

In another 5 days, as a nation, we will embark on a new journey; it might be with the same party who were in government until recently, it may be another party, or a coalition of parties, we don't know as yet. Something will happen, change of some sort will happen and we will find ourselves on a new journey. the journey may take us to a fork in the road, the road may cause us to lurch left or swing right, or as one party always accuses the other, we may make a U-Turn!

Talking with friends and colleagues, I have sensed for some time, an impatience; *We've heard it all, so lets get on and vote, and move on!*, seems to be a growing spirit across the nation

This mood of impatience was not dissimilar to the days leading up to Pentecost. The disciples were not dismissive of Jesus, not were they eager to see Him go, but as they waited, you can sense a growing impatience. Jesus had instructed His disciples to *return to Jerusalem and **wait** for the promise of the Father which you heard from me, that John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.* He did not say for how long; He did not describe what would happen, all He said was, **wait!** Over the next few weeks, we shall be examining "Encounter with Jesus", and in that context, shall study the meaning of "**baptised with water**" and "**baptised with the Holy Spirit**".

We know well the story of Pentecost, how ten days after Jesus' ascension to heaven, a group of around 120 were in an upper room in the centre of Jerusalem, when the sound of an almighty rushing wind filled the entire room, accompanied with flaming tongues of fire which seem to appear and settle on each one present. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in languages not native to them, as the Holy Spirit gave them power to do so.

We learn from Jewish tradition, The Passover celebrates the night when the Hebrew people fled from slavery in Egypt, to freedom; 49 days after celebrating this "flight to freedom", they celebrate the giving of God's Law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses.

The ten commandments, the law of God, was the constitution for this nation of people; God Himself would be their ruler, their King, and God's law would govern them. *I will be your God and you will be my people*, a declaration God makes throughout human history, up to the conclusion of human history in the final chapter of the book of Revelation.¹

It is interesting that the celebration of God's law, and the celebration of Pentecost are on the same day, and share many similarities.

Giving the Ten Commandments heralded new a nation gathered under God; giving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost heralds a new people, the Church, gathered under God, whose head is Jesus Christ.

When God gave the Ten Commandments, His physical presence was seen and experienced only by His chosen leader, Moses, but heard by the whole camp of several million people.

When God gave the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it was accompanied by "tongues of fire" seen only by God's chosen people in the upper room, but the effects of the sound of an "almighty rushing wind" which filled the entire room, was "heard across Jerusalem" and all people heard Jesus' disciples speak of God's glory, each in their native language.

Powerful stuff! If they had tabloid journalism back in the day, a spectacular event like this would have given journalists endless material to generate tabloid sensationalism.

So what do we know about the Holy Spirit? Are we just celebrating an event in the past, like the coronation, or St George's Day, or does it have any relevance to us today?

To us the Church, Pentecost represents everything it does to the Hebrew people: the Festival of Weeks (*Shavuot*)², the Festival of Reaping (Hebrew: אָפֶת

¹ Ezekiel 37:27; Leviticus 26:11-12; Zech. 2:10-11; Psalms. 46:4; Ezekiel 43:7; all relating back to the covenant in Exodus 29:45-46 ("I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God.") and Jeremiah 31:33.

² Exodus 34:22 and Deuteronomy 16:10

הקציר, Chag ha-Katsir)³, the Day of the First Fruits (Hebrew יום הביכורים, Yom ha-Bikkurim)⁴. One of the Hebrew teaching books refers to literally, "refraining" or "holding back" (Atzeret Hebrew: עצרת)⁵, referring to the prohibition against work on this holiday.

All these meanings, and much more, are found in Pentecost: **reaping** - receiving God's gift; **first fruits** - the first occasion the fruits of the Holy Spirit are made available to us, and **refraining** and **holding back** - restraining ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's plans.

Now, imagine yourself going on a long journey and informing your colleagues at work, and perhaps your children, or family, or neighbours, all they will need to know while you are gone: don't forget to water the plants, but the geraniums need watering every three days, put out the cat food, pick up the post from the entrance ... etc., etc. It is an exercise in faith, as much as it is a frustration. You know you are saying the right words and conveying the right instructions, but you can see your listeners not paying attention - *yeah, yeah, yeah, ... don't worry, everything will be fine!*

While The Twelve were not disrespectful of Jesus and not eager to see Him go away, it is clear to Jesus that the disciples do not really understand what is about to happen, but he must tell them anyway. They will later, remember his words, but may not know what He meant and how they were to apply His teaching!

So Jesus painstakingly tells them about the Holy Spirit⁶.

The first role of the Holy Spirit is to, *teach you everything, and remind you of all that I (Jesus) have taught you*⁷.

