of the Salvation Army wrote a beautiful hymn. “Thou Christ of burning cleaning flame – send the fire. The blood bought gift today we claim send the fire. Look down and see this waiting host, give us the promised Holy Ghost. We want another Pentecost, send the fire. God Elijah, hear our cry, send the fire. Oh make us fit to live or die. Send the fire. To burn up every trace of sin, and bring the light and glory in. The revolution now begin, send the fire.”

At Pentecost the tongues of fire rested upon each of the disciples and their hearts were purified by faith. But the purpose of Pentecost was also to impart,

**b. Power for Holy Living and Witness. Acts 1:8. 2:2. This power was symbolized in what Luke describes as the blowing of a violent wind.** Jesus said it in a command and promise. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you....” Acts 1:8. This is a spiritual power. It is not a power for self-advancement or self-glorification. It is vital that we understand that this power came with the Baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit. It is unscriptural to seek for spiritual power. Power is an attribute of the Holy Spirit. We are never directed to seek God’s attributes. We are always directed to seek for God the Holy Spirit. **Samuel Chadwick maintained that “God does not rent out His attributes.”** This power is received when the Holy Spirit comes on us. We must seek Him first and then when He comes to fill us, He will anoint us with power and authority. The scriptures make clear that when God fills us with His Spirit, He does not give us the “spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7. With the Spirit comes spiritual power. Jesus knew the church faced overwhelming odds in her mission. Her task is to proclaim a supernatural message, for this a gospel that is the **power of “God unto salvation** for everyone who believes.” Romans 1: 16. That little group of disciples seemed so insignificant and so weak as they faced the enormous task of evangelizing the world. What could so few do with a mission so great? They were faced with the formidable supernatural forces of darkness. The answer lies

in the power of God in the person of his Holy Spirit.

Nothing has changed since Pentecost, but when the world is at its worst the church should be at its best, and the church is at its best when she is anointed and filled with the Spirit of God. When the devil makes his boldest and fiercest attacks, the church needs the will and the power of God to counterattack and overcome him. And she certainly can, for Jesus said "I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18. This is not conjecture or theory, this is the promise of the Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost to ensure the victory of the church.

Rev. A. C. Dixon wrote that "When we rely on organization, we get what organization can do. When we rely on education, we get what education can do. When we rely on eloquence, we get what eloquence can do. When we rely on the Holy Spirit, we get what God can do" and there is no limit to what God can do. The work of the church is supernatural, and it cannot be done in the strength and power of the natural. One commented that "if the Holy Spirit were taken out of the church today 90% of what she is doing would continue without interruption." That is a serious indictment, and if it be true, it is a profound tragedy, because this means that she is fixing her faith in her own ingenuity, effort and wisdom. She becomes muscle bound by ecclesiastical machinery, pursuing and putting her trust in every new fad of church growth programs to the neglect of the Holy Spirit. God does not anoint and empower machinery. Samuel Chadwick wrote that "The Holy Ghost is no more needed to run bazaars, social clubs, institutions, and picnics, than He is to run a circus. These may necessary adjuncts of the modern Church, but it is not for power to run these things that we need tarry.....The Church that is man-managed instead of God-governed is doomed to failure.....The Church that multiplies committees and neglects prayer maybe fussy, noisy, enterprising, but it labors in vain and spends its

strength for naught. It is possible to excel in mechanics and fail in dynamic.

There is a superabundance of machinery; what is wanting is power. To run an organization needs no God. Man can supply the energy, enterprise and enthusiasm for things human. The real work of the Church depends on the power of the Spirit.” (the Way to Pentecost – Samuel Chadwick) When the Holy Spirit comes upon His church with power and authority, there is no power in hell and no force on earth that can withstand a Spirit-filled, Spirit anointed church. We need to be constantly be reminded that the church will never overcome the forces of darkness and win the world for Christ with the arm of flesh and the wisdom of this world. The weapons of this warfare are not of the flesh. Paul said, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” 2 Corinthians 10: 4-5. The Word of God makes quite clear that it is “not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord.” Zechariah 4:6. We are reminded that “He that is in us is greater than he that is the world.” 1 John 4:4. Spiritual power is given to us in the person of the Holy Spirit. You cannot have this power without Him.

One has written that “We can best appraise Peter in the glow of three fires: Peter by the fire consorting with the enemies of Christ; Peter under fire, being accused by a girl to be a follower of the his Lord and disowning and denying his Lord; and Peter on fire, preaching with such power that three thousand souls were drawn into God’s Kingdom.” That same Peter who denied his Lord three times, filled with the Spirit of God, boldly declared the word of God to the crowd who wondered what was going on. “He told them clearly “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.” Joel 2:28-32.

