Pentecost 8

We have considered the who, what, when, where, and how of Pentecost. Now let’s discuss why. Although there are many reasons, here are three important ones.

1. God Wanted a Family

I was sitting in a church a couple of summers ago when some of the women of the congregation seemed extremely attractive to me. These thoughts irritated me because of the setting and because I am a grandpa. I controlled my thinking and told God it was frustrating to deal with these impulses for decades. “Why did you make us like this?” I asked. Three words floated to the center of my mind, “I … love … people!”. My response was, “What??” Then it dawned on me that God is not in the business of making people, people are! And the only way He gets lots of people to love is to get lots of people to make… lots of people!

Gen. 1:28a

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.”

“Fill the earth”. He wasn’t kidding! That’s His vision – wall-to-wall family! I quit after three kids because I was concerned that I might fall short supporting more. God is not burdened with such thoughts. With unlimited resources and love, He can handle a planet full. And who knows? Maybe more! That is why He built an urge in us to reproduce not for a short season, but for our entire lives. Then it hit me – I was left in an orphanage in New Orleans, probably because of over desire and under planning. So, it dawned on me that I should be thankful for that burning yearn God built in man. It caused … me! And God loves me despite the twist and turns my life has taken. And one day our pasts will be just that – past – and insignificant compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. As we discussed earlier, we must be born twice to be in God’s family. And God seems not to get too hung up on how we get born both times, just that we do. He wants family.

God made the universe for the earth, the earth for man, and man to fellowship with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, God put the “Redemption Rescue” plan in motion. After all, if you go to the trouble of creating galaxies, nebulae, planetary systems, time, space, energy, matter, angels, plants, animals, and humans, it stands to reason He should get the consummation of His creation plan – a family. God did not quit at the first (or one millionth) setback. He did the best He could for mankind at each stage of their redemption journey until the Redeemer could come and begin restoring what Adam lost.

Each of us puny humans see the world as it relates to us. We see ourselves as Americans or Kenyans or French. We see ourselves as male or female… or as butchers, bakers, or candlestick makers. We see history starting about when we started and the “most important things that ever occurred” happening while we are alive and aware. Why do we think this way? Because it’s all about us. Fallen human nature is “us-centric”, everything is about and focused on us. It’s as if each of our lives is a movie and we are the stars. Our immediate family are the costars and the people we interact with daily are the supporting cast. Then there is the walk-on cast and “extras” who filter through our experience as we live our little movie life. Why? Because we think it’s all about us. But, is it? Here’s “the Self-made Man” for some perspective.

“The Self-Made Man”

Living on a planet in a universe he didn’t create…

Surrounded by heavenly objects light-years away that he didn’t arrange…

Breathing air he never produced…

Living in a body that was a gift from God (and his parents)…

Speaking a language he never invented and was taught by others…

` Drinking water he never sourced…

Eating food he never planted, grew, or harvested …

Wearing clothes he never designed or made…

Living in a building he never built…

Driving a car made of materials he never mined, machined, or manufactured …

Listening to music he never composed, recorded, or performed…

Watching a TV that he didn’t build…

Using electricity he didn’t produce…

Molded by his family, neighborhood, and environment…

Spending much time in a profession he joined…

Informed by the schools and media…

Led by his government…

Propelled into the future by societal and cultural expectations…

A self-made man? (No way! And yet, we still think it’s “all about us”!)

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1 Cor. 4:7b

And what do you have that you did not receive as a gift? But if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Has it hit you yet? We are not the stars in our own little movies. We are walk-ons in God’s movie! We are twinkles in His eye. We are bit players in His-story – because of His mercy and grace. He made the movie set – the universe. He made the script – the gospel story of redemption and family. He directs the movie according to His will despite the temperamental actor’s desires. And He’ll reward those that cooperate with him and cut out those that don’t in the final edit. He’s making His family movies for eternity. In that day, if you’re family, you’ll be in His movie. If you’re not family, you had your own little movie and it’s over for you.

Eph. 3:14,15 KJV

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

God has been working for millennia to fulfill His gospel story and family. Pentecost was a major step forward for “filling the earth” with spiritual children. It became available for fallen man to have spirit born within and change natures and families for eternity. All that is left to do is for these new believers is to get new bodies at the Rapture and the redemption of every aspect of the Church of Grace will be complete. Next, he will resurrect and redeem those who walked righteously in the Old Testament and those of Israel who will accept Christ after the Rapture. It’s mind blowing to realize that we are 6000 years after Adam’s sin and God is still shooting His movie of redemption and family. He’ll finish when …

Eph. 1:9-10

having made known to us the sacred secret of his will, according to his good pleasure that he planned beforehand in him,

with a view toward the administration of the fullness of the times, to unite under one head all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in him;

There will be a family reunion in the future. The heavenly and earthly family will be united in Christ and God will make the popcorn and we’ll watch the family movies!