³ Exodus 23:16

⁴ Numbers 28:26

⁵ The Torah

⁶ The reading for this lesson is John 14

⁷ John 14:26

The Holy Spirit works both ways: to teach and underpin His teaching by reminding us what Jesus said, and to remind us what Jesus said and teach us how to apply it in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is literally, an *aide memoire*, a phrase we do not use very much these days. In a world so full of information and knowledge, we need guidance by the Wisdom of God to discern right from wrong, good from bad, just from unjust, and to distinguish between people who place their own interests before the interest of others, and those who genuinely place the interests of others, before their own. The Holy Spirit is first and foremost, an *aide memoire*.

The Holy Spirit is "**another** Advocate"⁸, variously translated as Comforter, Counsellor, and Helper. Whichever word you choose, the "**other** Advocate" describes a *person who remains at our side forever*⁹, like a lawyer who pleads our case, testifies on our behalf, represent us, defend us, provide us counsel, strength in time of need, and gives us peace and assurance of the outcome.

The literal meaning of the word¹⁰ used to describe the Holy Spirit is, "*someone called in*, a distinctive meaning which those who heard the word *Holy Spirit* in their language, would have understood this meaning.

They understood clearly, when a person is in trouble, or distress, or doubt, or is confused and perplexed, they can, with full assurance, **call in** the Holy Spirit who is **always alongside forever**, to step in and advise, counsel, comfort and intercede, as their need may be.

The reason why Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "**another** Advocate," is because Jesus Himself will return to Heaven, where in the Heavenly Court, He intercedes before the Father, for us! "*If anyone does sin*", says John, "*we have an advocate (in the presence of) the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One*"¹¹.

⁸ John 14:16

⁹ John 14:16

¹⁰ *parakletos*

¹¹ 1 John 2:1

An evangelist-theologian, who was at one time Principal of Spurgeon's College, London, puts it this way, "*Here the ascended Lord is viewed as an Advocate in the court of heaven, pleading the cause of his own; the Holy Spirit is then understood as the Advocate from heaven, supporting and representing the disciples in the face of a hostile world*"¹². To the early church, and to many churches today, this is a welcome word, that they have not been abandoned by Jesus, something we discussed two weeks ago.

This Advocate who comes to us from heaven, "*is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him*"¹³. The **world** is hostile to God. It loves "*darkness rather than light, because there are people whose deeds (are) evil*"¹⁴. The world rejects the truth, because they have chosen to follow "*a liar and the father of lies*"¹⁵.

Finally, the Holy Spirit "*abides (menei - dwell) with you and lives in you.*"¹⁶

This word, "*to abide*" describes a deep, ongoing relationship; the Holy Spirit is **one with us**, in the same way we describe marriage as a deep ongoing relationship, in which two become as one.

Long before His last passover meal with the disciples, Jesus told them, "*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood **abide** in me, and I in them*"... *who ever feeds on me, will also live because of Me*"¹⁷. Jesus is referring, of course, to investing Himself into each of their lives.

Sometime during the three years Jesus spent with the twelve disciples, He said to them, "*I have said these things to you while I am still with you*"¹⁸. He knew, He had to implant His teaching about the Kingdom of God, knowing the seed

¹² Beasley-Murray, *The Gospel of John. Word Biblical Commentary* (2nd ed.). Waco, TX: Word Books p. 256

¹³ John 14:17

¹⁴ John 3:19

¹⁵ John 8:44

¹⁶ John 14:17

¹⁷ John 6:56-57

¹⁸ John 14:25

would take root in fertile soil. The time will come, when the Holy Spirit “*will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you*”. Jesus packed in a lot of teaching in three years; it was necessary, therefore, for the Holy Spirit to be released by the Father, when Jesus is ascended back to heaven, to help them remember His teachings and interpret those teachings for their immediate situation. Standing beside them day and night, the Holy Spirit made all things clear, and empowered them to act in keeping with God’s plan .

Does Pentecost have relevance to us today, or are we just commemorating an event in the past?

The Holy Spirit is very much alive and at work in the world today, doing all which God promised He would do. The Holy Spirit is always alongside us, ready to be *called in* to refresh our memory of all that Jesus has taught us, **BUT there is a pre-condition:** we must first learn the teachings of Jesus, also it to soak in, obey it and live by it to the best of our ability, **ONLY THEN** can the Holy Spirit act as an *aide memoire*! Only when we have the Word of God planted in us, will the Holy Spirit do what it is supposed to.

It remains for us to decide if we want this blessing.

We can ignore it, or not give the Word of God due importance, in which case the Holy Spirit has no work to do in our lives, but He is always alongside us, forever, in the event we change our minds.

One thing I can assure you (I cannot assure of of much but this is one of the few things I can assure you), you will enjoy the blessing of the Holy Spirit as God intended, only when you have taken the decision to forge a deep, ongoing relationship with Him, and decide to be as ONE with Him.

AMEN.