

Verna Linzey: The Spirit at Sinai and Pentecost

The Day of Pentecost in the Old Testament commemorated the events of Sinai. When God encountered His people at Sinai, God entered into a different kind of relationship with an entire nation. On the Day of Pentecost in the New Testament, God entered into a new relationship, not only with individuals but with the collective body, the Church, by pouring out His Holy Spirit on the people assembled.

At Sinai, points out James E. Hamill, in "The Pentecostal Experience," God spoke in a way He had never before spoken to a group of people—in an audible voice (1); at Pentecost, God also spoke in a new way both to man and through man. At Sinai there were supernatural sounds such as wind and fire; on the Day of Pentecost in Acts, there were also sounds of rushing winds and the tongues of fire. On both occasions, Sinai and Pentecost, the wind and fire were simply signs calling attention to the significance of the event (1)—that God was entering a new relationship with people.

Pentecost was one of the big celebrations—Israelites came to Jerusalem to worship God. Dr. J. D. Jones used to say, "There are two things vital to the very existence of the Church—Easter and Pentecost. Easter gave the Church its gospel. Pentecost gave it its power" (cited in Hamill, 2). Hamill adds, "Easter is Christ risen in behalf of His Church. Pentecost is Christ released within the heart of His Church" (2). However, clearly, Pentecost is more than just a special day of observance.

The Day of Pentecost brought a climactic change in the plan and purpose of the Church of God. A new dispensation was born—the dispensation of grace, often called the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost came to form a church. This Church

was to consist of all the redeemed whether Jew or Gentile, slave or rich (Hamill, 2). The observance of a day, the beginning of a dispensation, the marking of the birth of the Church—Pentecost is a glorious experience for the believer. Augustine declared, “The Holy Ghost on this day—Pentecost—descended into the temple of His apostles, . . . appearing no more as a transient visitor, but as a perpetual comforter and as an eternal inhabitant” (R.E. Orchard, “The Holy Spirit and This Age,” *Paraclete* 15, #1, page7).

We are now living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit (Thomas, 70). Everything else was preparatory to this; in fact the previous two dispensations were to prepare for the gift of the Holy Spirit which would bring men into fellowship with God and restore the relationship of God and man (70). “The dispensation of the Spirit, . . . did not dawn until the period of preparation was over and the day of out-pouring had come. . . . It is not that His work is more real in the new dispensation than in the old. It is that it is directed to a different end . . . for the perfecting of the fruitage and the gathering of the harvest” (Warfield, *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, Vol. VI, P. 687, cited in Thomas, 70-71).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is important to dispensationalism, and John F. Walvoord states that theologians generally have failed to realize the importance of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. There are many causes for this failure. “The distinctive purpose of God for the church is often not given its proper place. The contrasting spheres of law, grace, and kingdom are often confused. The work of the Holy Spirit in baptism, if properly understood, would do much to correct these errors By the act of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, the present age began at Pentecost. By an act of the Holy Spirit some future day . . . Christ will come to receive [the church] to Himself” (*The Holy Spirit*, 143).

The primary message the New Testament offers, apart from the Old Testament and the Intertestamental writings, is that the

Messiah has come. The age of the Spirit has opened. The Spirit itself is the power of the divine purposes of God the Father and Jesus Christ. All that the New Testament has to say about the Holy Spirit points to that center (Heron, 39): Jesus Christ and Him glorified.

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