

PENTECOST

Drinking the Living Water

May 23, 2010
Revision E

GOSPEL: John 7:37-52, 8:12
EPISTLE: Acts 2:1-11

The first part of today's Gospel lesson (John 7:37-39) is commonly used in the West for Pentecost, but not the rest of John 7. Today's Epistle lesson is also used in the West for Pentecost (also called Whitsunday). In the West, Trinity Sunday is the Sunday after Pentecost; in the East, Trinity Sunday is Pentecost.

BACKGROUND FOR PENTECOST

Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, was one of the major festivals in the Old Testament along with Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Every Jewish man was instructed to appear before the Lord on these three festivals every year to bring their tithes and offerings (Exodus 23:15-17). "Pentecost" is of Greek derivation meaning "fiftieth" since it was the fiftieth day after the Day of Firstfruits (16th of Nisan) where a sheaf of the new barley harvest was brought in as a wave offering (Leviticus 23:15-16). In 30 AD, the 16th of Nisan was a Sunday, the first day of the week when the Lord rose from the dead as the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Pentecost was then the fiftieth day after the Resurrection.

The feast of Weeks is referred to by other names in the Scripture. On one occasion, it is referred to as the "feast of the harvest of the firstfruits of your labors" (Exodus 23:16); on another, as "the firstfruits of the wheat harvest" (Exodus 34:22); and on another as "the day of the firstfruits" (Numbers 28:26). It is not, however, to be confused with the Day of Firstfruits that occurred seven weeks earlier. On that day, which was not a Sabbath, a barley sheaf was brought as a wave offering. On this day, which is a Sabbath, two loaves made from the wheat harvest just completed were brought as a wave offering. In one case, the barley sheaf is the firstfruits of the barley crop; in the other, the two loaves are the firstfruits of the wheat crop.

The historical event associated with Pentecost in Jewish tradition is the giving of the Mosaic Law on Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 19:1, the nation of Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai on the first day of the third month (Sivan). Thus Pentecost commemorated the Old Covenant Law. Under the Hebrew calendar, Pentecost could fall on the 5th, 6th or 7th of Sivan depending on whether the first two months (Nisan and Iyyar) had 29 or 30 days. The length of the month varied depending on when the new moon was observed.

But there was also an agricultural event involved. On Pentecost two loaves made from the just-completed wheat harvest (Exodus 34:22) were offered as a wave offering. These loaves were baked with leaven in somebody's household, not at the Temple as was the shewbread

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(1 Chronicles 9:31, 32). Thus, these loaves are different from the unleavened bread eaten during the Passover festival. The meaning of these two loaves is that both Jews and Gentiles are to be partakers of the New Covenant. They are not the elite, or even of a special tribe (the tribe of Levi), but can be uneducated men” (Acts 4:13). Since leaven represents sin (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), this New Covenant is a treasure in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). And just as the Holy Spirit – which is the New Covenant – was poured out on the 120 at Pentecost, 30 AD, so the Holy Spirit was later poured out on:

- An extended group of disciples (Acts 4:31)
- The Samaritans responding to Deacon Philip (Acts 8:14-17)
- Cornelius and the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10:44-46)
- Twelve of John the Baptist’s disciples (Acts 19:1-7).

GOSPEL LESSON – John 7:37-52, 8:12 – Drinking the Living Water

The Gospel lesson begins with a reference to an event that occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles. Whereas Passover refers to repentance, baptism and resurrection, and Pentecost refers to the giving of the Holy Spirit; Tabernacles refers to the Kingdom of God in all its glory. The Feast of Tabernacles took place from the 15th to the 22nd of the seventh month (Tishri) and the first and last days were Sabbaths. In the Gospel lesson, the “last day, that great day of the feast” (John 7:37) was the 22nd of Tishri. This was also the eighth day of the feast and represented the Kingdom of God stretching into eternity.

Part of the 8th day Sabbath was a procession from the pool of Siloam (the drinking water supply of Jerusalem) with a pitcher of water and pouring the water as a libation (or drink offering) at the Temple. This was to commemorate the water flowing from the rock which Moses struck in the desert (Exodus 17:1-7). This is the backdrop for Jesus’ announcement in the Gospel lesson: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). Of course, Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit as mentioned in v.39. Jesus had used a similar illustration of drinking “living water” in His conversation with Photina, the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:10-15).

