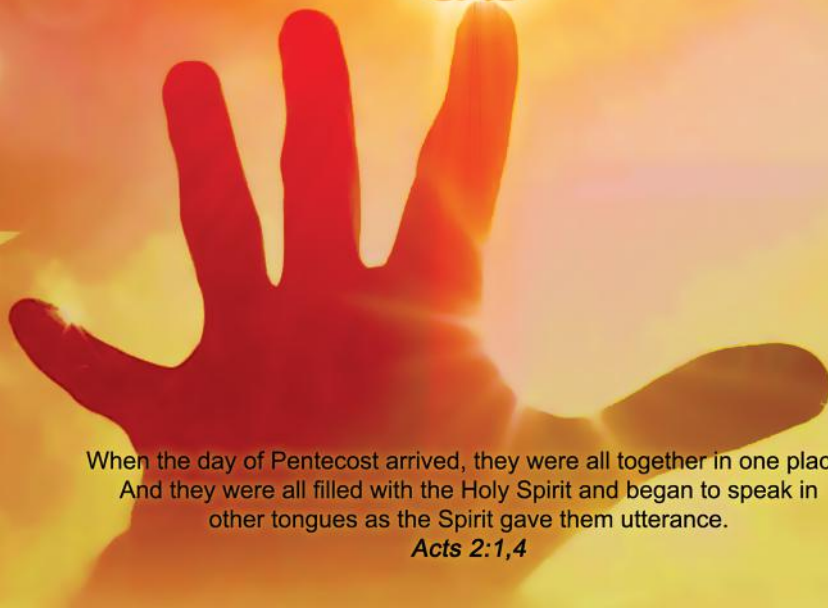




BETHEL AG CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST



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And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in
other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:1,4

The Feast of **PENTECOST**

All the feasts of Israel were designed to focus the hearts and minds of God's chosen people to His salvation plan and worship. To teach the people of Israel, God set aside seven annual feast days, better known as the appointed times of God.

- These feasts focussed upon the Salvation and Redemption of man and worship of God.
- These feasts painted a prophetic picture of Salvation, the Salvation that God was to bring to man through Lord Jesus Christ.
- These feasts showed Believers how to walk day by day, throughout their life, in a relationship with God and to honour Him every day of their life.

The Feast of Pentecost is the Feast which the Lord had in mind when He told Moses that Pharaoh was to let the people go, so that they could "*hold a Feast to Me in the wilderness*" (**Exodus 5:1; 10:9**). After the exodus of Israel from Egypt, they received the Ten Commandments and the order of priesthood and sacrificial systems were given at Mount Sinai. Here at Mount Sinai, the nation was established as "*the Church in the wilderness*" (**Acts 7:38**)

The major scriptures that pertain to this Feast of Pentecost are found in **Exodus 19-20, 24; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; Exodus 23:16,17; 34:22-23; Leviticus 23:15-21 and Numbers 28:26-31**.

A study of this feast shows that it pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit to form the Church of Jesus Christ, and to write upon the hearts and minds of the Believers the New commandments or New covenant.

In the same way, Jesus fulfilled the first three feasts: in His death, burial, and resurrection (Passover, Unleavened Bread and First Fruits). The Feast of Pentecost is fulfilled in empowering the Church with the Holy Spirit (as Lord Jesus promised) to bring the harvest of the Gospel.

Scripture has three different names for the feast; each feast name emphasizes a different aspect of its observance. "*Shavuot*" in Hebrew means "*weeks*". The Hebrew, "*Feast of Weeks*". "*Hag Hashavuot*" is designated because there were seven weeks counted from the feast of Firstfruits until this feast was celebrated. (**Exodus 34:22, Deuteronomy 16:10; 2 Chronicles 8:13**)

In Numbers, the feast is called "*Yom Habikkurim*"- "*Day of Firstfruits*".

(**Numbers 28:26**) This was the time when the first fruits of the summer Wheat harvest were brought to the Temple. In contrast to the feast that preceeded, the Barley harvest crop was celebrated in feast of "*First Fruits*".

The third name, "*Hag Hakatzir*" - "*The Feast of the Harvest*" (**Exodus 23:16**) , meant the start of the official summer harvest season. The Talmud (Jewish civil and ceremonial laws) calls this feast "*Atzeret*" which means "*conclusion*". Since this was the concluding feast of the first four feasts until the next set of feasts in the month of Tishri (Sept / Oct months).

This feast is known as Pentecost in the New Testament because it celebrated on the "fiftieth" day from the feast of Firstfruits. (**Acts 2:1**) Pentecost is a greek word (Pentekostos) which means '*fiftieth*'. The Feast of Pentecost was a one day celebration.

Leviticus 23:15, 16 *"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord".*

Deuteronomy 16:9 *"Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the Lord your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the Lord your God has given you".*

Also, during this feast marked the official beginning of the summer wheat harvest even as earlier Feast of Firstfruits marked the beginning of the barley harvest. Pentecost was also a day that would later become important to believers as the coming of the Holy Spirit and birth of the church in **Acts 2**.