Why Pentecost? It was a major step forward and milestone in God’s eternal family plan.

2. Man Needed Fixing

Romans 5:12

So then, just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, in this way death came to all mankind for all sinned.

God originally made Adam body, soul, and spirit. When Adam sinned, he died as God warned – not physically but spiritually. He lost the spirit God gave him. This change was cataclysmic. Man, who was made to walk and talk with God who is spirit, couldn’t do it without the spirit. This short-circuited the blueprint for creation and left man missing an important part of himself. This caused man to become subject to Satan’s influences and enslaved to his flesh, his compromised body and soul.

Jesus came to bring man back to God. When he ascended out of this world, he poured out God’s spirit on Pentecost, making it available for man to be a three-part being again.

Rom 5:17

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one—Jesus Christ.)

“Death (spiritual death – the absence of spirit) reigned through the one (Adam).” Adam’s loss of spirit became genetic. All his progeny were born without it. And this caused man to sin more and more because the part made to fellowship with God was gone. It’s almost as if man was like a tricycle with three wheels – body, soul, and spirit. When he lost the spirit, his riding became an impossible challenge – riding on two wheels when you were made to ride on three. Falling was inevitable. The only questions are “When?” and “How much damage this time?” Religion, psychology, self-help, and other behavior modification attempts different approaches to fix the malady of mankind’s lack of spirit. The cause of man’s problem isn’t behavioral or mental, it’s spiritual. Man “comes from the factory” defective. He’s broken before he ever tries to live. He’s missing a third of himself. Until… he is born again of God’s spirit.

Rom. 5:19

For just as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.

In the first birth man since Adam was “made” to sin, fall and fail. It wasn’t a question of how they lived, but how they were “made”. They were “made” for frustration, desperation, and death. In the second birth, we are “made” in Christ righteous. We are “made” to stand before God and ask for and get answered prayer. We are “made” to overcome and to succeed. We are “made” to love and have peace, joy, goodness, and patience. We are “made” to speaking tongues, prophesy and operate the other manifestations. We are “made” to walk with God and have eternal life. It’s how we are now spiritually “made”. Whether we feel these things or do them is dependent on our renewed mind, yet from God’s and Christ’s perspective, that is how we’re made in the new birth. We have a new spiritual DNA that can overshadow the old that allows us to be more than conquerors as God’s children. Pentecost began the introduction of a new human species to the earth – body, soul, and spirit.

1. Walking by the Spirit

Having given man the spirit on Pentecost, God wanted him to use the spirit, not just “have it”.

Gal. 3:3

Are you so senseless? Having begun in the spirit, are you now trying to be completed in the flesh?

God begins us in the spirit in the new birth. Afterward, God wants us to live in and by the spirit, not to return to living a lifestyle dominated by the flesh as we did before.

Gal. 5:25

Since we live by the spirit, let us also keep in step with the spirit.

This does not mean shedding our flesh, our body and soul. That would mean suicide and death. Walking by the flesh or by the spirit indicates which part of us dominates in our thinking and action. When we speak in tongues, our body (brain, lips, tongue, lungs, etc.) and soul (will) certainly are in partnership with our spirit (the content of the language), yet the spiritual is emphasized. When we go to work, our body and soul punch the clock, but we should allow our spirit to filter the sights and sounds of everyone and everything around us, looking for an opportunity to serve others spiritually and physically. This is the spiritual walk. If we walk by the flesh, we never speak in tongues and are just another wage slave racking up another day toward retirement. Christians who walk by the flesh are physically alive but spiritually numb. They have the spirit but don’t use it. They just operate exclusively from their body and soul. Physical life is a terrific gift from our parents and God, but physical and spiritual life is what God desires and everybody else should want too. Pentecost started this.

In the Old Testament, only certain people got the spirit put on them conditionally for special assignments. The elders and kings prophesied and could lead. Sampson kicked Philistine butt. Isaiah wrote the scripture. On Pentecost, the conditions changed because of what Christ accomplished and gave to mankind. Anyone could receive the gift of the holy spirit if you believed in Christ.

Acts 2:38,39

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.

For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are far off, even to as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Pentecost began major changes so that anyone could receive the holy spirit, not just elders, prophets, kings, or judges. The only qualification was believing in Christ. Another change was that it was eternal life. And yet another change was that the new spirit was to be a dominant force in our life, just as it was with Adam in the garden.

Let’s deal with a doctrinal and practical error that has deceived me and others in the Church. I call it…

Distracted by Scripture

Far too many of us (me included) have emphasized scripture over the spirit of God in the church, sometimes to the spirit’s exclusion in daily life. When I was in my teens, I went to a Bible college that taught that the spirit was given to the Church until the time the Bible came and, therefore, it is no longer needed. They quoted verses from 1 Cor. 13 to justify this idea.

