

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT PENTECOST?

The Significance of the Coming of the Spirit

Introduction: **Why a sound from heaven?**

What is the significance of the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost? The answer is found in Acts 2.2, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven".

Why is this significant? Because the outpoured Holy Ghost was far more than just a sound from heaven. It was heaven sent down. Let us explain by looking at some aspects of the outpouring:

- Why a rushing, mighty wind?
- Why cloven tongues as of fire?
- Why not until Jesus was glorified?
- Why on the day of Pentecost?
- Why speaking with tongues?

Why wind and fire?

On the day of Pentecost:

- Acts 2.2-3 There came a **sound** from heaven as of a **rushing mighty wind**...and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of **fire**

What is the significance of the wind and of the fire?

Wind and fire are frequently found together in OT appearances of the Lord:

- Ps 18.8-10 **fire** out of His mouth devoured... he rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the **wind**
- Ps 50.3 a **fire** shall devour before him, and it shall be very **tempestuous**
- Isa 66.15 the Lord will come with **fire** and with his chariots like a **whirlwind**
- Ezk 1.4 behold, a **whirlwind** out of the north, a great cloud and a **fire**
- Heb 12.18 ye are not come unto the mount...that burned with **fire**, nor...**tempest**

Let us look more closely at each and their significance.

God in the wind

God may be in the wind, the whirlwind, the storm or the tempest. For example,

- Job 38.1 the Lord answered Job out of the **whirlwind**
- Ps 18.10 he rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind
- Ps 104.3 who maketh clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the **wind**
- Nah 1.3 the Lord hath His way in the **whirlwind** and the **storm**
- Zech 9.14 the Lord shall go ... with **whirlwinds** of the south

What, then, is the significance of the wind?

- A rushing mighty wind like a tempest or a whirlwind symbolises His coming.
- The wind is likened to the chariot which carries Him.

God in the Fire

Fire is also often associated with the Presence of the Lord in the OT:

- Gen 3.24 he placed cherubims, and **a flaming sword** which turned every way
- Gen 15.17 a smoking furnace and **a burning lamp** passed between those pieces
- Ex 3.2 the angel of the Lord (= God, v 4) appeared...**in a flame of fire**
- Ex 13.21 the Lord went before them...**in a pillar of fire**
- Ex 19.18 the Lord descended...**in fire**, and the smoke...ascended...as of **a furnace**
- Ex 24.17 the glory of the Lord was **like a devouring fire** on the top of the mount
- Dt 4.11-12 the mountain burned with **fire** unto the midst of heaven...and the Lord spake...**out of the midst of the fire**
- Ps 50.3 Our God shall come...a **fire** shall devour before him
- Is 66.15 the Lord will come **with fire**, and with his chariots, like a whirlwind
- Ezk 1.4-5,13,15,26-27 a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud and out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures (= cherubim, 10.15) ... their appearance was like **burning coals of fire**, and like the appearance of **lamps**...and the **fire** was bright.
Now...behold one wheel ... by (each of) the living creatures ... and ... over their heads was the likeness of a throne... and upon (it) ... the appearance of a man ... And ... as the appearance of **fire** from his loins ... even upward, and ... downward ... as it were the appearance of **fire**
- Dan 7.9-10 his throne was like the **fiery flame**, and his wheels as **burning fire**. **A fiery stream** ... came forth from before him
- Heb 12.29 our God is **a consuming fire**

What is the significance of this fire?

- Just as the wind is likened to His chariot, the Lord also has a chariot of fire.
- It is the chariot of **the cherubim** (cp 1 Chr 28.18; Ps 18.10), who **have the appearance of fire** (cp Heb 1.7).
- This chariot is **His flame-like fiery throne**.
- **The Lord**, seated on that throne, **looks like a devouring fire**, with fire issuing out from before Him.

So, why wind and fire on the day of Pentecost?

Why, then, wind and fire on the day of Pentecost? It was far more than simply a remarkable supernatural manifestation. It had a meaning. The Lord Himself had entered the room. The same Pillar of fire that went before Israel in the wilderness was in the midst.

- The **rushing wind** symbolised the coming of God into the room, just as did the whirlwind Ezekiel saw, accompanied by a great cloud, the Cloud of the Glory of God (Ezk 10.4), and fire.
- The **fire** signified the Pillar of Fire, the fiery Presence of God, whom Ezekiel saw as the appearance of fire.

The link between the wind and fire is even clearer from the following:

- Just as Elijah's **chariot of fire** is likened to **a whirlwind** (2 K 2.11),
- So also Ezekiel compares the noise of the wings of **the fiery cherubim** and of the wheels of **their fiery chariot** bearing **the fiery Glory of God** to **a great rushing wind** (Ezk 3.12-13).

Why cloven tongues as of fire?

The reference to fire on the day of Pentecost is,

- Acts 2.3 and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

What exactly does this mean?

The literal translation of the **cloven tongues** is not **divided** but **dividing** tongues. The meaning is:

- Not a cloven tongue of fire sitting upon each one present,
- But, separate tongues of fire breaking away or splitting off from a central point.

From what? From the Pillar of Fire, which had entered the room with the rushing mighty wind of the fiery chariot of God. Licks of fire were breaking off from the central Pillar and sitting on each believer; the fulness of God distributed among the many members of the one Body.

Now a believer's body is called a tabernacle or temple (1 Cor 3.16; 2 Cor 5.1). This is because God desires to dwell in him just as He previously dwelt in the OT tabernacle and temple. The **tongues as of fire sitting upon the assembled believers** showed each as a mini-tabernacle of Moses

- Nu 9.15 upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire

So, Pentecost was a foretaste of the prophecy of Isaiah

- Isa 4.5 the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion ... the shining of a flaming fire.

