

# 1. Pentecost: The Birth of the Church

## I. Pentecost

### A. The Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost (from Gk *pentēkonta* “fifty”) is the Greek name for *Shavuot*, the Feast of Weeks, one of the three great festivals of the Jewish year (with *Pesah* Passover, *Sukkot* Booths), for which Jews made pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Exod 23:14-17; Deut 16:1-17). They went up (עלה) to Jerusalem; cf. the Songs of Ascent (Pss 120-134).

Shavuot was 50 days (7 weeks [*shavuot*] + 1 day) after Passover (Lev 23:15-16; Deut 16:9-10). It was the 6th day of the 3rd month (later this became the 9th month). It became associated with two other events that occurred in the third month:

- the giving of the Torah (Exod 19:1), and hence the making of the covenant with the Lord.
- the renewal of the covenant under Asa (2 Chr 15:10).

### 1. The Jewish Calendar

At the first Passover, God declared a new beginning to the Hebrew calendar, with the first Passover starting at the end of the 14th day of the 1st month (Exod 12:2, 18). The year thus began in the spring. Months were referred to numerically (first month, second month, etc), but during the Exile the Babylonian names were adopted. At an unknown later date the start of the year was moved to the Fall. The calendar consists of 12 lunar months, each beginning on a new moon. Since the lunar month averages 29.5 days, 12 months = 354 days, so the lunar calendar advances on the solar calendar by 11 days per year. To compensate, an extra month is added seven times in a 19-year cycle.

7 TISHRI	1 NISAN [AVIV]
1 Rosh Hashanah (New Year)	15 Pesah (Passover) (orig. began sunset 14th)
10 Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	15-21 Unleavened Bread
15-21 Sukkot (Feast of Booths, Tabernacles)	2 IYYAR
22 Simhat Torah	3 SIVAN
8 HESHVAN	6 Shavuot (Weeks)
9 KISLEV	4 TAMMUZ
25 Hanukkah (8 days)	5 AV
10 TEVAT	9 Tishah be-Av (9th of Av)
11 SHEVAT	6 ELUL
12 ADAR	
14 Purim	

### 2. The Christian Calendar

The Christian Year begins with Advent and moves through the seasons of Christmas, Lent and Easter. The year contains both movable and immovable feasts. The movable feasts are tied to Easter Sunday,

the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This date was agreed at the Council of Nicea (325) but not finally fixed until the Council of Whitby in (761). The year has two periods of Ordinary Time.

**ADVENT**

4 Sundays of Advent

**CHRISTMAS**

12/25 Christmas

1/06 Epiphany

*Ordinary Time*

**LENT**

Shrove Tuesday (Mardi Gras; day -1)

Ash Wednesday (day 1)

Palm Sunday (day 40)

**HOLY WEEK**

Palm Sunday

Maundy Thursday

Good Friday

Holy Saturday

**EASTER**

Easter Sunday

Ascension Day (Thursday, 40th day after Easter)

Pentecost (Sunday, 50th day after Easter)

*Ordinary Time:*

**TRINITY**

Trinity Sundays 1–27 or 28

## B. The Diaspora

### 1. Divine Judgment

In the OT, dispersion was due to God's judgment:

- a. Adam: God settled (נִידָה hi.) Adam in the garden sanctuary (Gen 2:15), but drove him out (גָּרַשׁ), back to the ground from which he was taken (Gen 3:23-24).
- b. Cain: was driven out (גָּרַשׁ) from the ground; he went away from the Lord's presence (Gen 4:14, 16), into self-imposed exile.
- c. Babel: the Lord dispersed (פָּרֵץ) the people and confused their language (Gen 11:8-9).
- d. Israel: the Lord settled (נִידָה hi.) Israel in the land, where he put his presence. But he later removed them from his presence for disobedience. They went into exile (גָּלוּת).
  - i. Israel: in 722 BC Assyria deported (גָּלוּת hi.) the people, scattering them throughout its empire (2 Kgs 17:6; 18:11)—the Ten Lost Tribes. It settled foreign peoples in Israel (2 Kgs 17:24); these foreigners intermarried with the remaining Israelites to produce the Samaritans.
  - ii. Judah: in 587 BC Babylon deported (גָּלוּת hi.) all except the poorest (2 Kgs 25:11, 21).

Even after the 70-year Exile was over, few Jews returned to Jerusalem. Most scattered to the four corners of the earth. These scattered Jews became known collectively as the Diaspora (Gk "dispersion"). More Jews lived outside the land than in the land.

Matthew divided Israel's history into 3 periods of 14 generations each, demarcated by Abraham, David, deportation to Babylon, Jesus (Matt 1:1-17).

