

# THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL

## THE CHURCH ON MISSION

### THE SPIRIT WHO EMPOWERS

#### *The Spirit Comes*

There is a chorus we sometimes sing, ‘Holy Spirit, thou art welcome in this place.’ I visualize the ‘place’ in this song as a being a reference to my own heart and soul. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person equal with the Father and the Son. I want to live in such a way that the Holy Spirit feels welcome in my heart. It should be very overwhelming when we consider that the Spirit of the Living God literally comes to live in me and in you when we accept the Lord Jesus as Savior. **1 John 5:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God....*

As we start our new study series, The Church on Mission, it is natural to begin with the coming of God the Holy Spirit to earth for the purpose of filling the hearts of God’s people. Throughout scripture God reveals Himself in Three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We define this revelation of God as the Trinity although the word Trinity is not found in scripture. The triune nature of the One True God is a divine mystery beyond our total human comprehension. Let me simplify and say that the Holy Spirit is a personal Gift from God to us! When we possess the Gift of the Holy Spirit we are empowered to enter His mission field.

**Leviticus 23** tells of Israel’s great festivals. In these Old Testament feasts, we find foreshadowing pictures of events that the people living in Old Testament times would never personally experience. For them, the Passover feast commemorated Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt. However, the Passover also pointed to a sacrifice yet to come. During Passover, Jesus the Messiah, became **the** Passover Lamb when He shed His precious blood as the covering for our sins thereby removing the need for the yearly sacrifice of a Passover lamb. **1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> *... For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

The Feast of Firstfruits occurred on the first day after Passover when the people offered the first ripe sheaf (firstfruits) of barley to the LORD as an act of dedicating the harvest to Him. On Passover, a sheaf of grain was bundled and left standing in the field. On the next day, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the sheaf was cut and prepared for the offering on the third day. On this third day, the priest waved the sheaf before the LORD. It was God’s design – not coincidence that Jesus rose from the dead during the Feast of Firstfruits. **1 Corinthians 15:23 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> *But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.* Just as Passover pictured the death of Christ, the Firstfruits pictured His glorious resurrection.

Another forward looking picture is the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. Pentecost means fiftieth. This feast was held 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits. During Pentecost, the people presented an offering of the new summer wheat harvest to the LORD by presenting loaves of bread baked with leaven. Since leaven is a picture of sin, these loaves did not picture Jesus the Messiah since He is without sin. The loaves of Pentecost picture

how sinful ones through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ are harvested for God as new creations. **2**

**Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

It was during Pentecost that the risen Christ's church (the called out ones) originated. I would like to say that the church which began on Pentecost is the church we now have today. However, I am afraid that for the most part the church of today has lost much of the Holy Spirit power that emboldened believers at Pentecost. **2**

**Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)** <sup>14</sup> *if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* The Holy Spirit comes to indwell every believer.

**Read Acts 2:1-4 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.* <sup>2</sup> *And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.* <sup>3</sup> *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.* <sup>4</sup> *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

There were three startling signs that accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit:

(1) *a sound like a mighty rushing wind* – In the Old Testament, manifestations of the Presence of God were associated with wind. The word *Spirit* is the same as "wind" in both Hebrew and the Greek. Wiersbe says that this wind of God was not felt but it was heard. Ironside says that it was felt and heard. All that scripture says is a sound came from heaven like a wind! J. Vernon McGee speculates, "It wasn't like the sound of the wind blowing through the treetops. It sounded like a tornado, and I believe that all of Jerusalem could hear it." This we can know for certain: **John 3:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*"

(2) *divided tongues as of fire appeared* – The appearance of this fire was not like fire in our physical realm yet this Holy Spirit Fire was visible to human eyes. **Deuteronomy 4:24 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire...* Recall when Isaiah had a glimpse into heaven and proclaimed that he was a man of unclean lips, one of the seraphim touched a burning coal to his lips and said that his sin was atoned for. The fire of God is pure and cleansing. **1 John 1:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* The fire of the Holy Spirit should be visible in the lives of God's children today!

