

### **Study 33: Leviticus, Part 6 Leviticus 23 Pentecost, Part 2**

Last week, we looked at the feasts of Firstfruits and Pentecost (Weeks), and one of the things I didn't mention is how the fulfillment of this feast was spoken of by the apostle Peter. In **Acts 2**, it says:

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews **from every nation under heaven**. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ...12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "**What does this mean?**"

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

Now, notice what Peter says in response:

15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! [The time of the morning sacrifice, BTW.] 16 No, 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. 18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. 19 **I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.** 20 **The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.** 21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Peter quotes from **Joel 2:28-32**, and says it is *fulfilled* in the events these mockers are seeing. What I want to call your attention to is what is contained in verses 19-20: "I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord."

In spite of what Peter, under the *inspiration* of the Holy Spirit, said about this being fulfilled, many who call themselves Christians (i.e., followers of and believers in Christ), simply *refuse* to believe it. And, many of these are the same people who make such a huge deal about Jesus stopping in the middle of the verse He quoted from Isaiah 61. (He stopped in the midst of verse 2). So, how are we to take these verses in Acts 2? There doesn't seem to be *much* disagreement about the beginning and ending verses. The sticking point here for most Christians, is the first part of v 17: "**In the last days**...." The problem, as they see it, is that Peter is claiming *his own time* as "the last days," whereas most Christians today think that *we* are living in the last days. But is this a correct assumption?

The question is, of whom should we be more confident? Men who teach that the disciples of Jesus were mistaken, or those same disciples, who taught these things under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit? One of the many dangers of Dispensational-ism is that it confidently passes judgment over the words of Scripture, and proclaims them to be in error. In short, it promotes *unbelief*. It may also lead ultimately to the conclusion that God's Word is not inspired or infallible. Let's take a few moments to go back to the Bible to see what *it* says about "the last days."

In **Heb 1:1-2**, it says: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but **in these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."

Paul, speaking of the Exodus, told the Corinthians, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, **upon whom the ends of the ages have come.**" (**1 Cor 10:11**).

Peter, in his first epistle, said, "The end of all things is near" (**1 Pet 4:7**). In Acts 2, he explicitly ties in the outpouring of the Spirit to "the last days." So, if the last days had already begun in *Peter's* day, it's not surprising that he quotes a passage that speaks of the signs that will precede "the end." Their sons and daughters were prophesying. Therefore, they were "the terminal generation." Jesus had *already* said so.

After pronouncing sevenfold woes on the Pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation." (**Matt 23:36**). In the same context, He pronounces doom upon the temple: "Behold, your house is left to you desolate." (v. 38). Jesus' disciples then ask Him, "**when** will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are **about to take place?**" (**Luke 21:7**). Jesus answers: "Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." (**Luke 21:32**). Biblically-speaking, a *generation* is 40 years (**Num 32:13; Heb 3:7-11**).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **Num 32:13** The Lord's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

Note, too, the imagery of the Exodus here. Just as in that time, God gave the people His covenant on Pentecost, thus making them His “church,” Israel (as we found in our previous study), whose head was Moses. It was during this same feast that God gave the people the New Covenant, whose Head is Jesus Christ. God’s church was still Israel. It is **not replaced**. Its composition, however, has changed because its covenant has changed. Under Israel’s Old (Mosaic) Covenant, one only had to be circumcised physically in order to become an Israelite. Under the New Covenant, one must be “circumcised” spiritually (in the heart – Rom 2:28-29)<sup>2</sup> in order to be part of Israel. That is, to be an Israelite under the New Covenant, one *must* believe in Jesus as the Messiah. This is why, when speaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews who had rejected their Messiah, the Holy Spirit calls them a “synagogue of Satan” in Rev 2:9<sup>3</sup> and Rev 3:9.<sup>4</sup> Paul, in Rom 11, says these people were like the branches of an olive tree, broken off, separated from Israel, because of their unbelief. It is *only* through the New Covenant faith in Jesus that “all Israel” can be saved (Rom 11:26 says, “in this manner, all Israel shall be saved.”)

More ties to the Exodus: In the Old Testament, we see Moses ascending a mountain and bringing down the Law. In the New Testament, we see Jesus ascending a mountain, and giving the people the Law (Sermon on the Mount – Matt 5-7). Notice that after the exodus, the blessing of the Promised Land was not immediately received. There was a one-generation “gap” that intervened. Whereas the Old Covenant church wandered for 40 years in the wilderness until that generation *died*, the New Covenant church had to wait 40 years in order to receive *eternal life*.

In **Matt 19:28-29** Jesus told His disciples: 28 ...“Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother [or wife (some mss don’t include wife)] or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit **eternal life**.”

Remember the parable Jesus told about the sheep and goats in Matt 25? Listen to what He says: “31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

Jesus finishes with the conclusion of the judgment: 46 “Then they [the goats] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” Is this not a picture of what we assume happens to people *now* when they die? Yet, Jesus says that eternal damnation and eternal life are not received until His “second coming”! This is why I told you last week to do a study on the subject of “Hades” (the New Testament term, called “Sheol” in the Old Testament). Did you find out when Hades is emptied out? (Rev 20:13. In v 14, it is thrown into the lake of fire, Gehenna). It is at the “Great White Throne” judgment that these things happen! Is there any reason to think that this is not the same event Jesus was talking about in His parable of the sheep and goats?