How does one celebrate the Feast of Pentecost in Bible times?

1. The Feast of Pentecost was marked by the offering of the firstfruits of the wheat grain harvest. The Feast of Pentecost followed the same pattern as that of the Feast of Firstfruits since both were celebrated with firstfruit offerings. However, the offering of Pentecost was unique. It consisted of two long, flat, leavened loaves of wheat bread as commanded by the Lord: *"You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah (1 kg). They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord."* (**Leviticus 23:17**)

2. During the Feast of Pentecost, it's a tradition to read the Ten Commandments as they believed that this feast is associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

Exodus 19:1, *"In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai."*

As Moses entered the mount of God, supernatural manifestations took place. The Presence of God was evidenced by the sound of the trumpet, by thunders, lightning, thick clouds, fire and a voice (**Exodus 19:16-19**). The Jews refer to this day as "*The feast of the Giving of the Law*" or the Birthday of Judaism.

3. The Jewish traditions on the Feast of Pentecost include the reading of the Book of Ruth because of its harvest setting in the story. Also, Ruth's commitment to leave her old life to follow the God of Israel is seen as a parallel to Israel's commitment to follow God at Mount Sinai.

What does Feast of Pentecost mean for different people today?

To the Jews, it's an annual festival. To the world, it's a new dispensation. To the Church, an impartation of power to witness. To the individual believer, a glorious new life in the Spirit.

For Jewish people it's a thanksgiving festival to thank Yahweh for the manifold blessings.

For the world, it's a new dispensation of God's grace through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost marked a shift of emphasis from works to faith in the power and anointing of the Spirit.

For the church, it was an inaugural ceremony to build the New Testament church. Jewish temple was built of material stones, the Church is built of believer, the living stones in whom God dwells.

For individual Believers, it's the power to become more like Christ through His gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

How did Jesus fulfil this feast of Pentecost?

Jesus was our Passover Lamb for the redemption of humanity. His blood allowed death to Passover our sins, since He took our sins upon Himself. Jesus, the sinless one, was in the grave, but he did not see decay, fulfilling the picture of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then Jesus rose on the Feast of Firstfruits, Himself being the Firstfruit of the resurrection.

Jesus fulfilled the Feast of Pentecost when He was glorified and ascended to the throne of God; He then sent the Holy Spirit just as He promised upon His disciples who were waiting in the Upper Room in Jerusalem. This was the fulfilment of what God had promised through the prophets. God would write His laws on their hearts through the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:46-49, *"and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.'"*

It was exactly fifty days from the Feast of Firstfruits to the Feast of Pentecost. Likewise, it was exactly fifty days from Jesus' resurrection to the day when He sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples.

It is the feast day upon which God chose to send the Holy Spirit as the proof that Jesus had been exalted as Lord.

Acts 1:3-5, *"He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'"*

Acts 2:1-4, *"When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

On the fiftieth day, during the Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the followers of Christ who had gathered in the Upper room to celebrate the feast. The church is the harvest of Messiah's redemption in this age. We are the bread of the harvest. Those who had gathered in the upper room were the first fruits of the "Wheat Harvest". **Acts 2** event is known as the birthday of the Church. The three thousand souls who received the word and were baptised that day (**Acts 2:41**) were indeed the firstfruits of a harvest that must continue until Messiah returns. There will be a greater harvest of souls coming that we will continue in the power of His Holy Spirit.

What is the significance of two loaves of leavened bread?

The most peculiar ceremony which took place on the Day of Pentecost was the presentation of the two leavened wave loaves before the Lord. The Lord commanded Israel on the Feast of Pentecost to present a new meal offering unto Him baked from their dwelling places and they were to be baked with leaven!

On the Feast of Passover, leaven was absolutely forbidden and no leavened items were allowed to be offered on the altar of the Lord (**Leviticus 2**) as it symbolized evil and sin. However, on the Feast of Pentecost, leaven was used to show the imperfect nature of God's people!

The two wave loaves were to be of fine wheat flour, which speaks of the oneness of the Jew and Gentile blended together by the unifying power and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 12:12-13 *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" .*

These loaves with leaven is God's wonderful way of telling us that the church is not made up of perfect people.

It is made up of saints who yet have sin in them. It is not made up of those who have reached perfection, but of those who are in the process of becoming what God wants them to be, through the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit bringing them to maturity and perfection by the atoning work of blood of Jesus and God's word. Thus the loaves are baked with leaven representing the Church.

What is the significance of reading the book of Ruth during the Feast of Pentecost?

The story illustrates the role of a "*kinsman-redeemer*" (Boaz), who returns the land lost to Naomi by performing the requirements of redemption. He also takes for himself a Gentile bride Ruth who is destined to appear in the family tree of David and of Jesus Christ.

