

## Great Celebrations for the Lord

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## 主の大いなるお祝い

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[1]

[International Standard Version]

Acts

2:1 When the day of Pentecost was being celebrated, all of them were together in one place.

2:2 Suddenly, a sound like the roar of a mighty windstorm came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

2:3 They saw tongues like flames of fire that separated, and one rested on each of them.

2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them that ability.

2:10 Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the district of Libya near Cyrene, Jewish and proselyte visitors from Rome,

2:11 Cretans, and Arabs, listening to them talk in our own languages about the great deeds of God?"

2:22 "Fellow Israelis, listen to these words: Jesus from Nazareth was a man authenticated to you by God through miracles, wonders, and signs that God performed through him among you, as you yourselves know.

2:23 After he was arrested according to the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified this very man and killed him by the hands of lawless men.

2:24 But God raised him up and put an end to suffering of death, since it was impossible for him to be held by it.

2:32 "It was this very Jesus whom God raised, and of that we are all witnesses.

2:33 He has been exalted to the right hand of God, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has caused you to experience what you are seeing and hearing.

2:36 "Therefore, let all the people of Israel understand beyond a doubt that God made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!"

2:37 When the crowd that had gathered heard this, they were pierced to the heart. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we

do?"

2:38 Peter answered them, "Every one of you must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift.

All existing religions place importance on what we have to believe in and what we have to do. Actually, this is totally opposite to what our Bible tells us. It is neither what men should believe in nor what men should do, but rather what the Lord God has done through the Lord Jesus for us that is important to understand.

There is an expression in verse 11: "the great deeds of God." Humans have two kinds of calendars. The first kind of calendar was made by men based on social practices and conventions. Actually, I keep this type of calendar handy and use it sometimes.

I often need to find the unlucky days in the Buddhist calendar, such as Tomobiki, because it is easier for us to book the crematorium knowing this information. The second kind of calendar has nothing to do with any social practices or superstition, but is based solely on the eternal truth. The New Testament describes the seven remarkable celebrations. Among these seven celebrations—seven wonderful deeds of the Lord—the most important one for us is apparently the Pentecost. Next Sunday is the celebration of the Pentecost. So today, let's think about these seven celebrations together.

As we all know, the first celebration is Christmas. Needless to say, the Nativity of Jesus does not mark the beginning of the life of Jesus, but is the day when Jesus appeared in this world. All things were made by Jesus, and Jesus is the one who is present from the beginning of time until the end of time.

The second celebration is called Lent. This is to celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus was stripped naked and nailed to the cross. The life of Jesus in this world was 33 years, and for the first 30 years, Jesus worked as a carpenter. Then, during the next three years, He spread the gospel, healed the sick and brought the dead back to life.

In those days, men were not allowed to talk in public before they reached the age of 30. Jesus accomplished His great work in the last three and half years of His life. He was sentenced to death because of the jealousy of the Pharisees at that time.

This is what Jesus said: First of all, He was the Son of God and the Promised Savior. He also made it clear that He came down to this world, not to enjoy His life,

not to obtain wealth, but to die. He took the form of human flesh because God can't die.

Since humans had stepped far away from God, they had to take the punishment of death and they were destined to walk the path heading toward eternal destruction. However, Jesus was resurrected. He is still alive. Even though we have nothing to be proud of ourselves, we can be proud of Him for being alive. Our Lord is alive. Everything is governed by Him, and there is no coincidence in this world.

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The third celebration is Easter, which is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus did not want to remain dead long, but chose to come back to life after just three days. The resurrection of Jesus is the best proof of the fact that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Confucius died. Buddha died too. But they were not resurrected.

Only Jesus was resurrected from death because Jesus is truly the Son of God and the Promised Savior. Furthermore, the resurrection of Jesus is proof that the redemption of the whole human race was accomplished and is still active today.

The fourth celebration is the Ascension Day. This is a celebration to commemorate the elevation of Jesus. The Ascension took place 40 days after Easter. It is a day to celebrate the fact that Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples 40 days after His resurrection, during which he had communion and had meals with them. More than 500 people witnessed Jesus being raised from the dead. Then, He ascended to heaven as His disciples were watching. This incident is described in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:

Acts

1:9 After saying this, Jesus was taken up while those who had gathered together were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

1:10 While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, two men in white robes stood right beside them.

1:11 They asked, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw him go up into heaven."

The fifth celebration is Pentecost. It is held on the 50th day after the resurrection. This is to celebrate that the Holy Spirit was poured out on the earth only once in history. Jesus clearly promised to His disciples:

Luke

24:49 I am sending to you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

As we can see from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1, verse 4, this came to be:

Acts

1:4 While he was meeting with them, he ordered them, "Don't leave Jerusalem. Instead, wait for what the Father has promised, about which you heard me speak.

1:5 For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit a few days from now."

1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured onto the earth. It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that four things happened on that day. First, a sound like the roaring of a mighty windstorm filled the whole house. This is proof of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Second, all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only did they receive the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit now controlled them.