Why not until Jesus was glorified?

Before Pentecost some were filled with the Spirit, for example John the Baptist,

- Lk 1.15 shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb

But it was not until afterwards that this experience was for all believers:

- Acts 2.17 I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh
- Acts 2.39 the promise is unto you, and to your children ... even as many as the Lord our God shall call

What made the difference? It was Jesus's glorification:

- Jn 7.39 the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet **glorified**
- Acts 2.33 being by the right hand of God **exalted**, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear

Notice, not after His crucifixion, nor His resurrection but His glorification/exaltation. Only when sat on the throne of the kingdom of heaven did Jesus pour out the Spirit.

Why only then? Because the Spirit brings the powers of that kingdom to earth.

- Acts 1.6-8 Wilt thou at this time restore **the kingdom...**? ...ye shall receive power **after that the Holy Ghost is come** upon you
- Heb 6.4-5 made **partakers of the Holy Ghost**, and have tasted...**the powers of the world to come**

The Spirit brings into the present the powers of the future, of the coming kingdom of God.

This is further illustrated by the day chosen for the first outpouring of the Spirit.

Why on the day of Pentecost?

Pentecost means 50th. Why? Because it was 50 days after Passover. It was the day when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were offered in the temple:

- Ex 34.22 thou shalt observe the feast of weeks (i.e. 7 weeks after Passover), of the **firstfruits** of the wheat harvest
- Lev 23.15-21 unto the morrow after the 7th sabbath shall ye number 50 days...ye shall bring ... 2 wave loaves...they are the **firstfruits**

Why is this significant? Because the Holy Ghost is,

- The **firstfruits** of our future full inheritance, of the adoption and the redemption of the body (Ro 8.23).
- The **earnest** of our future inheritance (2 Cor 1.22; 5.5; Eph 1.13-14).

(The word "earnest" has a double meaning. Firstly, **a promise, a guarantee**, or down payment of a future event. Secondly, a sample or **foretaste** of that future.)

So, on the self-same day the Jews offered the firstfruits of the coming full harvest, on that very day the Church received the Holy Ghost, not just as **a promise** but as **a foretaste** of her future inheritance before she takes possession of it.

- Heb 6.4-5 made **partakers of the Holy Ghost**, and have **tasted the powers of the world to come**

She is like Israel on the way to her promised inheritance. Israel tasted the actual fruits of the Promised Land before entering and taking possession of it. And, significantly, not just the fruits, but the **firstfruits**.

- Nu 13.20, 26 the time was the time of the **first ripe** grapes...and (they) showed them the fruit of the land

So, why the day of Pentecost? As a token that the outpoured Spirit was a foretaste, a firstfruits of the future.

An example of those firstfruits is speaking in tongues.

Why did they speak with tongues?

The tongues of the day of Pentecost was more than just a sign of the Spirit. It was also a foretaste of the future.

This is made clear by Peter's explanation of the tongues-speaking. He said it fulfilled the prophecy of Joel about the last days:

- Acts 2.16-17 this is that...spoken by the prophet Joel; "And it shall come to pass **in the last days**...I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh..."

Why did Peter apply this prophecy to the events of the day of Pentecost? The last days were yet to come. How, then, could this prophecy apply to the time then present? Because the Spirit brings the powers of the world to come in the last days into the present (Heb 6.4-5).

Speaking with tongues is an example of this. It reverses one of the effects of sin.

- Gen 11.7 let us...confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech

- Acts 2.8 how hear we every man in our own tongue...?

One day tongues shall cease (1 Cor 13.8). This is because in the world to come this gift will be redundant. The effects of the fall will have been reversed. Men will once again understand one another's speech.

- Zeph 3.9 I will turn to the people a pure language

The speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost is a foreglimpse of that day.

Conclusion:
What really happened at Pentecost?

Review

What is the significance of the outpoured Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost? It was a major divine visitation.

- God Himself came down in His fiery Glory, on the fiery chariot of the cherubim, into the upper room.
- He came on His throne, symbolising the impartation of the presence, power and authority of the kingdom of heaven.
- Fire from the Glory, the Pillar of Fire, sat on each one present.
- The powers of the world to come came down into the present.
- Through the Spirit, the 120 had in the present a foretaste of the firstfruits of our future full heavenly inheritance.

To put it concisely, heaven came down at Pentecost. The 120 not only heard a sound *from* heaven. Heaven itself came down. The powers of heaven filled all the house.

- Acts 1.6-8 **The kingdom of God** promised amongst us in the present
- Acts 2.17 **The last days** brought into the present
- Heb 6.5 **The powers of the world to come** in the here and now
- Heb 6.4 **Heaven** brought down to earth

Preview

But that was not all. The significance of the coming of the Spirit is even more beautiful.

- Not only did heaven come down **into the house**. It came **into the inhabitants**.
- Not only did **heaven fill all the house**. It **filled all those in the house**.
- Not only were the firstfruits of the Spirit **tasted by** those in the house. Those firstfruits were **manifested in** them.
- Not only were the heavenly powers of the future world to come **experienced by** those in the house. They were **incarnated in** them.

To examine this more fully, we need to look at:

- The Holy Spirit as the Heavenly Gift.
- Not just **tasting** the firstfruits but **being** the Firstfruits of the Spirit.
- Not just **experiencing heaven**, but **being heavenly**.