



# Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7

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## CELEBRATING PENTECOST WITH A FOCUS ON THE NATIONS

By Marius Gradwell



I am writing this message to highlight a specific theme in the Pentecost narrative. That is God's heart for the Nations.

Acts 2:1-12 ESV (1) *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. (2) And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (3) And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. (4) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (5) Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. (6) And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. (7) And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? (8) And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? (9) Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, (11) both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." (12) And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "**What does this mean?**"*

For us as Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians there is a tendency to look at the day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as an exclusive upper room experience that had a public impact. I want to show you from scripture that Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a very inclusive and public event revealing God's heart and passion for the nations.

Let us start by doing a very quick survey of the "Nations" theme that runs like a thread through the Bible.

## **Nations - Covenant with Abraham**

Genesis 17:3-6 ESV *Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, (4) "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. (5) No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. (6) I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations..*

## **Nations - Prayer priority of the Church**

Isaiah 56:7 NKJV "... For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

## **Nations - Destiny of the Church**

Isaiah 60:1-3 ESV *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. (2) For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. (3) And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

## **Nations - the Heritage of Jesus**

Psalms 2:7-8 ESV *I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. (8) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.*

## **Nations - the calling of the Church**

Ephesians 1:16-18 ESV *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, (17) that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, (18) having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...*

It is important to link the scripture above to Psalm 2:7-8 and to the great commission in Matthew 28. It is His (Jesus' Inheritance in (by means of) the saints.

## **Nations - the Mandate of the Church**

Matthew 28:18-20 ESV *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

## **Nations - the Ultimate Goal**

Matthew 24:3, 14 ESV (3) *As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"*

(14) *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.*

## **Nations - the Final Picture**

Revelation 7:9-10 ESV *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, (10) and*

crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

## Pentecost and the Nations

John 7:37-39 ESV *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. (38) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (39) Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Please take note that the prophetic utterance of Jesus recorded in the scripture above has three different time frames as prophecy often has:

- The present: "On the last day of the feast... Jesus stood up and cried out..."
- It looks back: "As the Scripture has said..." and,
- It looks forward: "...whom those who believed in him were to receive..." pointing to Pentecost.

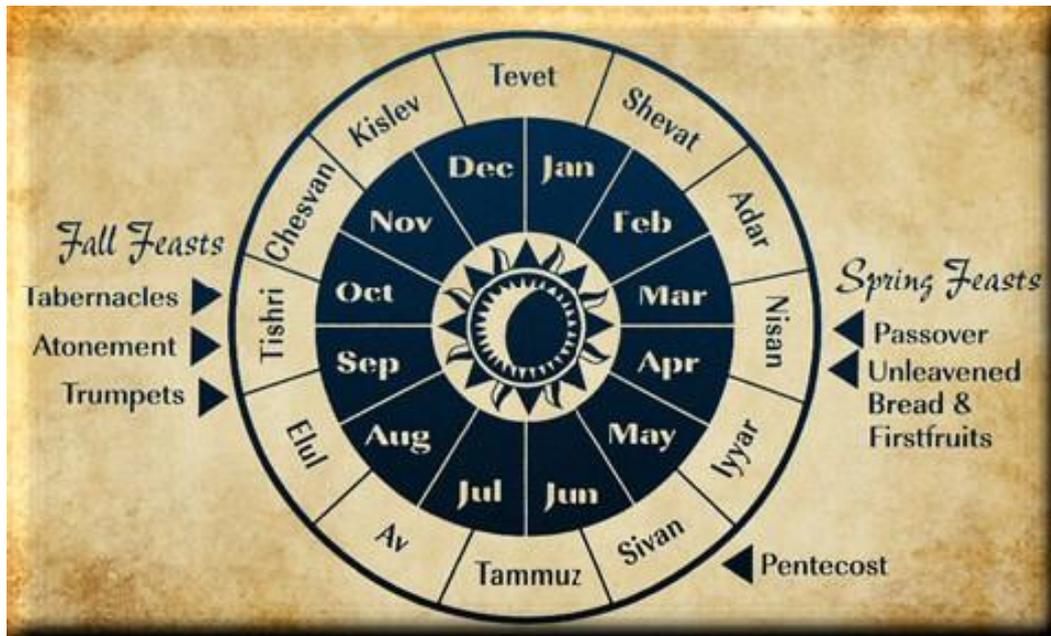
It is important to understand the significance of what Jesus said in terms of the past, present, and future as we look at Pentecost and the nations.

Let us start by looking at the context and the present moment when Jesus spoke these words.

It was the last day of the feast. (Some translations refer to it as "a great day" or "the most important day of the feast" The feast John is referring to is the "Feast of Tabernacles - Sukkot".