The first link between the Feast of Weeks and the Book of Ruth is the timing. The story of the Book of Ruth starts at the beginning of the barley harvest (**Ruth 1:22**) and the marriage proposal that serves as its happy ending occurs at the beginning of the wheat harvest (**Ruth 2:23**).

Boaz serves as a type of Christ, as a fulfillment of the role of our spiritual redeemer from death and slavery to sin, and Ruth serves as a type of the Israel (Church) formed of both Jewish (Naomi) and Gentile (Ruth) elements.

Are there any parallels between the Old Testament Pentecost in Exodus and New Testament Pentecost in Acts?

Here are some amazing parallels between these two events

1. Both events occurred on a mountain (Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion) known as the mountain of God – **Exodus 24:13 & Isaiah 2:3** (Please Note: Upper Room is in Mt. Zion, Jerusalem)

2. Both events happened to a newly redeemed people. The Exodus marked the birth of the Israelite nation while the Pentecost events recorded in **Acts 2** marked the birth of Christianity.

3. Both events involved God's people receiving a gift -Torah (Law) and Spirit.

4. In both events the gift was given by God settling on a mountain with the fire of His Spirit

5. Both events took place at the same time on the same month

6. The Israelites left Egypt on Passover and 40 days later arrived at Sinai. Then Moses went up on a mountain to see God (Mt. Sinai). Ten days later Moses came down with the Torah and the Israelites broke the covenant and 3000 people died as a result. Jesus died on Passover and 40 days later ascended to heaven from the Mt. Of Olives. Ten days after Jesus ascended, the Holy Spirit came down and 3000 people were saved!

7. Both events had similar sounds and symbols—wind, fire, smoke, voices—the Hebrew word translated thunder in Exodus is “kolot”, which means voices or languages.

8. The fire at Sinai was one fire visible by all; the fire at Pentecost was individual fires on every person. In the event at Mt. Sinai, the people were kept away from the fire, but in Acts, the fire came to the people.

9. God showed up in both cases (**Exodus 19:18-20 & Acts 2:4**)

10. In both events God gave His Torah (Law) to His People and in both cases He sealed the covenant that He had made with them. At Sinai He gave the Law written by His finger on tablets of stone. At Pentecost, He gave the Law written on Tablets of the Heart.

Is what happened on the day of Pentecost a reversal of Babel?

At tower of Babel, there was confusion of tongues (**Genesis 11:9**) but on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, it was a reversal of Babel; tongues were understood (**Acts 2:5-10**). At Babel, God scattered the people in judgement to the four corners of the earth (**Genesis 11:8**). At Pentecost, the gospel of Jesus Christ spreads and reaps a great harvest of souls from every corner of the world. At Babel, there were disunity but at Pentecost there were unity in diversity.

What is the relevance of this feast of Pentecost to the Church and to a New Testament believer?

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost marked the beginning of the church.

a. Power to serve God. Jesus said, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me” (**Acts 1:8**). The disciples were weak, quarrelsome, and intolerant before the Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. (**Luke 9:54; Matthew 20:21; 26:33–35, 38–45, 56, 69–74.**) Fearful and timid, they hid behind closed doors (**John 20:19**). But after they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they were fearless and faithfully proclaimed the gospel, even when threatened with death (**Acts 5:27–33**).

b. Power to be Holy in this present evil world. The Bible says “friendship of the world is enmity with God” (**James 4:4**). No one rises above this evil world except through the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit’s power we can overcome evil. (**Galatians 5:17**)

c. The Gift of the Comforter. Jesus had said He would send the Comforter (the Holy Ghost) to abide with them as their Teacher and Helper (**John 16:7**).

d. Spiritual gifts for ministry. (**1 Corinthians 12:8–11**)

e. Fruit of the Holy Spirit to be like Jesus. (**Galatians 5:22,23**)

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:3-4)

The Spirit’s work in our world, not only so that we can be better witnesses to those “outside,” but also that we may be transformed as individual followers of Jesus and as members of a community of believers seeking to do the works of Christ whenever and wherever the Spirit may bring them about.

(Refer our booklet Baptism in the Holy Spirit in www.bethelag.in)

Application

1. God gave us the Spirit so we would have God inside us, so we would have intimate relationship with Him. Instead of living life in our strength, we depend on Christ who lives in us (**Galatians 2:20**).

2. We who yearn to know God more intimately must listen to the voice of the Spirit, who reveals Jesus Christ, the Lord who died to make His body one (**Ephesians 2:13-15**).

3. We must also evaluate the fruit of the Spirit, which reveals God’s character in us.

4. We must depend on the Spirit’s power for evangelism and for edifying our fellow believers. God gave us the Spirit so that in all we do in our lives, we can do it depending on Him rather than on ourselves. May we seek him in prayer for deeper empowerment.

5. Holy Spirit prepares every believer for God’s future purposes.

Luke 12:35-36, *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.”*

If you have any further questions, please email us at info@bethelag.in or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.