The connection of the pouring of the water to commemorate Moses’ striking the rock must have developed after the return from the Babylonian captivity, since nothing is mentioned regarding this in the Pentateuch. Also, Moses struck the rock during the second month (Iyyar) on the way to Sinai prior to Pentecost, not during the seventh month.

The meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles (i.e. the Kingdom of God in Glory) was generally known to the ancient Rabbis. Simeon, Anna and Joseph of Arimathea are mentioned as looking for this (Luke 2:25, 2:38, 23:51). Old Testament prophecy spoke about how the Spirit of God will be poured out in those days. For example, two readings currently used in the Orthodox Church for Vespers preceding Pentecost are: Joel 2:23-32 and Ezekiel 36:24-28. These speak of the Spirit of God being poured out in the last days and are discussed in more detail under the Epistle lesson.

Jesus also proclaimed, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (v.38). To see this in the Old Testament requires some insight and illumination. Isaiah spoke about “joyously drawing water from the springs of salvation”

(Isaiah 12:3); “I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring” (Isaiah 44:3); and “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1). But all these speak of His people receiving the living water, nothing about the living water coming out of their hearts.

If we put these passages from Isaiah together with two of the readings from Pentecost Vespers, we get the connection. Joel had prophesied that the Lord will “pour out His Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions” (Joel 2:28). An example of this occurred in another of the readings for Pentecost Vespers. The Lord commanded Moses to choose seventy elders and gather them around the tent of meeting. Then He took of the Spirit which was upon Moses and placed Him upon the Seventy; the Seventy then began to prophesy (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25). If the living water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39), then the living water flowing out of the hearts of His people represents the words and deeds of the Holy Spirit proceeding from Christ-centered activity.

In this regard, John Chrysostom pointed out that the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was different than the sending of the Twelve (and the Seventy) out two by two. In sending them out two by two, the Scripture does not say that He gave them the Holy Spirit. It says that He gave them power and authority to do what they did (Mark 6:7, Luke 9:1, 19). The Prophets, on the other hand, had the Gift that was of the Holy Spirit. However, the Prophets were not able to impart the Holy Spirit to others as the Twelve did after Pentecost (Homily li on John 7).

Another tradition that developed after the return from the Babylonian captivity was a particularly joyful feasting during the Feast of Tabernacle. Many oil lamps were made using as wicks pieces of cast-off clothing of the priests. (This means that the wicks had already been consecrated). These lamps illumined the entire city while the Levites chanted the 15 songs of degrees (Psalms 120-134) accompanied by stringed instruments, cymbals, flutes, etc. There would be dancing in the courtyard of the women all night long. With the illumination of these lamps as a background, Jesus made another announcement recorded in the Gospel lesson: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12).

These announcements made by Jesus created quite a controversy. Prior to the Gospel reading (v.32) the Pharisees had heard the crowd buzzing about what Jesus had been doing, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?” So the Pharisees sent attendants from the Temple to seize Jesus. But they returned empty handed (v.45). When asked why they hadn’t brought Jesus they replied, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (v.46).

Some from the crowds and from the Pharisees argued that Jesus couldn’t be the Christ, since the Christ was supposed to come from Bethlehem, not Galilee. Apparently they presumed that Jesus was born in Galilee, not realizing that He grew up in Galilee because of murder plots by Herod.

As we saw two weeks ago in the Sunday of the Blind Man, Nicodemus is in the center of some of these disputes over Jesus. Here (vv.50-51), Nicodemus merely pointed out that the Mosaic Law does not judge a man before it hears him out. However, Nicodemus was shouted down and accused of being a Galilean also. The other Pharisees claimed that no prophet had

arisen out of Galilee. They had conveniently forgotten that the Prophet Jonah came from Gath Hopher, about three miles from Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25). Thus there is more to the sign of the Prophet Jonah (Matthew 12:39-40) than meets the eye: not only did Jonah spend three days in the belly of the sea monster (as Jesus spent three days in the tomb), but they grew up in the same neighborhood. Jewish tradition states that the Prophet Nahum came from Galilee also.

In all this questioning, we note that no one ever asked Jesus to explain how He could be the Messiah even if He came from Galilee. (The answer is simple: He was born in Bethlehem!) His accusers really don't want to know that, however. As Chrysostom stated it, "we must manifest the desire of thirsty men; for 'blessed are those (Matthew 5:6) who hunger and thirst for righteousness'" (Ibid.).

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

May 23, 2010
Revision E

EPISTLE LESSON – Acts 2:1-11 – The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Today's Epistle lesson represents the fulfillment of the Old Testament Feast of Weeks and of some Old Testament prophecy.