So, what’s this business about “blood and fire and billows of smoke,” the darkened sun and the moon turning to blood? Should we assume these things must be fulfilled in a “literal” (i.e. physical) way? If so, we must look for signs in the physical heavens, such as eclipses. (Obviously, we cannot assume the moon will literally turn to blood, but only that it must look red). We’d also have to look for bleeding of some sort, and a smoky fire. The physical is not the usual, though, when it comes to the interpretation of biblical prophecy. Quite often, Scripture presents future events in the form of visions, which, like dreams, require us to recognize symbolic representations of things. Consider the vision given to Peter just prior to the visit of Cornelius. Peter is on the rooftop thinking about what’s for lunch, and God gives him a vision. He sees all kinds of animals, birds, and reptiles. God speaks and tells Peter to kill and eat them. This happened 3 times. Now, if Peter was accustomed to the Dispensationalist method of interpretation, he’d “just take it literally.” They say if the “plain sense” of the words makes sense, don’t look for any other meaning. So, Peter was supposed to go hunting and eat non-kosher critters, right?

When we compare Scripture with Scripture (theologians call this “the analogy of faith”), we find that heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon are used in prophecy to represent leaders. Consider, for example, the dream of Joseph in which he dreamt of the sun, moon, and 11 stars bowing down to him. His father didn’t assume that the heavenly bodies were going to be affected.

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**Heb 3:7-11** So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” (Cp. Ps 95:7-11).

<sup>2</sup> **Rom 2:28-29** A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

<sup>3</sup> **Rev 2:9** (letter to the church in Smyrna): “I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”

<sup>4</sup> **Rev 3:9** (letter to the church in Philadelphia): “I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars....”

He rebuked Joseph because he was dreaming about his father, mother, and brothers bowing down to him. Should Jacob have been accused of “allegorizing” Joseph’s dream? (This is a favorite pejorative buzzword of Dispensationalists, who use it to sneer at any interpretation that disagrees with theirs). The Jewish Midrash (commentary) on Lamentations<sup>5</sup> supports Jacob’s understanding, also. It says that the sun represents the king, while the moon is the Sanhedrin.

Blood, fire, and smoke would symbolize warfare. We use terms today, such as “rivers of blood,” and talk about “the world” being “on fire.” Certainly, we aren’t using these terms literally, and would look askance at anyone who understood them that way. Anyone unfamiliar with the “over-the-top” way of describing terrible events in biblical times should read *The Wars of the Jews* by Josephus.

If a strictly literal interpretation is still insisted upon, we can find all these things in the destruction of the temple in AD 70. In AD 69, a year before the temple fell, there was a total eclipse of the sun, and another on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan in AD 70. A Roman historian writing of the brief reign of Vitellius in AD 69:

[E]vil omens occurred. A comet was seen, and the moon, contrary to precedent, appeared to suffer two eclipses, being obscured on the fourth and on the seventh day. Also people saw two suns at once, one in the west weak and pale, and one in the east brilliant and powerful.<sup>6</sup>

Josephus records similar event occurring:

[The people of Israel] did not attend, nor give credit to the signs that were so evident, and did so plainly foretell their future desolation; but, like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year. Thus also, before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eight day of the month [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day-time; which light lasted for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes as to portend those events that followed immediately upon it.

Besides these, a few days after that feast, on the one-and-twentieth day of the month [Jyar], a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the] temple, as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, “Let us remove hence.”<sup>7</sup>

<b>First Passover</b>		<b>OLD COVENANT: COVENANT OF DEATH</b>	
<b>Slavery In</b>	50 days later – the Law was given (Ex. 19:1)	3,000 die for worshipping the golden calf (Ex. 32:28)	<b>Promised Land</b>
<b>EGYPT</b>	<b>40 YEARS TRANSITION</b>		<b>Crossing Jordan</b>
Crossing The Red Sea - Deliverance	<b>Miraculous Evidences of God's Presence and Power</b>		Salvation Complete
<b>SHADOW</b>			
<b>First Spiritual Passover</b>		<b>NEW COVENANT: COVENANT OF LIFE</b>	
<b>Slavery To SPIRITUAL</b>	50 days later – the Spirit was given	3,000 baptized, receive life (Acts 2:41)	<b>Christ's Kingdom</b>
<b>EGYPT (elements)</b>	<b>40 YEARS TRANSITION</b>		<b>End of Old Cov. Age - Salvation Complete</b>
Christ's Death - Deliverance	<b>Miraculous Evidences of God's Presence and Power</b>		
<b>FULFILLMENT</b>			

<sup>5</sup> Midrash Rabbah *Lamentations* Proems 23.

<sup>6</sup> Cassius Dio [Roman History 64:8](#).

<sup>7</sup> Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, [Book VI, Chapter 6, Section 3](#).