1 Cor. 13:9-12 KJV

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

The professors said that “when that which is perfect is come” [they said the Bible] “then that which is in part [the spirit and the manifestations] shall be done away”. They reasoned that the spirit and manifestations (knowing in part – word of knowledge, wisdom, discerning of spirits and prophesy) would be gone when the great revelation of the Bible appeared. Therefore, we should not speak in tongues. I remember sitting glumly in class wondering why it says in the next chapter…?

1 Cor. 14:39 KJV

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

Was their teaching correct? If so, why does the Bible say otherwise and years later I ask, “Why do I and multitudes of others still speak in tongues, receive revelation and prophesy?”

The reason their teaching is incorrect is because they are misidentifying “that which is perfect” in 1 Cor. 13:10. This phrase refers to the new body we will receive at Christ’s return in the Rapture (then, “face to face”. Our new face with Christ’s beautiful face!} Then, the manifestations – tongues, prophesy and word of knowledge and wisdom will be done away because we’ll know with spiritual minds tapped into Christ. Until then, we have these spiritual “play toys” as God implies - “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” The manifestations of the spirit have not “died with the apostles” like I was taught. They will be around until the Rapture and then discarded as unnecessary.

Look, I like the Bible. A lot. At times in the past, too much. I’ve been studying it for almost 50 years. Taught seminars on it and wrote books about parts of it. I looove the Bible! But I see it overemphasized in the Church regularly, and in some cases, institutionally. What do you mean, Steve? I’ll tell you but first let me say that I love you and the things I’m saying will confront things perhaps you suspected but never crystallized in your mind. Read the whole chapter before you throw it down, burn it, and buy a plane ticket to come and yell at me. Are you seated? Good, here we go.

On Pentecost what came? Was it the Bible? No, it was the spirit. Could God have printed up the New Testament that day and delivered it in the Temple? Sure. Remember, He did something like that for King Belshazzar once. He could have even done a ‘red-letter edition’. Why didn’t He? I’ll answer by asking another question, “What’s more important, the Spirit or the Bible?” To God and Jesus, it was more important to pour out the spirit on Pentecost than give the New Testament scriptures. Why is that? Because God made the universe for the earth, the earth for man and man to fellowship with Him. And to do that man has to have spirit because God is spirit.

When Christ comes back at the Rapture, what happens to the Bible? We don’t need it any longer. Why not? “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” If we know even as we’re known” the Bible is superfluous. If we have questions then, we’re “face to face” with the Lord Jesus Christ. We don’t need to read Thessalonians, we’re living it!

When Christ comes back at the Rapture, what happens to the spirit of God we received in the new birth? It will be our life source with a new body. So, what’s of more eternal value, the spirit or the Bible? Some of you are having a cow. Some of you can’t allow yourselves to say the answer. It seems blasphemous to say that the Bible is somehow less than anything. Yet it will one day (soon I hope!) lose relevance to us while the spirit will be our life forever. The Bible was given to help our bodies and souls to learn to walk by the spirit and know God personally. Let’s look at the big picture.

The Pattern

Gen. 1:26,27

And God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the ground.”

So God created the man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.

If God is spirit, then part of man that God created in His image was spirit. Notice that He didn’t give man the Bible, the scriptures. He gave, or made man body, soul, and spirit so that He could walk and talk with Man. Why? Because God made the universe for the earth, the earth for man and man to fellowship with Him.

Gen. 3:8a

They heard the sound of Yahweh God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,

Where is the Bible at that point? Non-existent. Moses started writing it 2500 years later. If it was around then it would have been “in the way” and a distraction. Why? Because God and Adam walked together and talked directly. Why? Because that‘s what God wanted and they could. Think about that. God never “made the universe for the earth, the earth for man and man to read about Him from a book.” He wanted intimate fellowship, not an intellectual distant relationship.

Once I went to lunch and brought my Bible to read while eating. A fellow customer came over and asked what I was reading. I answered the Bible. He told me that was obvious, but what part of the Bible was I reading? I answered “Romans, and our identification with Christ is awesome!“ I went on for a couple of minutes sharing my excitement. He shared with me that he just graduated from a university biblical studies program with a Ph. D and would be teaching soon at a major college. I asked him what part of Romans did he like most. He told me he wasn’t into that sort of stuff. He was into biblical languages and archaeology. We parted awkwardly after a strained conversation.

He knew the languages. He knew the archeology. He knew the history. He just didn’t know the Author. So, what did he really know? Not much. Do you think his degree will help at the judgment seat of Christ? I think it will be a hindrance until then – beguiling him into a false sense of religious association with God. Do you think a Ph. D impresses God? How about a lot of money? Or power?

