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The Day of Pentecost

Acts 2

*“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls”
(Acts 2:41).*

How can we explain what happened on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)? Three thousand baptisms took place on that day, involving people from all over the known world. How amazing! The speaker, Peter, was an unknown preacher who was not even a rabbi. He did not know what he was going to say to the crowd. The Holy Spirit put the right words in his mouth. He explained who Jesus was and what He had done. This was the greatest response to a sermon in all of history. The most marvelous thing ever produced, the church, was accomplished through the cross and this preaching.

God left nothing to chance. He put it all together. Thousands of Jews had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. For many, this was a major religious pilgrimage, maybe a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Some of these people remained in Jerusalem for *fifty days* until the Day of Pentecost. These people were crowded close together. They could not stop talking about the Passover, the cross, and the empty tomb.

There had never been a Passover like this one! God gave Israel fifty days to think about what had happened. Earthquakes had “rattled their teeth” (see Matthew 27:51–53). From the sixth hour to the ninth hour, the land had been covered in darkness (Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). God allowed the people to crucify Jesus, but He refused to let them enjoy seeing Him die. This time from 12 noon to 3 p.m. was spooky, weird, and scary! People were too bewildered to move, too afraid not to move.

“What have we done?” was the question. Rocks were rent. Tombs were opened. Recognized folk from these opened tombs walked around after the resurrection (Matthew 27:51, 52). As priests in the temple were serving (at the ninth hour), the veil was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45b). The frenzy that cried, “Crucify Him!” turned into hysteria. The participants were so disturbed that they smote their breasts in confusion. Even the Roman centurion, one of the soldiers who had helped to crucify Jesus, recognized Him as being “the Son of God” (see Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39).

For *fifty days* all that the people who had crowded into Jerusalem could see was an empty tomb. Pilate and the Jewish leaders knew that Jesus had been resurrected. No search party was sent. The apostles were not questioned. The enemies knew before the disciples did.

Jesus had been resurrected. He did not die again; rather, after appearing to His disciples over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3), He ascended to His Father in heaven. He was taken up in the clouds and is now seated at God’s right hand (Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1). Before He ascended, Jesus told His apostles, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you

shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This promise was fulfilled only days later, on the Day of Pentecost.

On that occasion God came with a mighty wind. The Holy Spirit filled the apostles. Divided tongues as of fire sat upon them. All of the apostles began to preach in other languages the wonderful things of God. Then, in the major sermon, Peter preached about what had happened *fifty days before!* He said his listeners were not only witnesses but also perpetrators. He branded them as murderers—killers of God's Son! They were cut to their hearts. They cried out in terror. They repented. Three thousand were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. With their conversion, the church began on this Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

History reveals to us that "all the armies that ever marched, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned"¹ have not affected us as the one solitary life of Jesus Christ has. Those three thousand baptisms were no accident. Satan was not as smart as he thought he was. Do not underestimate Satan; do not overestimate Satan. Did Satan think he could kill God? Surely, he knew that, even if he did kill God, he could not keep God dead. Imagining that he had won, Satan defeated himself.

*The cross . . .
there is no other way!*

¹James Allan Francis, "Arise, Sir Knight," in *"The Real Jesus" and Other Sermons* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1926), 123–24.