(3) *began to speak in other tongues* – When the Spirit of God came upon this group of believers, they began to speak words of witness in languages they did not know concerning Jesus Christ. Under the Spirit's power, the first believers began sharing the story of Jesus and His power over sin and death in a mighty way. At the Tower of Babel, a confusion of language occurred and separated the people because of their sin. At Pentecost, language unified people as they became one in Christ.

You know the story – there was a great gathering in Jerusalem of peoples who spoke many different languages and they all heard God’s Word in their own language. Some Bible scholars believe that this event occurred at the temple because of **Luke 24:53**. Possibly it was the sound as of wind that drew the people in or possibly the recognition of languages but the fact of the matter is this: **John 6:44 (ESV)** <sup>44</sup> *No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.*

Some were amazed but some mocked saying that those proclaiming the good news in other languages were drunk. And then Peter stood up – the very man who had cursed as he denied Jesus after he had followed for three years. Empowered by the Spirit, Peter was now able to stand tall and proclaim the message of Jesus. The study of Peter’s sermon could be very detailed. I will briefly point out four proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that Peter mentioned.

#### Proof #1 – The person of Jesus.

**Read Acts 2:22-24 (ESV)** <sup>22</sup> *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—<sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.<sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*

Peter's audience knew that Jesus was a real Person from the town of Nazareth and that He had performed many signs and miracles. It was clear that God’s hand had been upon Him. Yes, His crucifixion had been a terrible crime and yet that terrible crime led to Jesus’ victory over death and the grave.

#### Proof #2 – Prophecy of David

**Read Acts 2:25-32 (ESV)** <sup>25</sup> *For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, ...; my flesh also will dwell in hope.<sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life; ...’<sup>29</sup> “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.<sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,<sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.<sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

Peter reminded them of **Psalm 16:8-11**, verses that obviously could not apply to David who was already dead and buried. Being a prophet of God, David wrote about the Messiah, that His soul would not remain in Hades (the realm of the dead) or His body in the grave where it would decay. And that is exactly what happened to Jesus.

Proof #3 – Witness of Believers and Proof #4 – Presence of the Holy Spirit

**Read Acts 2:33-35 (ESV)**<sup>33</sup> *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*<sup>34</sup> *For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,*<sup>35</sup> *until I make your enemies your footstool.””*

Prior to Christ's resurrection, the disciples did not have a clue that He would rise from the dead. There was nothing for them to gain by preaching a lie, because their message aroused official opposition and even led to the imprisonment and death of some of the believers. The witness of the early believers is a powerful reason to believe. A few fanatics might promote a lie for a time, but when thousands believe a message, and when that message is backed up by miracles, you cannot easily dismiss it. And even if the listeners to Peter's sermon had not been privileged to have personally experienced the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, they were witnesses to the coming of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus was dead and in the grave, He could not have sent His Holy Spirit. Once again, Peter quoted David saying words that could not have applied to himself. Jesus, in fact, quoted these words of David during His ministry. I don't know if Peter understood when Jesus quoted David but he certainly does on the Day of Pentecost – the day the Holy Spirit came to earth.

**Read Acts 2:36-39 (ESV)**<sup>36</sup> *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*<sup>37</sup> *Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*<sup>38</sup> *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*<sup>39</sup> *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”*

Scofield says that the theme of Peter's sermon is stated in verse 36. *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.* The Holy Spirit took Peter's message and used it to convict the hearts of the listeners. Note that they addressed their question to the other Apostles as well. The Holy Spirit comes to build the community of faith.

**Read Acts 2:41-42 (ESV)**<sup>41</sup> *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*<sup>42</sup> *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*

When God does His work His way, the Gift of The Holy Spirit Is released. As we saw with Peter and all the others who were filled with the Spirit that day, personal witnessing goes hand in hand with the mission of the called out ones. God blesses missionary churches. Churches that turn inward dwindle and die. The best thing for us to do is work until Jesus comes!