Jer. 9:23,24

This is what Yahweh says: “Let not the wise man boast about his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast about his might, and let not the rich man boast about his riches;

but let the one who boasts boast about this, that he has understanding and knows me, that I am Yahweh who acts with covenant faithfulness, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for in these things I delight, says Yahweh.

None of us are in God’s league. Heck, we’re only in the game (life) by God’s mercy and grace. He wants us to know Him. Read that again. He wants us to know Him. Not about Him. Know Him. This is why there is a creation. Am I making a big deal about this? Yes, and you ought to seriously consider it.

Far too many Christians know about God. They’ve heard of Him from others and read about him. But to know Him you must have a shared experience. And usually, that comes from walking by the spirit, not the flesh because God is spirit. To many, God is an intellectual concept. An idea. A hypothetical. These people know little to nothing about the spirit God gives when they get saved. They’ve never spoken in tongues, prophesied, or got revelation. God is an abstraction to them. They know He’s real because creation didn’t make itself. But beyond that, they are mentally and experientially disconnected from God day to day, except for perhaps one-sided prayer and scripture reading. These folks usually think “the spirit died with the apostles” and/or “the spirit” is too spooky and antiquated for us modern scientific folks. Really?! Are we talking about the modern “scientific man” that shuts down half of society for a disease that has a bit more mortality rate than the common flu? Man is just as stupid now as then. Of course, when you’re missing 1/3 of yourself, what do you expect? You get led into all kinds of crazy ideas and actions.

And the Bible is little help to us in this pandemic situation. There I said it. I’m a reprobate. Find a stake, tie me to it and get the lighter fluid! Does the Bible have the answer to the pandemic? If so, what is it? I’m waiting… . Where do we get the answer for the pandemic? **GOD!** How does that work?

Jas. 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, ask God for it, who gives to everyone generously and without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

The Bible gives us the big picture. It was given to help our bodies and souls to learn to walk by the spirit and know God personally. It wasn’t designed to help with daily decisions. But God’s spirit is. So, we ask God and He tells us what to do. It’s called word of wisdom. It’s a manifestation of the spirit. It didn’t “die with the apostles”. It’s called walking by the spirit. It’s why He gave it to us – to use.

The Bible is great. I may be the biggest fan you’ll ever run into. After all, I think that’s what I’m doing here – teaching you the Bible. But the Bible is NOT the end of our life’s journey, God is. God wants us to know Him, remember? The greatest Bible teacher I’ve ever had taught this:

The spoken word (preaching) makes known the written word. (the Bible)

The written word makes known the Living word. (Jesus Christ)

The Living word makes known the Word. (God)

This is how the process works. I am teaching you the Bible so that you can get a feel for Christ. And he will make known God to you through the scripture and His love for you. The word of wisdom regarding the pandemic may be “no big deal” for me, but “keep your distance” for you. Which is right? Both are! God’s word is always right. His promises are “Yea and amen!”. This is why we got the spirit – to each one walk and talk with God. This is what HE wants. What’s the first great commandment? Isn’t it to love God with all our whole heart, soul, mind and strength? First means first. This is what God wants. He wants love. He’s not a hypothetical, or an abstraction, or a concept. He’s someone – the one who created everything and has given us everything. He wants love…and He sure deserves it!

Is the Bible important? Absolutely! I’ve seen churches with lots of spiritual activity – some of it holy and some otherwise. They have no “quality control” from the Bible so the enemy slips in some counterfeit bills with the genuine currency of the spirit. The Bible is given to establish guidelines of how the walk by the spirit works. Is that important? It’s the biggest deal to God.

2 Cor. 3:7,8

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel were not able to look steadfastly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, which was passing away,

how will not the ministry of the spirit have even more glory?

God calls the time of the Law “the ministry of death”. He calls our time “the ministry of the spirit”. That’s what came on Pentecost, “the ministry of the spirit”. God revealed the New Testament to support that. If the Bible was to be preeminent and the spirit was a “throw in”, God would have said “the ministry of the scripture”, right? Some of you are getting uncomfortable and I’m sorry to do that but I’m balancing the scales that have been tipped toward scripture too much in today’s church.

One great reason God had the scripture written was:

Luke 1:3b,4

to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus,

so that you can come to fully know the certainty of the things about which you have been told.

Without the scripture, there would be no certainty about Jesus’ words and actions, only guesswork and fantasy. There would also be no certainty about what Jesus accomplished for us and gave us, just conjecture and opinion. Now that we have the guidelines of what the spirit is and can do, all that is left is for us is “to do”. That’s not a scriptural matter, but a heart matter between each saint and God.

A great reason God caused Pentecost was to make available God’s spirit for all people so that they could learn to live with it as an integral part of their lives. Are you growing in this God-desired venture?

Gal. 5:25 KJV

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.