

The Legacy of Pentecost: The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Intro:

Most of the world ignored the small band of Pentecostals that gathered together in that church [Stone Church, Chicago] almost 100 years ago. I am sure some observers laughed when they heard the group's bold declaration. This small band of "ordinary" people committed themselves to a remarkable goal: "the greatest evangelism the world has ever seen."

And then, miraculously, they went out and did it! This small group, empowered by the Holy Spirit and focused on exalting the name of Jesus, initiated a movement that has impacted hundreds of millions of lives around the globe. The impact was so great that one scholar has named the modern Pentecostal movement as "the most successful social movement of the past century."¹

As we celebrate the centennial mark of this bold declaration, I think it is fitting that we pause and consider the theological commitments that produced this great missionary movement. For those of us in Japan, we also celebrate the Anniversary Day of CBC and the great church movement that has been so wonderfully blessed by this school. This too calls us to reflect on our rich Pentecostal heritage in Japan.

We should remember, we should reflect on the important legacy that our Pentecostal forefathers have left us.

I believe this legacy of theology and mission centers on three core commitments. Of course the true center is a passionate love for Jesus and a desire to see people from every tribe and nation worship Him. However, in addition to this fundamental commitment shared by Christians around the world, three distinctive convictions that shaped this new movement:

1. They had a special way of reading the Bible and particularly the book of Acts: They read the book of Acts as a model for their lives and ministry. They were convinced that the stories of the apostles and the early church served as models for the contemporary church. "Their stories are our stories." So, the Azusa Street Revival met at the "Apostolic Faith Mission" and early Pentecostals loved to speak of the Apostolic Faith. The term, Apostolic Faith, highlighted their connection with the early church and the pages of Acts. "Their stories are our stories."

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 8.

2. Our Pentecostal forefathers also had a special understanding of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. They were convinced that the Baptism in the Spirit is a missiological gift – an empowering for service; and that it should not be equated with conversion. Acts 2 is not the story of the birth of the church or the regeneration of the disciples; rather, it is the beginning of the grand story of the church’s mission to the ends of the earth...really a continuation of Jesus’ story. So, they had confidence that Jesus, who had called them, would also grant them power to fulfill this calling.
3. Finally, our Pentecostal forefathers highlighted that speaking in tongues is a sign of this missiological empowering, Baptism in the Spirit. Speaking in tongues was important for them because (1) it symbolizes and validates a Pentecostal approach to the Bible: “Their experience is our experience; their stories are our stories.” (2) And, speaking in tongues, they declared, also reminds us of who we are: we are nothing less than a band of end-time prophets called and empowered to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

This morning I want to focus our attention on the Pentecostal understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. I believe the church – our churches – desperately needs to recapture a sense of the apostolic calling and power that Pentecost represents.

Some years ago a Chinese house church leader (no stranger to persecution) commented, “When foreign Christians read the book of Acts, they see in it *inspiring stories*; when Chinese believers read the book of Acts, we see in it our *lives*.” My friend’s words challenged me: Do we read the stories of Acts with this kind of urgency and desperation, with this kind of solidarity and hunger? The prayer of my heart is that we would: Lord, let it be.

This morning I want to encourage you to allow the pages of Acts to serve as your model...I want to encourage you by suggesting that our Pentecostal forefathers got it right! When our forefathers spoke of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as a missiological empowering available to every believer, they got it right!

I believe that two passages in Luke’s gospel highlight, in a unique way, the missiological purpose of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The first passage is found in Luke 10:1-12, 16. The second is at the very end of Luke’s gospel: Luke 24:44-49.

1. Baptism in the Spirit: A Community of Prophets - Sending of the Seventy: Luke 10:1-12, 16

12 + 70 = ? (in Luke's economy, more than 82: All God's people)

Read Luke 10:1-12, 16.

This passage reminds us that... **We represent Jesus.**

•Tendency to disregard this passage as relevant for us...these are apostles and a select group after all...

And they are asked to heal the sick, do miraculous things...Can this really be relevant to us? Over the past century, most churches have said "no."

...However, as we take a closer look, we see that this text speaks to us.

•As we read this passage, two questions leap out at the reader:

1. How many did Jesus send? (70 or 72; CUV, 70; NIV, 72).
2. Why did Luke include this account; Lk 9, sending of 12; Lk 10, sending of 70 (only Luke records this).

- Let's begin with the significance of the number:

- The selection of "12" not chance: represent reconstituted Israel (12 sons of Jacob, Gen. 35).
- Selection of "70" also not chance...represents the mission to the nations, including the gentiles.

-We need to understand OT background: Num 11:24-30...esp. 11:29

- Now we see why Luke highlights this important story:

•Moses' wish is fulfilled at Pentecost, Acts 1:8 (2:17-18).
Jesus, 12, 70, all of God's people...including us. We are connected to the apostles, the 70, ... to Jesus. Pentecost represents the beginning of our prophetic vocation...our mission.

-This passage, then, highlights the missiological nature of Pentecost...We like the 12 and the 70 have been called to "heal the sick and proclaim the Kingdom is near."

•The earliest Christians read this passage in this way: Manuscript evidence: Eldad & Medad: how many prophesied? 70 or 72?

So, like the 12 and the 70, we represent Jesus. (...12, 70, All)

•This is a great responsibility. Although we are far from perfect & often feel inadequate, we should remember the promise (Acts 1:8).

•**Lijiang**, 2000 years ago...afterwards prayed... He knows our weakness, he loves to use us.

•Wenshan, Ding Ni's Sister, story: privilege to represent him, amazing that we do... "You are like the light of the moon on a dark night. Thank for you for bringing hope."

Read: Lk 10:16

2. Baptism in the Spirit: Our Prophetic Calling (Luke 24:44-49)

Read: Luke 24:44-49.

•In Luke 24 there is a wonderful emphasis on the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection:

-2 Angels to the women: Luke 24:5-8

-Jesus to 2 disciples: Luke 24:25-27

-Jesus to the disciples: Luke 24:44-49 (esp. vs. 44).

This "necessity" is the result of God's plan...revealed in the OT promises

•Vss. 45-47 describe the greatest Bible study ever conducted: Jesus "opens" their minds so they are able to understand the OT promises.

- The OT speaks of Jesus' death and resurrection (vs. 46).

- The OT also speaks of the mission of the church (vs. 47)... "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations..."

What OT texts did Jesus "open" their minds to?

-Jesus' death and resurrection: Isaiah 53 (cf. Acts 8, Philip & the Ethiopian Eunuch).

-The mission of the Church?...hint in Acts 1:8 (cf. Isaiah 49:6)... "ends of the earth." [cf. Acts 13:47]

-Paraphrase Acts 1:4-8. God's plan for our lives is larger than we can imagine... "a light to the nations"

• **Auntie Cha**, Shui zu, older lady.

Conclusion No wonder 100 years ago in this church a small band of believers could make such a bold claim...they knew that they were a band of end-time prophets, called and empowered to bear bold witness for Jesus! May the same be said of us!