### 2. The Hope of Return

God promised that he would bring a remnant (שְׂאֵרִית) home to Jerusalem/Zion (Deut 30:3; Isa 11:11-12; Jer 23:3; Ezek 36:24). Even Gentiles would join the Jews in this world pilgrimage to Zion (Isa 2:2-4; Mic

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4:1-3; Zech 8:20-23).

In 539 BC Persia captured Babylon. Cyrus issued a decree allow exiles to return home (cf. Cyrus Cylinder in British Museum). The Hebrew Bible ends with this decree and the invitation “Let him go up” (2 Chr 36:23).

### 3. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

On the day of Pentecost, many members of the Diaspora were present in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5, 9-11). They had come from the four corners of the earth.

- east: Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia
- center: Judea
- north: Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia
- west: Egypt, Libya (around Cyrene), Rome (Jews and proselytes), Crete
- south: Arabia

### C. The Gift of the Spirit

The gift of God’s Spirit was a sign of the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20; 36:25-27). The Spirit manifested himself in three ways:

- wind: Heb רוּחַ and Gk πνεῦμα mean wind or spirit.
- fire: tongues of fire resting on each one present. When the Torah was given, the Lord descended on the community in fire (Exod 19:18). The Lord now descends on his people individually.
- prophetic speech: reversal of Babel.

### D. Peter’s Sermon

#### 1. Apologia/defense (2:14-21)

Defense (απολογία) of what has happened. “This is that” (KJV): this (the gift of the Spirit) = that (the promised gift of the spirit in the last days, Joel 2:28-32). Conclusion: the last days have arrived, God has returned to restore his people.

#### The Two Ages

OT Prophets: contain many promises of what God will do “on that day,” “in those days,” “on the last day,” “in the last days,” “at that time.” On this “day of the LORD” he would come in:

- judgment on his enemies = Israel’s enemies
- salvation for his people
- vindication of his righteousness and of his suffering people, including resurrection.

There would be a transition from “this age” to “the age to come.”

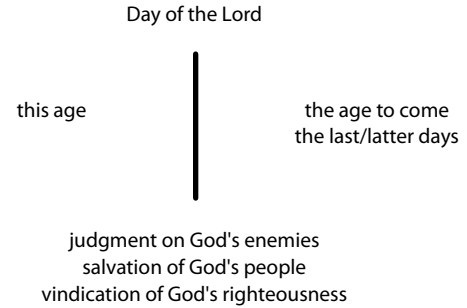
Intertestamental Period: Intensification of expectation of “the coming age” that will end “this age.” This produced an “eschatological dualism” and an “apocalyptic view of history.”

- **Eschatology:** “the doctrine of the last things.” It deals with the teaching or belief, that the world-movement, religiously-considered, tends towards a definite final goal, beyond which a new order of affairs will be established, frequently with the further implication, that this new order of affairs will not be subject to any further change, but will partake of the static character of the eternal. (Vos, *Pauline Eschatology*, 1)
- **Apocalyptic:** the expectation that the reversal of Israel’s fortunes required a dramatic

intervention by God, upsetting the present course of world history.

Expectation

- Liberation from oppression (Rome)
- Restoration of land
- Proper rebuilding of Temple



Jesus: addressed, but reinterpreted, the contemporary understanding of the two ages. Focused it around himself. E.g.

“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much **in this present age**: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and **in the age to come eternal life.**” (Mark 10:29-30 NIV; par. Luke 18:29-30)

## 2. Kerygma/proclamation (2:22-36)

Proclamation (κήρυγμα) of the events of Jesus’ life. These now make sense. Two primary facts:

- human action: you crucified and killed him
- God’s action: God raised him up

The resurrection is central; it indicates that the new age has arrived.

## 3. Call to repentance (2:37-41)

- repent
- be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins
- Promise: will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

## Inaugurated Eschatology

God had inaugurated the new age in the middle of time while the old age continues to run. God’s people now enjoy eternal life (“life of the age to come”) in the midst of time. The church is “an eschatological outpost in time” (D.A. Carson), a colony of heaven in time and on earth.

Continuity with OT & Jesus: OT → Jesus (life, death, resurrection, ascension) → church

So, for Luke, the ascension of Jesus is the transition point between Luke and Acts.

Acts is about the spread of the gospel and the church outwards from Jerusalem under the impulse of the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus’ programmatic statement: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8). Acts records this witness to Jesus in Jerusalem (1:12-8:1a), in Judea and Samaria (8:1b-12:25), to the ends of the earth (13:1-28:31).
- Luke gives periodic statements that the word of God and the church grew (αὐξάνω) and multiplied (πληθύνω) (6:7; 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:20).
- each new stage in the expansion of the gospel is initiated by the Holy Spirit, e.g. 8:29; 10:19; 13:2, 4.
- Luke records major speeches (απολογία defense or κήρυγμα proclamation): Peter, Stephen, James, Paul.