Then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages that they had never learned or even heard.

Jesus descended to earth only once; he was crucified and resurrected only once; He ascended to heaven only once. Likewise, the Pentecost only occurred once in history. The Holy Spirit has been living in this world ever since the Pentecost, and dwells within all true believers. The important thing is not to have knowledge. You have to understand that there is something far more important.

Whether our lives end in eternal destruction or we obtain eternal life—for us there can be nothing more important than this. Jesus accomplished the perfect salvation for all mankind. But this salvation has to be experienced by each one of us. And it can only be achieved by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, our attitude toward the Holy Spirit is extremely important. We should constantly contemplate what kind of attitude should be taken toward the Holy Spirit, shouldn't we?

Several decades ago, there was this famous French philosopher called Sartre. He wrote an autobiography, in which he noted: "My life came to an end for which I

can't do anything anymore." This is a dreadful confession, isn't it? He ended up as a man with no hope, no joy.

Why did it have to be this way for him? He explained in his confession when he wrote, "I caught the Holy Spirit in the wine cellar and I chased him out." As a result, he had to live a purposeless life. Yet he listened to the gospel and sensed the work of the Holy Spirit, and then he hardened his own mind to it. He refused to repent. He corrupted himself and ended up as the most pitiful man. We can see it clearly from his own words, telling us that his life was a failure.

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The famous American author Hemingway once said about his life: "It was a dark passage which led to nowhere, then to nowhere, then again to nowhere, once again to nowhere, always and forever to nowhere, heavy on the elbows in the earth to nowhere, dark, never any end to nowhere, hung on all time always to unknowing nowhere." He made this confession then killed himself.

The Holy Spirit was sent to this earth so that our lives shall not be a meaningless dark passage. The Holy Spirit is not merely a concept that symbolizes influence and strength of God or our gratitude to God—it is a true entity. The Holy Spirit, as The God Creator or the Lord Jesus, is Himself the Lord God. The Holy Spirit has many names.

The Spirit of truth, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of promise, the Spirit of strength, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of abstention, the Spirit of purification, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of revelation, the Spirit of glory, the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of the Lord, and so on. Here, I would like to talk quickly about what will happen to those who are not yet saved, when the Holy Spirit extends his hand and works on them.

John

16:8 When he comes, he will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

So, I would like to begin with this verse to explain that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to our sins. We all commit sins. This is how the Lord God sees us: "Not even one person is righteous. No one shows kindness, not even one person! All have turned away. They have become completely worthless." There is absolutely no hope, no salvation for such sinners, unless the Holy Spirit works on them and makes them realize how they are covered with sins. Only when they realize that they have no place to escape—then will they begin to call upon the name of the one who gives salvation.

Secondly, it is also the Holy Spirit that opens our eyes to righteousness. It is nothing but the truth that salvation is provided by Jesus. In this way, Jesus justifies us. This short verse contains an extremely important truth:

1 Corinthians

1:30 the Messiah Jesus, who for us has become our righteousness.

This is a most amazing truth that cannot be explained logically. "Jesus became righteousness for us." Those who trust in Jesus and accept Him will be justified. We can be justified in the eyes of the sacred Lord, neither by any human deeds, nor human efforts, but only by belief in Jesus.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit works on us and opens our eyes to the judgment of God. Those who refuse to personally accept Jesus will have to be judged. They have to remain separated forever from the Lord God, who is the fountain of love, the spring of life. All humans make mistakes. And as sinners, they are destined to eternal death. However, Jesus sacrificed Himself for humans and took the punishment of the Sacred Lord God. Anyone can be regarded as righteous by the grace of Jesus, but only if they put faith in Him—while for those who refuse to accept this wonderful gift but walk the way they want to walk, there will be no hope, no salvation.

The Holy Spirit is working very hard to bring out this truth to us. Those who meekly accept this truth have the true repentance and will get to the recognition of their sins. When people confess their sins and promise to stay away from sins, they come to believe in Jesus. We can see from the Bible that when people repent and accept Jesus, they are given the Holy Spirit as a gift. Receiving the Holy Spirit this way is to be born into a new life.

It is written in the famous verse 3 of John, Chapter 3: "Unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." This is so clearly stated. Paul wrote the same thing in his Epistle to Titus:

Titus

3:5 'Twas not for deeds that we had done, but by his steadfast love alone, he saved us through a second birth, renewed us by the Spirit's work.

2 Corinthians

5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in the Messiah, he is a new creation. Old things have disappeared, and—

look!—all things have become new!

Here is a new creation. Without the Holy Spirit, there will be no hope, no salvation. Paul also wrote in his letter to the Romans:

**Romans**

8:9 You, however, are not under the control of the human nature but under the control of the Spirit, since God's Spirit lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of the Messiah, he does not belong to him.

Such people are not truly saved. They lack true salvation.

