

Following Jesus' ascension back to the Father, we witness Peter's ascension to the leadership position of the New Testament church and the key event that made it possible, the arrival of "The Promise," the Holy Spirit. We will discuss some prophetic scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit, listen to Acts chapters 1-2 and discuss the connection between the Jewish celebration Shavuot and Pentecost.

Prophetic Scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit

Jeremiah 31:33-34 New International Version (NIV)

³³"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Ezekiel 36:26-27 New International Version (NIV)

²⁶I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Joel 2:28-29 New International Version (NIV)

²⁸"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

Romans 8:2-9 New International Version (NIV)

²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you ^[a] free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, ^[b] God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. ^[c] And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

Acts 1-2 New International Version (NIV)

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit."

⁶Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹"Men of Galilee," they said, "why do

you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk^[a] from the city. ¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶and said, “Brothers and sisters,^[d] the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

¹⁸(With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. ¹⁹Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,^[e]

and,

“May another take his place of leadership.^[f]

²¹Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²²beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show

us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,^[b] ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷“In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.^[i]

²²“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,^[i] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

²⁶Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.^[k]

²⁹“Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³²God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the

promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
³⁵until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”^[1]

³⁶“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸Peter replied, “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. ³⁹The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The Fellowship of the Believers

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What is *Shavuot* -- Pentecost?



Shavuot is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the single most important event in Israel's history: the giving of the *Torah* (the first five books in the Hebrew Bible) to Moses at Mount Sinai. Although it is not as well known among non-Jews as Passover or *Sukkot*, the Feast of Booths, it is one of the three major festivals often called "pilgrim" festivals because all Jewish males were required to observe them at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

More than 3,000 years ago, after leaving Egypt on the night of Passover, the Jews traveled to the Sinai desert. There, they experienced divine revelation as God gave the Jewish people His Law. In Deuteronomy 4:10–13, Moses reminded the people of that experience:

"Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb [Sinai] . . . You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke . . . He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets."

Shavuot is the culmination of the seven weeks between Passover and the giving of the Law. Indeed, the very term *Shavuot* means "weeks." Since *Shavuot* occurs 50 days after the first day of Passover, it is sometimes known as Pentecost, which is a Greek word that means "fifty." Jesus' followers were in Jerusalem celebrating Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to them, and so, many churches today celebrate Pentecost as the birth of the church.

The two holidays, Passover and *Shavuot*, are linked by more than just their proximity. The Exodus from Egypt, which Passover celebrates, marked the beginning of physical freedom for the Jewish people. But *Shavuot* is a reminder for the Jews that physical liberation was incomplete without the spiritual redemption represented by receiving God's law. *Shavuot* is also called *Atzeret*, meaning "the completion," because together with Passover it forms the completion of a unit. Jews gained their freedom from Egypt on Passover in order to receive the *Torah* on *Shavuot*.

The earlier celebrations of *Shavuot* were more agricultural in nature and motif. In ancient times, sheaves of barley (the winter crop) were brought to the Temple each day, starting on Passover until *Shavuot*, the beginning of the harvesting season 50 days later. Farmers looked forward to *Shavuot* with great anticipation. When it finally arrived, the people would bring their first fruits to the Temple amid great pomp and ceremony. They rejoiced before God and thanked Him for their material blessings.

With the destruction of the Second Temple and the forced separation of the Jewish people from their land, the centrality of the harvest motif diminished. Instead, the theme of the anniversary of the revelation of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai gained dominance—a theme continued today.

Many Jews today celebrate *Shavuot* by staying up the entire night studying and learning the *Torah*. At synagogue services on *Shavuot* morning, the Ten Commandments are read and the people reaffirm their commitment to treasure and obey God's Law. According to a well-known Jewish *Midrash* (the oral traditions that eventually were written down), God initially offered the *Torah* to each of 70 nations, who would not accept it without first asking what it was about. After hearing the commandments, each nation had some excuse for not accepting them. God finally turned to the nation of Israel, who said "*kol asher diber Adonai na'aseh*," which means "all that the LORD says we will do." Unlike the other nations, Israel chose the *Torah* before knowing its contents (Exodus 19:8).

Today, after the reading of the Ten Commandments during *Shavuot*, Jews reaffirm their commitment to God, to the *Torah*, and to their faith, by repeating those same words: "All that the LORD says we will do."

The book of Ruth is also traditionally read on *Shavuot* morning because of its link to the harvest season (when the story takes place) and because of Ruth's acceptance of the Jewish faith and God. Ruth was a brave, non-Jewish woman, whose love for God and the *Torah* led her to convert to Judaism. Ruth has a further connection to *Shavuot* because she was the great-grandmother of King David who, according to tradition, was born and died on *Shavuot*.