

Understanding Pentecost

Fifty days after leaving Egypt, the Israelites gathered at Mt. Sinai to hear God proclaim the Torah or Law to them. The sight was awesome and provoked considerable fear in the hearts of all those gathered there, so much so that they asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf (Exodus 19:10-25; 20:18-21).

The lessons for us are clear:

1. Humankind cannot live in the presence of God.

Sin has separated us from God. Sin can only be understood in the light of God's character. The Torah or Law reflects this character and teaches us how far we have fallen from it (Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:24).

2. Humankind needs to have a healthy fear of God.

The biblical record states that God came down to the mountain and it trembled and shook as lightning, thunder and fire engulfed it. When men and women live as if God never existed, this is more a commentary on their rebellion than their certainty about their position (Proverbs 14:9). The reason all men know that God exists is because this knowledge is embedded in their conscience (Psalm 14:1; Romans 1:20-23). We mock God, as many do today, to our own peril.

3. Humankind needs a mediator.

The state that we live in attracts the wrath of God (John 3:36; Romans 1:18). We cannot bridge the gap between God and ourselves. Hence at Sinai, the Israelites were terrified and wanted to run. Jesus bridged this gap by becoming a propitiating sacrifice for us (Romans 3:23-25).

4. Humankind needs to be clothed with God's presence and power.

On the Day of Pentecost 2000 years ago in Jerusalem, the Spirit of God was poured out upon the early disciples, filling them with love, power and voice! (Acts 2:1-4). They were no longer fearful but enshrouded in love and fully reconciled to God. They could now rejoice in God's presence and come boldly before His throne, free from fear (Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 12:18-24).

This is the full message of Pentecost. It is thus important to note that we cannot fully celebrate it without first going back to Sinai.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

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