Old Testament Parables:

Several Old Testament readings are used as parables of the coming of the Holy Spirit and are read as part of Great Vespers preceding Pentecost Sunday.

Moses' Seventy Elders (Numbers 11:16-29): The Lord had directed Moses to gather seventy elders to help him "bear the burden of the people." These Seventy were gathered around the Tabernacle when the Lord came down in the cloud. The Lord then took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed the same Spirit upon the Seventy. As this occurred, the Seventy prophesied, although they never did so again.

The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh (Joel 2:23-32): Joel prophesied concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1) where the earth will be judged with fire (v.3) using the imagery of an army of locusts (vv.4-11, 25). He called on the people to repent (vv.12-13) and perhaps the Lord will delay His judgment (v.14).

Yet the righteous have nothing to fear (vv.21-22); they will have plenty to eat, they will praise the Lord and they will never be put to shame (v.26). The Lord will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, even on the male and female servants (vv.28-29). The old men will dream dreams and the young men will see visions (v.28). Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be delivered (v.32).

A New Heart and Spirit for God's People (Ezekiel 36:23-27): Ezekiel spoke at a time when Israel had profaned the Lord's Name among the Gentiles wherever they went (v.22). The Lord, Ezekiel said, was going to vindicate His Holy Name when He gathered His people from all nations and brought them into their own land (vv.23-24). We have a foretaste of this now in the Church. Having done this, the Lord gave His people a new heart and put a new Spirit within them, removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh (v.26). With the Lord's Spirit within them, they will be clean (v.25) and will walk in His statutes and observe His ordinances (v.27).

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The 120 Gather in the Upper Room

As thousands of years of Old Testament history prepared the people of God for Pentecost, the three year public ministry of Jesus prepared His followers for Pentecost, as did the ten days of fasting and prayer in the upper room by the 120 (Acts 1:13-14).

The Day of Pentecost occurred on¹ either the 5th, 6th, or 7th of Sivan depending on the sighting of the new moon to mark the beginning of the month. In the year 30 AD, this occurred on a Sunday, the first day of the week. Thus there were back-to-back Sabbaths; the weekly Sabbath followed by the Feast of Pentecost, which was also a Sabbath.

Gathered together at this time were the Twelve, most of the Seventy², the Women plus others totaling about 120 (Acts 1:15). They had been meeting in the upper room where the Twelve had eaten the Passover and Last Supper (Mark 14:15, Acts 1:13). Continuing in prayer and supplication, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 1:14, 2:1).

Thus, the people we know were involved in the filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were:

- The Twelve Apostles
- The Seventy Lesser Apostles
- The Eight Myrrh-Bearing Women

This leaves 30 others unaccounted for. Probably included among the unnamed 30 were:

- Joseph of Arimathea
- Nicodemus
- Simon the Leper
- Lazarus
- Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander
- Zaccheus

All of these 120 people (Acts 1:15) were filled with the Holy Spirit. And all 120 received languages as of fire that were distributed and sat on each one of them. We don't normally think of the Virgin Mary as receiving this gift of languages, but she was there also.

The Effect of the Giving of the Holy Spirit

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was something special. The reading for Pentecost Sunday Matins is John 20:19-23 where Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." He then also gave them the authority to forgive sins. This occurred on the evening of the day He rose from the dead. The Twelve had just begun to believe He was raised; they needed the Holy Spirit to sort everything out. As Gregory of Nazianus (4th Century) said, "He measured Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him"

¹ A month could have either 29 or 30 days. If both Nisan and Iyyar had 29 days, Pentecost fell on the 5th of Sivan. If both Nisan and Iyyar had 30 days, Pentecost was the 7th of Sivan. If one had 29, the other 30 days, Pentecost was the 6th of Sivan. See Unger, Bible Dictionary, p.356.

² Apollos, one of the Seventy, was absent since he didn't hear about the Holy Spirit until over 20 years later (Acts 18:25).

(Fifth Theological Oration). In the 50 days leading up to Pentecost, the Spirit Himself began teaching the disciples.

John Chrysostom noted that Jesus’ breathing on His disciples in the upper room (John 20:22) was not the same as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Otherwise He would not have needed to come. Chrysostom suggests that the breathing on them in the upper room was to prepare them for the main event (Homily lxxxvi on John 20).

