

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

Leviticus 23:15-22

INTRODUCTION

- On 9th November 1989, the Berlin Wall fell, after nearly three decades separating East and West Berlin
- Some walls are good and necessary
- We should have spiritual walls in our lives, homes and church, separating us from sin and the world
- But other walls are not good, and are the result of sin
- There is a wall between sinful man and the holy God (Isaiah 59:2)
- Then there is the wall between Jew and Gentile
- Both these walls are taken away through the blood of Christ
- The gospel reconciles both man with God, and Jew with Gentile, breaking down the walls and building bridges
- The seven feasts of the Lord served vital religious, redemptive, didactic roles in the nation
- But the feasts are also are a prophetic outline of God's redemptive plan through Jesus Christ
- Today we are considering the fourth feast of Pentecost
- The first four feasts illustrate Christ's first advent

- ✓ Crucified at Passover
 - ✓ Buried at Unleavened Bread
 - ✓ Raised at Firstfruits
 - ✓ Sent the Spirit at Pentecost
- The first three feasts all took place over an eight day period, then there was a gap of seven weeks until Pentecost
 - This feast is known in Scripture under various names:
 - ✓ The feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22)
 - ✓ The feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16)
 - ✓ The day of the firstfruits (Numbers 28:26)
 - ✓ The day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8)

I. JOYFUL GRATITUDE FOR CROPS

- A. Pentecost, along with Firstfruits and Tabernacles, was a “harvest feast”
 1. As Firstfruits marked the beginning of the barley harvest, so Pentecost marked the beginning of the wheat harvest, hence it is also called “the day of firstfruits” (Numbers 28:26)
 2. Instead of a sheaf of the grain being offered, the wheat was to be ground into flour and baked with leaven into two loaves which were then presented as a wave offering
 3. As each offering was presented, the offeror would recite the creed found in Deuteronomy 26:5-10, acknowledging the nation’s humble beginnings, their bondage in Egypt, God’s deliverance from it, and his bringing them into a fruitful land (Deuteronomy 26:1-11)

4. The lesson to Israel was, “He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.” (Psalm 147:14)
 5. It served to remind them that “it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18)
 6. It was to be a time of great rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord (Deuteronomy 16:11)
- B. God’s people must be careful to remember the Lord’s goodness, and render thanks unto him
1. Despite all the appointed feasts to remind Israel of God’s mercies, Israel would forget and forsake him (Isaiah 17:10; Jeremiah 2:32; 3:21; 13:25; 23:27; 32:33; Ezekiel 22:12; Hosea 8:14; 13:6)
 2. Ingratitude to God lies at the root of gross corruption and idolatry (Romans 1:21)
 - a. It hardens the heart against God
 - b. It causes men to forget the Lord and his benefits
 - c. It diverts the affections and worship from God to idols
 3. “How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!” (Shakespeare)
- C. The blessings of the crop were to be shared
1. The corners of the field and the gleanings of the crop were to be left to the poor and stranger (Leviticus 23:22)

2. God blesses us in order that we would bless others (Matthew 10:8)

II. JESUS' GIFT OF THE COMFORTER

A. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Ghost would come in a new way upon believers after his departure (John 14:16-18,26; 15:26; 16:7,13-15)

1. In former times, the Holy Spirit would come upon certain individuals for certain ministries at certain times (Psalm 51:11)
2. But in this present dispensation, he permanently indwells every believer

B. The church was empowered by the Spirit at Pentecost

1. Christ commanded the church before his ascension to tarry (wait) in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49)
2. That power would come through the Holy Ghost
 - a. John the Baptist said that Christ would baptise with the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11)
 - b. The promised power would enable the church to be witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8)
3. Ten days after his ascension, the Spirit came in power at Pentecost
4. The church did not begin at Pentecost, as some teach

- a. The church was given her ordinances before the day of Pentecost
 - b. The church met as an organised assembly prior to the day of Pentecost
 - c. The church was given the Great Commission prior to the day of Pentecost
 - d. The church had a business meeting prior to the day of Pentecost
 - e. Church members were *added* to the church on the day of Pentecost
5. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost paralleled the glory of the Lord filling the Tabernacle and the Temple
- a. God demonstrated his approval of the church as the institution through which he would work
 - b. He further showed the acceptance of Samaritans and Gentiles into the church by bestowing Spirit baptism with the attending signs upon the Samaritans (Acts 8:13-17), Gentiles within the Promised Land (Acts 10:24), and Gentiles outside of the Land (Acts 19:1-7), following the pattern of Acts 1:8
 - c. Spirit baptism is an historical event that took place in the early church and has not occurred since (cf. Ephesians 4:5)
 - d. The baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is water baptism, where a believer is led by the Spirit to

submit to baptism, and by doing so join the body of Christ, the church

6. Note that the “sign gifts” (casting out devils, speaking in tongues, taking up deadly serpents, and healing – Mark 16:17-18), whose purpose was to “confirm the word” (Mark 16:20) of the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12) have ceased
- C. The Jews regard Pentecost as a celebration of the giving of the law at Sinai
1. There are similarities between what happened at the “first Pentecost” and the “final Pentecost”
 - a. God descended from heaven at both times
 - b. There were visible and audible manifestations of God’s glory
 - c. At Sinai there were 3000 killed (Exodus 32:28), while in Acts 2 there were 3000 saved
 2. While the law is holy, just and good, it cannot bring life or justification; it can only condemn us
 3. Moreover, in our natural state, we have no capacity to keep the law
 4. While the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life (2 Corinthians 3:6-9)
 5. Now those who have the Spirit indwelling, have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in them (Romans 8:4)

III. JEW AND GENTILE IN THE CHURCH

A. Two loaves became one offering

1. The two leavened loaves picture both Jew and Gentile united as one in the church (Ephesians 2:13-14)
2. In the temple, non-Jews were permitted only into the “Court of the Gentiles” and no further, and were to be put to death if they violated it (cf. Ezekiel 44:7)
3. The blood of Christ has removed all racial and social distinctions, bringing all together in one body (Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 3:10-11)

B. The two loaves contained leaven

1. This speaks of the remaining sin in the church and the individual believer
2. While we are called to holiness, we yet have a carnal nature that brings us into sin (Romans 7:18-25)
3. As we grow in grace and the Spirit works sanctification in us, we put away sin, yet in these bodies of flesh we will never be completely free of sin (1 John 1:8)
4. The leavened loaves must be brought with a burnt offerings and sin offerings (Leviticus 23:18-19)
5. Sin dwells in us, but yet it must be dealt with
6. We are accepted in the beloved, though sinners (Ephesians 1:6)

7. Knowing that we have this carnal old nature within us, we must be vigilant in striving against sin, mortifying the flesh and making no provision for it
- C. The grain must be threshed, ground, kneaded and baked in order to create the loaves
1. The Christian life is one of suffering and tribulation (2 Timothy 3:12)
 2. God uses affliction to perfect his people (Psalm 119:67)
 3. The trial is not for our harm, but for our good (Isaiah 43:2; 1 Peter 1:7)
- D. The grains of wheat lose their distinctiveness and prominence when combined in the loaf
1. The church is many members that comprise one body (1 Corinthians 12:20)
 2. Each member does not seek his own pre-eminence, but labours for the welfare of the whole body (cf. 3 John 9)

CONCLUSION

1. Pentecost was a joyful time of thanksgiving
2. Is your Christianity one of *enduring or rejoicing*
3. Every believer is indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8:9)
4. But not every believer is filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)
5. The question is not how much you have of the Spirit, but how much of the Spirit has of you?