

PENTECOST *Life*

Pentecost Observance Personal Reflection

By John M. Johnson

It happened 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus. It happened at the exact time when the Jewish community gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost¹ (Acts 2:1; Leviticus 23:16; Exodus 23:10,15; Numbers 28:16-24; Deuteronomy 16:9-12).

The disciples of Jesus followed his specific instructions to wait in Jerusalem to be filled with power (John 4:16; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4). So, they were “all together in one place” (Acts 2:1).² As they waited, wondered, and prayed, they were unified in their longing for the Spirit and readied for his infilling presence and propelling power.

And they were not disappointed, for the same power that raised Jesus from the dead became accessible to the church (Ephesians 1:19-20; Romans 8:11). Let me say that differently: it is more than the power of God becoming accessible to the church; rather, the presence and power of God invaded the gathered community. Suddenly their room of hiding (John 20:19,26) became the location of a hurricane and fire storm of the Spirit’s presence. And when the Spirit came, it was an experience³ to be remembered and told: a rushing, violent wind filling the room (Acts 2:2), divided tongues of fire resting on each one present (Acts 2:3), and an enabling of an unconstrained Gospel proclamation of “God’s deeds of power” in all the many diverse and distinct language groups that had gathered for Pentecost (Acts 2:4-11). To say that the Holy Spirit’s coming was an invasion, well, that isn’t even close to describing what took place! This “Holy Spirit event” not only got the attention of those in the room but those in the street as well (Acts 2:11-13).

Someplace between Acts 2:13 and 2:14, this uncontainable upper room event, this empowering Holy Spirit experience, riotously spilled out into the Jerusalem streets. And when that happened Acts 1:8 moved from promise to reality.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

¹ Pentecost happens 50 days after Passover. The Gospels make it very clear that the death and resurrection of Jesus took place at Passover (Matthew 26:1; Luke 22:1; Mark 14:1). Paul also references this (1 Corinthians 5:7).

² This is more than proximity. This reflects Christ-centered, Christ-obeying unity.

³ Not long ago the generally-recognized tag line of many Church of God congregations was, “Where experience makes you a member.” Perhaps those gathered in the upper room on that historic birth-of-the-church Pentecost might have said something similar.



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