

*Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven, without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell, when he gets the news of our departure from the field of battle.*

C.T. Studd

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## **LESSON THIRTEEN**

### **WHAT IS PENTECOST?**

**Internet Article: Author not cited**

Pentecost is the Greek word for 50. God told the Israelites to count off 50 days from the 17<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, when they celebrated the Feast of First Fruits. On the 50<sup>th</sup> day they had to keep the Feast of Weeks, also known as the Feast of Harvest. After the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, this feast became known as the Feast of Pentecost-because of the 50 day interval.

In the New Testament, Jesus was resurrected on the day of the Feast of First Fruits, and on the day of the Feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples and they “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Although all baptized believers during New Testament times received the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues, this experience was not referred to as a Pentecostal occurrence but as an infilling or receiving of, or baptism in the Holy Spirit. The modern Pentecostal movement is conceived as having its roots in the Azusa Street Revival of Lost Angeles in 1906. It was the first revival to attract visitors from all over the world, who then took the message back to their home churches. Some Pentecostal historians might concede 1901 as the starting date, but they are not inclined to include the revivals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, nor any before that.

Other church historians maintain that spiritual revivals throughout history have resulted in the same signs and wonders experienced on the day of Pentecost. In fact, they claim that God sent the Holy Spirit to empower believers for the spread of the gospel and for the building up of the church; that the Holy Spirit has been sent for all time, and that His operation in believers has been hindered through unbelief; that a return to God and renewed faith in the Word of God will result in all the blessings God has already given the church.

### **Pentecost during the Early Centuries**

Not much is known about this period, but occasional glimpses do tell the story and give the evidence. Irenaeus (115-202 AD) was a disciple of Polycarp who followed John the Apostle. He is quoted as saying, “We hear many brethren in the Church having prophetic gifts and speaking in all sorts of languages through the Spirit.”

Tertullian (160-202 AD) refers to the spiritual gifts, including the speaking in tongues, being operative in the churches. Justyn Martyr, living at the same time, confirms this fact. Origen (185-254) wrote of the speaking in tongues, not as a gift to oneself, but as an obligation to the people to whom the gospel is to be preached. Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> century) reportedly said, “We still do what the apostles did when they laid hands on the Samaritans and called down the Holy Spirit on them....It is expected that converts should speak with new tongues.” Chrysostom (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries) wrote, “Whoever was baptized...he straightway spoke with tongues...one...in the Persian language, another in the Roman...and this made manifest to them that were without that it was the Spirit in the very person speaking.”

### **Pentecost during the Middle Ages**

The Encyclopedia Britannica states that speaking in tongues “recurs in Christian revivals of every age, e.g. among the mendicant friars of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, among the Jensenists and early Quakers, the converts of Wesley and Whitefield, the persecuted Protestants and the Cevennes, and the Irvingites.”

Even during the dark ages of the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, God gave revivals to many groups in Southern Europe. First among them was the French Waldenses. The founder of this movement was Valdes (or Waldes), who was a rich merchant of Lyons. Inspired by the songs of a wandering minstrel, he asked a churchman for the best way to God. Informed of Jesus’ injunction to the rich young man, he set his affairs in order, gave away everything he had, and started out on a life of poverty and the preaching of repentance. He obtained parts of the Scriptures and aimed to follow all of Christ’s directions to the apostles. He soon had a band of followers, but their lives of preaching were condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1184 they were excommunicated and persecuted so that they were driven underground and lived mostly in the Alpine valleys southwest of Turin.

The main characteristic of the Waldenses was their principle that the Bible is the sole rule of belief and life: whatever practice lacks Biblical vindication has no place in the church and conversely, whatever the Bible does prescribe must be followed to the letter. They therefore laid hands on converts for receiving the holy Spirit; they spoke in tongues, and signs and wonders followed them.

### **Pentecost during the 16<sup>th</sup> Century**

The Waldenses are the only medieval sect to have survived. They joined the French Protestants in 1562, and collectively became known as the French Huguenots. They were repressed and persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church, so that large numbers fled to other European countries. After 30 years of religious wars, the Edict of Nantes assured them freedom of worship.

Francis Xavier, who died in 1552, preached to the Hindus in their own language without ever having learnt it; to the Chinese merchants he encountered in Chinese without knowing the language; and to groups of different nations so that each heard him speak in his own language.

Louis Bertrand (1526-1581) had gifts of tongues, of prophecy, and of miracles. He is said to have converted 30,000 South-American Indians of different tribes and languages in 3 years, without having learnt these languages.

### **Pentecost during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century**

George Fox (1624-1629) had a transforming spiritual experience in 1646 and believed that every person receives from the Lord a measure of spiritual light, and if this “inner light” is followed one would inevitably arrive at the “light of life” and spiritual truth. Revelation is not only from the Word of God but is received directly from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God gives them their message and prepares them for service. The original Society of Friends became known as the Quakers, because they “quaked before the Lord.” Being opposed to all the teachings of the Church of England, they were persecuted, and eventually many of them emigrated to America. In 1685 the Edict of Nantes (France) was revoked, which resulted in merciless persecution of the Huguenots. Many fled to other European countries, as well as England and America. Of those who fled to the Netherlands, 200 were transported to the Cape of Good Hope. Most of them were filled with the Spirit, and the spiritual gifts were manifested, including speaking in tongues. There are reports by both friends and enemies of their prophetic gifts. John Wesley, in defending the

manifestation of miraculous power, especially the speaking in tongues, pointed to the Huguenots as an example.

### **Pentecost during the 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

Some Huguenots from the Cevennes mountains in France traveled to Holland and on to Germany. Referred to as “prophets,” they arrived at Wetterau in 1714, bringing the gift of tongues and prophecy with them. Their pastor and his “gifted” followers were called ‘the inspired ones of the Wetterau.

John Wesley (1703-1791) joined his friend, George Whitefield in Bristol, where they preached in the open to the coal miners. Through the powerful preaching of these two men, thousands were saved. The Spirit of God worked in their listeners, and many cried out, fainted or had convulsions. Wesley was also invited to travel all over the world to preach.

At university they had established a club for studying together, but it developed into a group that strove to realize William Law’s ideals of a consecrated life. Other students dubbed them the “Holy Club” and later as the “Methodists.” This last name stuck, and when Wesley established a “society” in Bristol, it was called the “Methodist Society.” He had no desire to leave the Church of England, but his followers wanted a separate church, and that led to the founding of the Methodist Church.