

5 Ways Another Pentecost Will Surprise Us

When people staged surprise birthday parties for me in the past, I usually figured out their plans. But two years ago some friends organized a party without my knowing, and when I walked into the room I was totally shocked. There were banners, balloons, a cake and 30 people—and I didn't see it coming. This must be how it felt to be one of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus told His followers they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, but He gave them no clue about when or how. The key word in Acts 2 is “suddenly,” found in verse 2. When they were gathered together they heard the sound of wind; they saw flames of fire; and they began to speak in languages they didn't know. The commotion attracted a huge international crowd. After Peter preached, 3,000 people decided to believe in Jesus. And none of this was rehearsed.

We will celebrate Pentecost this year on Sunday, May 23. Are you ready for another surprise? On the first Pentecost, heaven literally came down. The Holy Spirit “filled” the room (v. 2) and “filled” the disciples (v. 4). That's because they needed supernatural power to do the work Jesus commissioned them to do. The church can't do its job if we are filled with ourselves; we must be empty and surrendered, so God can work.

We are overdue for another heavenly visitation. As I have read and reread the book of Acts this year, I see five blessings of Pentecost that we need today:

1. We need the rushing wind of new life. Acts 2:2 says “a noise like a violent rushing wind” filled the upper room where the disciples prayed. The sound was evidence of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Spirit

brooded over the waters of creation to bring life (Gen. 1:2), the Holy Spirit breathed His life into dry bones and brought forth a living church.

We need this new life today. The church is dry. Our congregations are aging. Many churches today haven't baptized a new convert in years. We can't jumpstart new life in our churches with programs, nice buildings or slick social media promotions. We need heaven's wind to resuscitate and revive us. Lord, send the wind again!

2. We need the fire of God's holiness. There was no giant pillar of fire standing nearby on the day of Pentecost. In the time of the New Covenant, the flame rests on each person. The fire burns much closer to us. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of each of us, and the flame rests on every head. Every believer is ignited with a holy passion for God.

We will not impact our wayward culture unless every Christian carries the fire inside. Not only does everyone need to be filled with the Spirit, but we must also learn to maintain the fire and never quench it. This requires that we crucify our ungodly desires and develop close intimacy with the Holy Spirit. Lord, send the fire again!

3. We need the tongues of supernatural anointing. I hear a lot of talk about the Holy Spirit these days, but words can be cheap. In the New Testament, the disciples had more than words—they had the demonstration of supernatural miracles. They had what the Bible calls "the manifestation of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:7). One definition of "manifestation" is "a perceptible, outward or visible expression."

Many Christians today have gone so long without seeing the reality of God's healing power that they don't even believe God heals today. But God never unplugged His power; we short-circuited it with our unbelief. People need to know that the same Jesus who makes lame beggars walk and blind men see is

still working in us. Lord, send Your miracles again!

4. We need bold preaching that produces conversion. The miracles of wind, fire and speaking in tongues were important. But the biggest miracle happened when Peter, a flawed man who had denied Jesus three times, preached a bold sermon. Peter had many weaknesses, yet the Spirit worked through him anyway. He “raised his voice” (v. 14) and bravely defended his faith.

This is a lesson for us all. You may speak in tongues, but if you don’t use the Spirit’s power to reach lost souls, you have cheapened the definition of a Pentecostal. We often say that tongues is the initial evidence of the infilling of the Spirit. But if someone isn’t bold to witness, they can’t be full of the Spirit. Lord, give us souls again!

5. We need the miraculous unity of the Holy Spirit. Before the day of Pentecost was over, people from all over the Roman Empire had come to know Jesus Christ—people from Egypt, Libya, Mesopotamia, Rome, Persia and beyond. Peter had prophesied this miracle when he said the Holy Spirit would fall “on all mankind” (Acts 2:17). Pentecost is not Pentecost if it does not break down racial and cultural barriers. The Holy Spirit is grieved by racism and classism. Lord, break down the walls again!

I hope you are praying for another visitation of Pentecost. We can’t predict what it will look like exactly, or where it might begin, but our hearts should be desperate for God to unleash it. {eoa}

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