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2). The sound was not just a wind blowing horizontally, but “from heaven.” This calls to mind the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night that led Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). This is also reminiscent of the “strong East wind” that the Lord sent to divide the Red Sea for Moses (Exodus 14:21). It is perhaps no coincidence that the words for wind and spirit are the same in Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*).

Jerusalem was crowded for the two day Sabbath (where no work could be done) and the sound of this “wind” created a curiosity among the multitude of devout Jews in town for the feast (Acts 2:6). Sabbath Laws also restricted travel, so all these people were required to be in the locale where they were staying. The sound of the wind was localized to the house where the 120 were staying such that the multitude could easily pinpoint the source of the sound. They had come from (see map on page 68):

Parthia (center)	Cappadocia (bottom left)
Media (center)	Pontus (bottom left)
Elam or Susiana (center)	Asia (bottom left near Ephesus)
Mesopotamia (center)	Phrygia (bottom left)
Egypt (bottom center)	Pamphylia (bottom left near Cilicia)
Libya near Cyrene (bottom center)	Rome (off map at bottom left)
Crete (bottom center)	Arabia (middle, SE of Jerusalem)

As well as from Judea. Many of these people stayed for about a year until the persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen scattered them (perhaps) back to where they came from.

Taking a closer look at the word “tongue”, the Greek word that is usually translated tongue (*glossa*) means both the fleshly member of the human mouth and a language as being controlled by the human tongue. Rufinus of Aquileia in his commentary on the Apostles’ Creed stated³ that,

“After Pentecost, they were enabled to speak a variety of different languages such that they found no nation strange to them and no foreign speech beyond their comprehension”.

So how did the speaking in tongues work? There was a miraculous aspect to it. They spoke so that others heard in their own languages, and they understood the languages others were speaking. Paul stated to the Corinthians that he spoke in languages (*tongues*) more than all of them (2 Corinthians 14:18). This was necessary for him. From the thirteen different languages mentioned in Acts 2:9-10, Paul evangelized people speaking seven of them on his various missionary journeys: i.e. people in Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia and

³ Rufinus, “A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed”, 2, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, v.3.

Rome as well as Crete where he left Titus (Titus 1:5). Thus Paul needed the Gift of Languages in order to do what he did. In the 1st Century, the major use of the Gift of Tongues among the Apostles was for evangelism.

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote⁴ that the Apostles and the women received considerable wisdom. Included in this wisdom, they received was the Gift of Prophecy to understand all mysteries and knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:2).

“What teacher can be found so great as to teach men all at once things which they have not learned? So many years are they in learning by grammar and other acts to speak only Greek well; nor yet do all speak this equally well. The Rhetorician perhaps succeeds in speaking well; and the Grammarian sometimes not well and the skillful Grammarian is still ignorant of the subjects of philosophy. But the Holy Spirit taught them many languages at once, languages which in all their life they never knew. This is in truth vast wisdom; this is power divine. What a contrast! Their long ignorance in time past to their sudden, complete and varied and unaccustomed exercise of these languages”.

For 120 people to fit into the upper room indicates that the house was fairly large and well-built. Access to upper rooms of houses or the roofs in general was by an outside staircase and also by a staircase from an inner courtyard. There was usually a railing around the edge of the first story roof (required by Law) such that people using the roof of the upper room wouldn't accidentally fall off (Deuteronomy 22:8). The edge of the first story roof, just behind the railing presented an ideal spot for Peter to address a large gathering of people, the eleven standing with him shoulder-to-shoulder (Acts 2:14).

When the multitude was attracted to the house by the sound of the “wind,” they were confused, Cyril wrote⁵ that this was a second confusion in the same vein as that first evil one at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). For in that confusion of tongues there was division of purpose because their thought was at enmity with God. But here, minds were restored and united, because the object of interest was godly (Catechetical Lecture xvii, 17). The confusion occurred because they recognized all or most as Galileans, but heard them speaking the language of their home country (Acts 2:6-7). The recognition as Galileans was easy: Galileans had a characteristic accent due to the way they pronounced (or mispronounced) some of the gutturals of the Hebrew alphabet (Mark 14:70). But for several thousand people (Acts 2:41) to hear 120 other people speak in at least 13 different languages (Acts 2:9-10) all at the same time presents a question of logistics. If we describe the “gift” in terms of Rufinus' and Cyril's statements, one person could have spoken while 3,000 different people heard the Word in 13 different languages. If this were the case, the “gift” would not be with the speaking but would be with the hearing. Thus there were likely multiple speakers.