See the two diagrams below. The Jews who heard Jesus speak understood the significance of what He was saying prophetically because He linked it with the feast they were celebrating.





The Feast of Tabernacles (known to some as the Feast of Booths) is the seventh and last festival on the biblical calendar, as recorded in Leviticus 23. Also known as Sukkot in Hebrew, God wanted the Israelites to observe this festival by living in temporary shelters for seven days as a reminder that when their ancestors were in the wilderness, God provided them booths to dwell in. There are two parts to this feast and its ceremonies that I want to draw your attention to.

1. The water drawing ceremony that Jesus referred to when He said: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

The Temple priest would lead a parade and exit the Temple through the Water Gate holding a golden pitcher, and he would walk several hundred yards to the pool of Siloam to fill the pitcher with water. With musicians in tow, the priest would gather the water; all would march back to the temple, and the priest would take the water from the pitcher and spill it on the altar where the animals were sacrificed. The water would form a stream of water that would flow in the direction of the city.

The theme of living water symbolised in the feast as a reference to Old Testament prophecies is linked to the salvation that comes from Jesus the Messiah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will cause streams of living water to flow out of every believer. Furthermore, it is also a picture of the church as a river of water that brings life and healing wherever it goes. Here are some of the scriptures Jesus must have referred to.

Psalm 46:4 NKJV *There is a **river whose streams shall make glad the city of God**, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.*

Isaiah 12:2-4 NKJV *Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.' " (3) Therefore with joy you **will draw water from the wells of salvation**. (4) And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.*

Isaiah 44:3 CEV *I will bless the thirsty land by **sending streams of water**; I will bless your descendants by **giving them my Spirit***

Isaiah 55:1 NKJV "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, **Come to the waters**; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.

Isaiah 58:11 NKJV The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; **You shall be like a watered garden**, And like a **spring of water**, whose waters do not fail.

Jeremiah 2:13 NKJV "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the **fountain of living waters**, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

Ezekiel 47:1-2 NLT In my vision, the man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple. There **I saw a stream flowing** east from beneath the door of the Temple and passing to the right of the altar on its south side. (2) The man brought me outside the wall through the north gateway and led me around to the eastern entrance. There I could see the **water flowing out** through the south side of the east gateway.

Ezekiel 47:8-10 NLT (8) Then he said to me, "**This river flows** east through the desert into the valley of the Dead Sea. The **waters of this stream** will make the salty waters of the Dead Sea fresh and pure. (9) There will be swarms of living things wherever the **water of this river flows**. Fish will abound in the Dead Sea, for its waters will become fresh. Life will flourish wherever this **water flows**. (10) Fishermen will stand along the shores of the Dead Sea.

Ezekiel 47:12 NLT (12) Fruit trees of all kinds will grow along both sides of **the river**. The leaves of these trees will never turn brown and fall, and there will always be fruit on their branches. There will be a new crop every month, for they are **watered by the river flowing** from the Temple. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing."

Joel 3:18 NKJV ... A **fountain shall flow** from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Acacias.

Zechariah 14:8 NLT On that day **life-giving waters will flow** out from Jerusalem, half toward the Dead Sea and half toward the Mediterranean, **flowing continuously** in both summer and winter.

These New Testament Scriptures support the same theme.

John 4:10 NKJV Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you **living water**."

Revelation 22:1 NKJV And he showed me a **pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2. The Feast of Tabernacles not only looked to the exodus experience and God's Tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant that guided the children of Israel through the desert wilderness to the promised land, but the feast also reminded Israel of her mission to the nations of the world.

This is the reason 70 bulls were sacrificed during the feast, one bull for each of the 70 nations which originally composed the nations of the world before the confusion of the tongues at the tower of Babel.

Can you see the link of Pentecost and the Nations? At the Tower of Babel, the human spirit was the driving force – at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was the driving force – in both cases God used language to achieve His purpose.

Let us have a closer look to the day of Pentecost.

### What is Pentecost?

- It is the Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after His Ascension, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter.
- Some consider Pentecost to be the birthday of the Church, when all Christians are now ready to set forth and do God's work.

### For Jews

- Pentecost refers to the fiftieth day after Passover. They call this the **Festival of Weeks** (or Shavu'ot).
- Originally it was a thanksgiving for the **wheat harvest** and the **first fruits** of the harvest were taken to the Temple.
- The feast also celebrates the renewal of the covenants between God and the chosen people received through Noah (Gen 8:20ff), Abraham (Gen 22:15ff) and Moses (Exodus 19:1ff).
- The giving of the law (or Torah) to Moses on Mount Sinai is the focus of the feast.

