**Pentecost**

**2021**

**The fire of God’s Presence at Pentecost**

**Introduction**

Such a difficult year, in so many ways; fear, bereavements, loss, isolation, loneliness – hibernation.

Hopeless => Easter – resurrection, felt like a turning point – real sense of hope

Drained => Pentecost – time to be filled, overflowing – boy I need it, and I am guessing you do too

What is Pentecost about?

We do know that Pentecost didn’t start in Acts 2 v.1. “When the day of Pentecost came….

In other words, it was a religious feast day in Jewish calendar long before Jesus appeared.

How did it originate?

*Pentecost -*  is from the word for *five* or *pentagon*

Literally 50 days after Passover

Originated in Israel – celebration of the harvest – like our Harvest Festivals

The Feast of First fruits

When the harvest began, you brought in the very first batches of grain

– ate it in celebration

50 days after the Passover.

*Passover* => celebration by which the people of Israel remembered the Passover meal before the exodus Out of Egypt to journey into the promised Land.

God’s appearance at Mt Sinai happened about 50 days after the Passover

So became the time when Israel remembered God coming down on Mt Sinai

& through Moses, gave the Law which became the foundation a new nation - Israel

Read about it in Ex 19 & 20

First of all the children of Israel came to Sinai

God came down on the mountain in wind and fire

1. *Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel1* Ex 24:16-17

The mountain shook, God began to speak the message

of the 10 commandments to

The people of Israel.

But – see Ex 20

1. *When the people heard the thunder and the loud blast of the ram’s horn, and when they saw the flashes of lightning and the smoke billowing from the mountain, they stood at a distance, trembling with fear. 19 And they said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen. But don’t let God speak directly to us, or we will die!”* 2 NLT Ex 20:18-19

God had come down the mountain to meet the children of Israel

But the people of Israel could not stand his presence. – the wind, the fire.

* + *We want to know what God wants to say, but we can’t bear the nearness of God. We can’t bear the being of God. Moses, you go up the mountain. You brave the fire, and you bring us back the message.*
  + That’s what Moses did. He went up alone. He alone met God o He went up alone, met God alone, came down alone with the 10 commandments on the tablets of stone

§ A new nation was formed.

At Pentecost on in Acts – something even greater than the Ex 20 Pentecost

New mountain, a new ministry and a whole new people.

V 1-4

*When the day of Pentecost came… a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the HS….”*

If you were a religious Jew, you would faint in shock at the suggestion of this.

Fire was a sign of God’s presence

Think of the pillar of fire as he guided the people through the desert by night.

Think of the burning bush.

Fire symbolised God’s presence brilliantly

Fire speaks about

i) Power of God – think of the fire storms => so powerful, they create their own wind to run riot – wild fires and bush fires of Australia, or those in California in 2018.

Firestorms WWII Allied bombing of Dresden & Hamburg bombing [45,000 people died]. ii) Purity of God – fire purifies, => demonstrates the holiness of God.

iii) Beauty of God – something magnetic, something eye-catching, mesmerising about fire

Gaze at a fire for hours on end. Fire speaks of the mesmerising beauty of God => His glory

BUT speaks of our dilemma

Because whilst deep down we want to come close to him

God is not safe

You can’t touch him.

He is inaccessible, he is terrifying.

Fire of OT – keep your distance, or you will die.

ð Barrier between us.

Fire – we want it but not too close Warm us but if too close, it kills us

Highlights our weakness.

Reveals our human nature.

But we want the beauty.

But Pentecost – the fire came, and came close – so close it alighted onto people.

1st Pentecost – the fire came on the mountain

2nd Pentecost – the fire came on the people

We have become the mountains.

Every person in that room became like a burning bush.

The fire came down and separated.

Came on everyone one of the believers.

Everyone of them became a mountain – a place to meet God.

Christians are the new mountains –

We carry the presence of God.

NT uses other metaphors – we are temples of his presence

Apply it in two ways:

1. If Moses here he would run to you, ‘Do you know what you are offered. Do you understand? The thing that priests couldn’t get near, the thing that people couldn’t get near, actually comes to you and abides in you.

God’s power, his purity and his beauty comes to you and into you.

Be overwhelmed! To the degree that you are, you have the power to be like him

Be filled with his presence! Burn with his Presence

Take his presence into the work place, into the school, into the community, into your family.

1. People who are exploring faith and Christianity

You’re not sure you believe it, you don’t know what you think about it

Maybe you believe it, but it doesn’t feel real, Or you are looking for an experience

‘Facts, Faith, Feeling’

This is the thing that brings the feeling, indeed there is no way that the Spirit of God can be in your life, and you don’t feel something

Ancient prayer: ‘Come Holy Spirit’

When we pray ‘Come Holy Spirit’ – we are praying for a greatly increased sense of the presence of God to come among us. That is what so often experience when we pray it.

Of course, the Holy Spirit is everywhere

But it is equally true that we don’t always sense his presence

And Paul in his letter the Ephesians commands the Christians to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit.

‘Come Holy Spirit’

Fulfil your promise among us again today

Thank you that every time we pray, ‘Come Holy Spirit’ the Holy Spirit comes.

We desire the beauty of God, we want his power to provide and protect us

But we feel threatened if we get too close – because we realise we will lose control/

We can’t stand the purifying power. Most people are religious – but they don’t want to be too religious.

They want God, but want to keep Hi, at arm’s length, fire of God – reflects this reality.

And we experience an increased sense of the presence of God among us.