

What End-Times Pentecostals Need to Know About This Prophecy

Pentecostals are sometimes accused of having Bibles that automatically open to the second chapter of Acts. That's where we read of the sights and sounds that happened supernaturally on the day of Pentecost, 10 days after our Lord's post-resurrection ascension to heaven. "A sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven" (2:2b) and "tongues as of fire" (v. 3b) appeared to them and separated apart to rest on each one.

"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them to speak" (Acts 2:4).

The crowds of devout Jews from Jerusalem and visiting Jews and proselytes from many nations, who were there for Shavuot, the Jewish Feast of Weeks, heard the 120 disciples "speaking in our own languages the mighty works of God" (2:11b). Peter stood among them and boldly proclaimed these sights and sounds were a fulfillment of prophecy by the prophet Joel (2:28-29) for the last days.

"In the last days it shall be," says God, "that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. Even on My menservants and maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy" (Acts 2:17-18; see Joel 2:28-29).

Joel's prophecy also projects the "last days" as including both the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit being poured out on young and old (as happened on the day of Pentecost) and a future season of divine judgment and justice known among the

prophets as the day of the Lord.

“And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day of the Lord comes” (Acts 2:19-20; see Joel 2:30-31).

Under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, both Joel and Peter linked the delightful day of Pentecost with the dreadful “day of the Lord.” That term is mentioned more than 30 times in Scripture, where it had both present and future fulfillments of godly vengeance in view.

John, the beloved scribe of the “Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1), said he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10a). The Greek construction emphasizes it as the day belonging to the Lord.

Some see the term “Lord’s Day” as referring to a Sunday, the first day in the Roman week, which was used by some early believers as a day set aside for assembling for worship, prayers, teaching and breaking of bread (Acts 20:7, 11). However, uses in the Old and New Testaments always related eschatologically to an awesomely awful season of God’s judgment and wrath, known as the “day of the Lord” (See Isa. 2:12-21, 13:6-13; Ezek. 30:3; Zeph. 1:7-2:3; Mal. 3:2, 4:5).

Others understand the cryptic term to be similar to Paul being “caught up to the third heaven” where he experienced “visions and revelations of the Lord” (2 Cor. 12:1-4). If this is correct, John was translated in the Holy Spirit forward to the great, future “day of the Lord,” which seems to correlate with the content of the various visions and “revelations” found in the book and the multitude of prophetic uses of the term in the Old and New Testaments.

Revelation 5 describes a specific scroll in the hands of “Him who sat on the throne” (v. 7b). It was written on both sides

and rolled up and held in place by seven seals. No one was immediately found worthy to unseal the scroll and reveal what was written inside.

Then, the Lamb of God (Jesus) took it and was subsequently worshipped by the thousands times many thousands of the former inhabitants of earth who were now in heaven. Finally, the Lamb began to progressively open the seals on the scroll, allowing John to see prophetic pictures about the end-times plagues and the judgments of God's vengeance and wrath.

These prophetic pictures are the details behind Christ's own words regarding the end-times events of the "beginning of sorrows"—as found in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24—and correlate with the first four seals in Revelation 6:1-8, which reveal the actions of the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

The fifth seal judgment reveals the result of Satan's period of intense persecution and martyrdom of true believers until their number was completed (Rev. 6:9-11). Then, the sixth seal is broken open to reveal the great cosmic disturbances above and the chaos on the earth (6:12-14), which were designated as the "wrath of the Lamb" (6:15-17).

The sixth seal judgment in Revelation 6 is where we can coordinate with the second segment of Joel's prophecy, which spoke about the cosmic chaos in the heavens and the "glorious day of the Lord" unfolding on earth:

"And I will show wonders in heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day of the Lord comes" (Acts 2:19-20; see Joel 2:30-31).

As last-days Pentecostals, we will increasingly understand that lawlessness, persecution and even martyrdom may await followers of Jesus, as we endure to the end of times. Comparing Matthew 24:4-14 and Revelation 6, we find

predictions of:

–False preachers and teachers, misleading and deceiving the many.

–Wars and rumors of wars.

–Famine.

–Pestilence or epidemics of disease.

–Sorrows and suffering.

–The Great Tribulation period of Satan, including the persecution and martyrdom of many remaining saints.

Our Lord's Olivet Discourse also connects with Joel's "awe-inspiring day of the Lord" (2:30-31). God's judgments will begin "immediately after the tribulation of those days" when cosmic chaos is revealed in the heavens and on earth (Matt. 24:29-31). What he identified earlier as "the beginning of sorrows" (24:8b) now leads to God's judgment on the wicked and justice for their victims. (See Joel 2:1, 11, 31).

Again, the Great Tribulation is Satan's wrath on God's followers. The terrible day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:14-18) is God's wrath on Satan's followers, who defiantly reject and rebel against Jesus. Instead of worshipping the Lord of Lords, they worship the beast and his image and take his mark of ownership or his name or number.

While You Are Waiting

As last-days Pentecostals, waiting "for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10), let us boldly acknowledge and celebrate Him and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We need to maintain our personal, spiritual disciplines and devotion, while we continue to "contend earnestly for the

faith" in this polluted and godless world. The apostle Jude exhorts us to "Build yourselves up in your most holy faith. Pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in the love of God while you are waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, which leads to eternal life" (Jude 20, 21).

Praying "in the Holy Spirit" is a Spirit-initiated "prayer language" (1 Cor. 14:2-5), which can bring both clarity and courage for these final days. Paul explains that "the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). He explained that this Spirit-prompted prayer leads us into the "mind of the Spirit," as He intercedes for us "according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27).

Jude concluded his short epistle with a memorable benediction, reminding the readers that our eternal God is "able to keep you from falling." This word "falling" is translated from the Greek word *aptaistos* and is often used to describe a surefooted horse that does not stumble. It teaches us that God is able to keep us from stumbling into doctrinal error or unintentional sin. (See Ps. 66:8-9 and 121:3.)

While we are waiting for our Lord's appearing (2 Tim. 4:1), let us predetermine and publicly declare that no matter what we may face, while living in these last days, we will "persevere" and not reject our faith in the Word of God nor renounce Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Rev. 2:12-13, 3:8-10), who lived, died and is coming again for those who confess Him and believe in Him (Rom. 10:9-13) as our Savior and Lord.

As these last days intensify the age-long spiritual battles around us, let us proactively comfort and encourage one another to patiently keep the commandments of God and maintain our testimony (witness) of faith in Jesus Christ (Rev. 2:13; 12:11, 17; 14:12). The day is coming when "every knee should bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and

every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10-11a).