

Bite Size Bible Study

Pentecost #134

By Pastor Lee

Pentecost is the Greek name for *Shavu'ot*, the Feast of Weeks. In Jewish tradition, God gave Moses the two tablets of the Torah (commonly called the Law) on Mt. Sinai on *Shavu'ot*, and therefore, in the minds of the Jewish people, this feast is closely equated with the events at Mt. Sinai.

Shavu'ot to the Jewish community has traditionally been a day of thanking God for the early harvest, trusting in a later harvest. What was understood in the physical realm of the Torah was made manifest in the spiritual realm of the new covenant. The coming of the Ruach HaKodesh (the Holy Spirit) has become the most famous of the firstfruits. The early fruits have come in, and the implicit promise of the later harvest will also come.

¹*The festival of Shavu'ot arrived, and the believers all gathered together in one place. (Acts 2 CJB throughout)*

Shavu'ot is one of three *regalim* (pilgrim festivals), when every Jewish male must go up to Jerusalem.

²*Suddenly there came a sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*

The “*violent wind*” is reminiscent of the fire, smoke and loud trumpets on Mt. Sinai (Ex 19:16) Most people assume that the *house* is the “upper room,” but it is more likely it was the Temple, the “house of God” since all male Jews are required to be at the temple on *Shavu'ot*.

³*Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them.*

Who are “they?” Is it just the twelve disciples? Nowhere in the account does it say, but Yeshua (Jesus) had many more disciples than just the closest twelve and it is very possible that there was a very large crowd of believers present.

⁴*They were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit) and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.*

⁴*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (KJV)*

When God brought the Israelites to Mt. Sinai, it was probably his intention to fill them with the Holy Spirit right then and there, but the people were afraid and backed

off and told Moses that he should speak to God for them (Ex 20:18-19). If they could not understand what it meant for God to indwell them individually, then he would dwell with them in the camp, which he did when he had them set up the tabernacle in the center of the camp. But now, at this *Shavu'ot*, God is going to indwell them individually.

⁵*Now there were staying in Yerushalayim religious Jews from every nation under heaven.*

Remember these Jews have all come to Jerusalem for the feast as commanded in the Torah (Ex 23:14–17).

⁶*When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered; they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in his own language.*

When Israel came out of Egypt, they came out with a “multitude” of people from other nations (Exodus 12:38). In Jewish tradition, there were seventy nations, which in Judaism represent “all” nations (from Genesis 10, which lists seventy nations), represented at Mt. Sinai. Another tradition in Judaism is that when God spoke to the people gathered at Mt. Sinai they all heard him in their native languages, which is what is happening again at this time.

Now, in verse 41 we have another connection back to Mt. Sinai.

⁴¹*So those who accepted what he said were immersed, and there were added to the group that day about three thousand people.*

In Exodus 32, we read that Moses was taking a long time on Mt. Sinai and the Israelites had lost hope in Moses and they made the golden calf. When Moses came down from the mountain, he was angry and destroyed the golden calf. Moses then instructed the Levites to kill all of those who had sinned against God and, according to verse 28, “*about three thousand*” were killed.

On *Shavu'ot*, at Mt. Sinai, in Exodus 32, about 3,000 were killed, but on *Shavu'ot*, at the Temple, in Acts 2, about 3,000 are saved.

When studying the Bible, it is important that the Jewish culture and traditions of the people of the time period be taken into consideration when attempting to interpret the text. More often than not, understanding the Old Testament culture will magnify the understanding of the New Testament events.

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