### For Christians

- Pentecost refers to the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ when the Holy Spirit descended on the first Christians.
- So, the Jewish feast of Pentecost became the celebration of the new covenant with Christ.
- Paul, for example, applied all the themes relating to the Jewish feast to Christ:
  - Jesus is 'our paschal lamb' (1 Cor 5:7),
  - the 'mediator of a new covenant' (Heb 9:15) and
  - 'the first fruits of those who have died' (1 Cor 15:20).
- Pentecost marks the outpouring of the Holy Spirit by which we are **equipped** to do the work of God.
- We are not by our own natural resources going to save the world and establish God's Kingdom.
- If **Christmas** marks the birth of Jesus, **Pentecost** marks the birth of the Church.
- If **Easter** marks the day when Jesus was raised from the dead, **Pentecost** marks the day when that message about Jesus began to make its way to people and places all over the world.
- Christmas and Easter were events that involved Jesus as the primary actor.

- On Pentecost that changes – You and I are called away from our roles as spectators into the role of central characters in God’s work of redemption and salvation.
- Pentecost is the day Jesus officially transfers the responsibility of spreading the message of salvation to all of us. To reach and disciple all nations!

I do not want you to miss the emphasis on the nations. Let us look at Acts 2 again...

*(5) Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. (6) And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. (7) And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? (8) And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? (9) Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, (10) Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, (11) both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” (12) And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, **“What does this mean?”***

I said at the start of this message that for us as Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians there is a tendency to look at the day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues as an exclusive upper room experience that had a public impact. I want to show you from scripture that Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a very inclusive and public event revealing God’s heart and passion for the nations. The manifestation of tongues confirmed the Biblical narrative of God’s dealings with the nations, and by the Holy Spirit God now restores the divide that started at Babel and unites all nations in Christ as His inheritance!

I want to suggest to you that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the 120, on the day of Pentecost, did not take place in the upper room, that would depict an exclusive inward charismatic experience, but rather, it happened very publicly at the Temple in Jerusalem, for all nations to witness.

I am sure your eyebrows are raised right now – you might be thinking, “why is this important?” This whole message is to show you how important the focus on the nations is when you celebrate Pentecost.

Let me present my motivation for suggesting that Pentecost did not take place in the upper room but rather at the Temple.

*Acts 1:12-14 ESV Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. (13) And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. (14) All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. (15) In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,*

Note from this scripture the upper room refers to a room/apartment on the third story of a building. It mentions the 11 men that were staying there.

We should not link verse 14 and 15 with the upper room. It is mentioning the fact that 120 prayed together. It does not mention where. Because it is obvious, the place of prayer was at the temple. So, by the way, 120 people cannot fit into the upper room, let alone live there.

Where did the 120 meet?

Luke 24:45-53 ESV *Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (46) and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, (47) and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name **to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** (48) You are witnesses of these things. (49) And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (50) And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. (51) While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. (52) And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, (53) and **were continually in the temple blessing God.***

They were continually in the temple - waiting for the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1 ESV *When the day of Pentecost arrived, **they were all together in one place.** (2) And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it **filled the entire house where they were sitting.***

The word "house" in this verse is **oikos** meaning, family, home, house, or **temple**. It is not the word **huperoon** meaning upper room. If it was the upper room, Luke would have said so. A room is not a house. The word "house" was a description of place or part of the temple where the 120 were continually meeting.

Note the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:14-15 ESV *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. (15) For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the **third hour** of the day.*

That was 9am, the hour everyone gathered at the temple for morning prayer, worship, and sacrifice. Jews prayed three times a day, 9am , 3pm and 6pm at the temple.

Also note! The scriptures we referenced before, that refers to the rivers or streams of living water that speaks of the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit have as its source the altar in the temple. The upper room as place has no prophetic significance. Therefore, I argue that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit must have occurred at the Temple.

Why is this important? God wanted the nations, all those in Jerusalem gathered for the feast to hear, see, and witness the outpouring of His Holy Spirit as prophesied by the prophet Joel.

The same crowd that heard Him say: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

Is the same crowd who said: *"Crucify Him"* (Was crucified at 9am)

And was the same crowd who gathered for the Feast of Pentecost and came to the Temple at 9am to observe their morning prayer when the Holy Spirit was poured out.

THIS WAS AN INCLUSIVE PUBLIC DECLARATION TO ALL THE NATIONS - ALL THE NATIONS THAT SACRIFICES WERE MADE FOR EVERY YEAR - THE 120 FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WERE SPEAKING IN ALL THE LANGUAGES OF THE KNOWN WORLD BY THE HOLY SPIRIT - DECLARING THE MIGHTY WORKS OF GOD. GOD WAS SAYING "THE NATIONS ARE MINE!"