[4]

Before I get to the last point, I would like to use one real-life example to summarize what has been talked about so far. Once, there was this evangelist called \*\*\*\*\* (inaudible), who initiated the great revival movement in Germany a long time ago. One day, he preached about the blessing of the Lord God—how people were stained with sins, the necessity of repentance and that kind of thing. But after he finished talking, the audience complained and requested him to teach about ethical commandments they should obey, such as “*You shall not steal, you shall not kill.*” Let’s look at how the preacher answered them.

He explained plainly using the analogy of a pear tree in a garden. You won’t get sweet fruit by commanding the pear tree everyday, “Make a fruit, bear fruit!” You will harvest very good pears if you cut off the trunk and graft from a tree that is bearing good fruits. Likewise, without the work of the Holy Spirit, we have no chance to be reborn or bear a good fruit.

Finally, I would like to discuss how the Holy Spirit affects believers. Needless to say, the Holy Spirit works not only on non-believers, but on believers too. The critical thing is not just receiving a gift from the Holy Spirit, but is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is written that all those who received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost were filled with the Holy Spirit. Such fulfillment with the Holy Spirit is generally transitional. Throughout their lifetime, people get filled with the Spirit again and again.

Gifts from the Holy Spirit are given only once, and once they are given, they will never be gone. In contrast, the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit is transient, and you will need to be filled repeatedly. Believers in Ephesus had a gift from the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, they were warned that they were not filled with the Spirit.

So next, let’s look briefly at the difference between the gift of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit. First of all, a new life is only given as a gift from the Holy Spirit once in our lifetimes, and it lasts forever, while the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit comes as a consequence of our devotion and thus is transient in nature.

Second, we are born into new life—which is a gift of the Holy Spirit—and become newly born men, but we are filled with the Holy Spirit when our old selves are put to death.

Third, true believers are born as gifts from the Holy Spirit, and the believers are transformed into the image of Jesus by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Fourth, our battle against God is put to an end when we accept the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the battle against the devil begins when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, we are given peace with God as a gift of the Holy Spirit, and when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we bring the Lord God Himself peace.

Sixth, the gift of the Holy Spirit cancels the punishment for our sins, while being filled with the Holy Spirit prevents us from committing sins.

Seventh, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit when we surrender to the Lord our lives, which are stained with sins. But we are filled with the Holy Spirit by our sincere devotion and service alone.

Although so many people receive the gift of Holy Spirit by believing in the Lord, very few of them are dominated by the Holy Spirit. Being filled is to be dominated by the Lord. So many people have accepted Jesus, but only a few among them walk with Jesus. Paul once wrote to his fellow believers in Colossae:

**Colossians**

2:6 So then, just as you have received the Messiah Jesus the Lord, continue to live dependent on him.

Just coming into the light is not all that is truly necessary for believers. We need to keep walking in the light. Not only Paul, but John also highlighted the same thing:

**1 John**

1:7 But if we keep living in the light as he himself is in the light....

This is what we ought to do. Not only come to Jesus, but to stay within the Lord and walk with the Lord.

#### 1 John

2:6 The one who says that he abides in him must live the same way he himself lived.

It is not just enough to have a new life. We need to walk the new steps with this new life. It is not just enough to come close to Jesus with faith. It is more important in our daily lives to keep walking with faith instead of depending upon something tangible. Instead of just having a gift from the Holy Spirit, we need to continually walk along with the Holy Spirit. Paul also wrote to his fellow believers in Galatia:

#### Galatians

5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit.

Once you have been called to the Lord, it is necessary that you walk in a way that is worthy of the calling. Just knowing the love of Jesus from experience is not enough. We are asked to walk within His love. We ought to keep asking ourselves sincerely whether we are walking in a way that is worthy of the calling. Are we driven by the Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit working on all aspects of our thoughts and deeds? Are we affected by other people rather than by the Holy Spirit? Can we say that the love of Jesus is the primary thing in our lives? Or are we motivated by some other purpose? Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

#### 1 Corinthians

6:19 You know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God, don't you? You do not belong to yourselves,

6:20 because you were bought for a price. Therefore, glorify God with your bodies.

From these things, it is clear to everyone that, regarding the Pentecost, our attitude toward the Holy Spirit is extremely important.

Now, I would like to talk about the two last celebrations in the next few minutes and finish this sermon. Let me check my watch before I proceed.

The sixth celebration is the Advent of Jesus. It is the second coming of Jesus to this earth. We don't know when it will be. It might be today. What is unimaginably important for us is to aspire for that day. Those who aspire are those who do not have to worry about tomorrow. There is nothing you have to be scared of. Jesus will come.

The seventh and last celebration is the greatest one. It is the marriage of Jesus, the lamb.

#### Revelation

19:9 'How blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the lamb!'

Marriage with the lamb is for us believers to be one with Jesus completely and forever. This is beyond all imagination. Paul wrote in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

#### 1 Corinthians

2:9 But as it is written, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him."

End