



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 147 - Something's Different This Pentecost (Acts 2)

The Festival of Pentecost

Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended into heaven. Then God waited. Day after day passed and still the disciples had not received the Gift He had promised to send them. They continued meeting at the temple, praying and giving thanks to God. But God was waiting for something—the next Jewish festival. The last time it was Passover—when Jesus died and rose again. This time Pentecost is drawing near. Once again God is preparing to do something amazing on a Jewish festival He had set in place many centuries before.

The Passover festival looked back to celebrate God delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt. He had killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, but spared the Israelite firstborn through the blood of the Passover lamb. Jesus' death freed us from our slavery to sin, death, Satan and hell.

- How has Jesus' death as our Passover Lamb brought a new and deeper meaning to the Passover festival?

The ancient festival of Pentecost reminded the people to thank God for providing food as they harvested their wheat. On this Pentecost festival God would send His Spirit to gather His people around His Son Jesus Christ in faith to harvest their souls to eternal life.

- How did the coming of the Holy Spirit add a new and deeper meaning to the harvest festival called Pentecost?

Multiple Languages

The great crowd that gathered on Pentecost came from all over the Roman Empire. The Jews who had arrived spoke every language under heaven. But at the same time, they were all able to speak a common language. Not everyone was fluent in Greek, but everyone knew enough to get by—like visitors anywhere who can only moderately speak the language of the country they're visiting.

- Peter and the apostles could have shared the good news of Jesus Christ in Greek, and the crowds would have understood sufficiently—just as the Gospels and letters of the New Testament were later recorded in Greek. Why do you think God wanted the Jewish worshipers to first hear Christ's story in their own languages instead?
- Why is it important for us to personalize the Gospel to an individual's own life and experiences?
- Why didn't the Aramaic-speaking Jews from Jerusalem realize the sounds they were hearing were other languages? Why did they assume instead the disciples were drunk?"

The Power of the Message

Peter addressed his sermon to these Jerusalem Jews. After clarifying that they were not drunk and mentioning Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, he reminded them of all the things they had heard and seen from Jesus.

- Why did he point out Jesus' spectacular miracles?
- How does Peter's sermon show these were not "on the spot" conversions, but Jesus' words and works had already laid the groundwork for their faith?
- How can Luke 23:48, "And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle (Jesus' crucifixion) when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts" help explain why so many in the crowd were cut to the heart by Peter's words and became disciples that day?
- Why is it important for us to witness to Jesus in our actions and attitudes as well as our words?