Whatever you may believe about Pentecost you cannot explain on the human level the incredible transformation that took place in the lives of the Apostles on that day, for the atmosphere was charged with spiritual power and supernatural

authority. The gift of the Spirit is the gift of power for effective witnessing, holiness of life and anointed service. Purity and power embody the purpose of the Pentecostal event. Finally note,

### **3. THE SPECIAL PRIVILEGES GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST. Acts 1:8, 2:4.**

**The question arises is “What ought Pentecost mean to you and me?”** We must go back to the amazing things that happened on that first Pentecost day in order to understand this. When we read the record in Acts chapter one and two, we must be careful to distinguish between the temporary extraordinary happenings, and the abiding lasting results flowing from them. In some church circles too much emphasis has been placed on the outward signs rather than the truth they symbolize. They have added phenomena to the infilling of the Spirit which have no basis in scripture, and bizarre things are taking place which are attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit, but they are clearly incompatible with who the Holy Spirit is. We must remind ourselves that if they do not glorify the Lord Jesus Christ they are suspect, because He said that when the Holy Spirit comes “He will glorify me.”(K.J.V.) So often new revelations and signs have been made more important than the Holy Spirit and what He really does for us and in us. Unless there is a significant transformation in our lives and attitudes that takes place when the Spirit of God fills us, then all these other things are empty, futile and meaningless. God gives to us special privileges when He gives us His Holy Spirit. If you study the second chapter of Acts you will discover that He gives

**a.A Dynamic Fullness. Acts 2:4.** “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit”

What greater privilege is there than that? They were all filled with God’s Holy Presence. What does the expression mean “Filled with the Spirit?” When its full impact dawns on us, it becomes an staggering and breathtaking fact that frail, weak unworthy people such as you and I should be filled with the Holy

Spirit of God. The amplified version of the statement has it “They were diffused through their souls with the Holy Spirit.” John the Baptist announced that Jesus “would baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Just before He ascended into heaven, Jesus repeated the promise in Acts 1:5, “you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” The tongues of fire came upon the disciples and they experienced the cleansing, purifying and energizing power of God. The Spirit of Truth comes to sweep away all sin, pretence, hypocrisy and false profession and make believe religion, to make men and women pure, sincere and truthful. This is what Charles Wesley meant when he wrote the words of the wonderful hymn, **“Refining fire go through my heart, illuminate my soul, scatter thy life through every part and sanctify the whole.”** On the Day of Pentecost the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit. In that moment they knew a dynamic fullness. This is a privilege in deed! But there is something else, for when God fills you with His Spirit the result will be,

**b. A Dynamic Witness. Acts 1:8, 2:4. Jesus said when the Spirit comes on you, you will be my witnesses.** Not witnesses of ourselves and our achievements or our spirituality. Note that “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit” and they began to speak the message and the amazed cosmopolitan crowd said, “we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.” (see Acts 2:11 K.J.V.)The focus of their witness was the wonders of God or the message of the gospel. They were not simply witnesses, but dynamic witnesses. The Holy Spirit motivated them into action. They were inwardly driven by the power of the Spirit. D. L. Moody used to say, “If you have been born again of the Holy Spirit you will not have to serve the Lord, it will be the natural thing to do.” Alfred Mulder said that “Jesus does not plead with us to be His witnesses. He does not command - He does not threaten. He simply states a promise – He gives assurance. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses.”

There are two unshakable assurances emphasized in this promise.

**“You will receive power and you will be my witnesses.”** The church does not get on the move by pushing harder, but by opening herself up more fully to the Holy Spirit’s presence and power. The Holy Spirit becomes the prime motivator. In the contemporary church we are urged to be purpose driven. It seems to me that our priority should be to be Spirit driven. Our witness finds its power in the Holy Spirit. We cannot be effective witnesses until we are filled with the Spirit of God.

### **Conclusion**

The question is “are you filled with the Holy Spirit?” Both Jesus and the early church began with open heavens and the descent of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus when John Baptized Him, and John Stott pointed out that “He entered His public ministry ‘full of the Holy Spirit. Led by the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit, and anointed by the Spirit’ as you will find in Luke 3:21-22; 4:1,14,18. And the same Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus to equip them for ministry and witness in the world. Acts 1 and 2. They were Spirit driven because without the Holy Spirit they would not succeed in driving back the forces of evil and build God’s Kingdom. Jack Taylor illustrates the ineffective efforts of the church without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He uses vivid metaphors and writes “to a large extent we are going around beating on trees with bare axe handles. At intervals, under suspicion that this is not getting the job done, we call for strategy conferences on how to make our axe handles more effective or how to improve our swing. We take a census of the trees, motivate wood choppers, declare that this is the day for felling forests, and with polished ax handles and persuasive personal, we embark toward the woods. But alas, though the noise of these workmen is great, the sound of falling trees is missing. There is movement without might, energy expended without effectiveness, much doing but little dynamic. There is, little to show after all is

done but bruised hands, tired bodies and wounded trees. What is missing? **Why**  
**the axe head of course** –the cutting edge of it all. What is the axe head of the  
Church? It is the life of God released in our world through the work of the Holy  
Spirit. The great need of the church in our day is a renewed hunger and intense  
seeking for the fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit. In this season of  
Pentecost let us open our lives to the fullness of the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to  
fully fill us in a complete, unreserved and renewed surrender to His sovereign  
will. It is only in the power of the Spirit that we can drive back the forces of  
darkness - the malignant demonic powers facing us, and snatch souls from  
the verge of hell. B.P. Head wrote these telling words in a beautiful hymn.

“O breath of life, come sweeping through us,  
Revive thy church with life and power;  
O Breath of life, come cleanse renew us,  
And fit thy Church to meet this hour.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating  
While harvest fields are vast and white?  
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting.  
Equip The Church to spread the light.”

May this be, not only our prayer, but our deepest longing.