The text states that when the sound from heaven came, “There appeared to them distributed languages (tongues), as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3). Thus, the Holy Women and the Virgin Mary, as well as the Seventy, received this gift also. Later on the same thing happened to Cornelius and the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46).

⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 16.

⁵ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 17.

John Chrysostom pointed out⁶ that this occurred at the third hour or 9:00 a.m. This meant that it was broad daylight and the “fire” still stood out strongly in the sunlight, and at a distance so all 3,000 could see it.

As the multitude was both amazed and perplexed (v.12) and wondered what this meant, others mocked the 120 saying that they were drunk with new wine (v.13). Part of the Old Testament Pentecost liturgy was a new grain offering from the wheat harvest. This was done by offering two loaves of bread with some animal sacrifices and some recently fermented wine, called “new wine” (Leviticus 23:15-18). Thus, the mockers used the illustrations from the Pentecost liturgy to describe the 120: they appeared to the mockers to be drunk with some of the “new wine.”

John Chrysostom stated⁷ that the wind and the fire were always couched in terms of “like as”. These physical phenomena were not the Holy Spirit, but indicated the presence of the Holy Spirit:

“Observe how it is always *like as*; and rightly so, that you may have no gross sensible notions of the Spirit. Also, *as of a rushing, mighty wind*; therefore it was not a wind. For when the Spirit was to be made known to John (the Baptist), then it came upon the head of Christ in the form of a dove. But now, when a whole multitude was to be converted, it is *like as of fire*. And it sat upon each of them. This means that it remained and rested upon them. For the sitting is significant of settledness and continuance”.

If the languages rested on each of the 120 *like as of fire*, there was something visibly different, perhaps like the haloes or glowing spheres around the heads of the saints, that are used in iconography. This may have been similar to Moses’ face glowing after he spoke to God (Exodus 34:32-35, 2 Corinthians 3:13). And they each began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). The multitude heard the sound of the “wind;” they saw the glow of the “fire” that sat upon each of the 120; and they heard them speaking in their own languages the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). The multitude was both amazed and confused at the same time (Acts 2:6-7). When Peter spoke to the crowd of 3,000 people, he quoted Joel 2:28-29 to describe what was happening: “I will pour My Spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters will prophesy...”

This speaking in languages may have appeared similar to the prophesy experienced by Moses’ Seventy elders. That this prophesying was unusual behavior and quite noticeable can be seen from two of the seventy elders who were not at the tent of meeting. They began to prophesy in the camp such that Joshua suggested that Moses restrain them. Moses replied, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:26-29).

King Saul experienced this “prophesying” on two separate occasions. The first time occurred just after the Prophet Samuel anointed him king. He met a group of prophets and “the Spirit of God came upon him mightily so that he prophesied among them. When all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, the people said to one another,

⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, V.

⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, IV.

‘What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?’” At this time God changed Saul’s heart (1 Samuel 10:1-11).

The second time occurred while Saul was hunting down David to kill him. It was reported to Saul that David was with the Prophet Samuel at Ramah. Saul sent messengers three times to arrest David and bring him back. Each time the messengers came to Ramah, they began to prophesy along with the prophets who had Samuel presiding over them. And they returned to Saul empty handed. Finally Saul, himself, went to Ramah and he, too, prophesied all day long, prostrating himself and stripped to his loin cloth (1 Samuel 19:18-24).

In other cases, the Apostle John was “in the Spirit” on the Lord’s Day (i.e. Sunday) when he received a vision (Revelation 1:10). Again, when he was “in the Spirit,” he was taken to heaven to see future things (Revelation 4:1, 2). Peter was in a trance while he was praying and saw heaven opened (Acts 10:10). Similarly, Paul was praying in the Temple in Jerusalem when he was in a trance and saw Christ speaking to him (Acts 22:17-18).

From one of the Old Testament readings for Pentecost Vespers, the Prophet Joel had predicted this, “And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. And your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29). We note that the text from Joel says that they will prophesy, dream and see visions but not speak in languages. Yet Peter quoted Joel to describe what was happening (Acts 2:14-21). Thus the “prophesying” and the “speaking in languages” must refer to something very similar. This does not mean that the Gift of Languages and the Gift of Prophecy are the same thing. However, since “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10), the speaking in languages at Pentecost telling of “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11) can be called prophecy. For more discussions on Prophecy and its implications and uses, see the discussion for the Feast Day of Elijah, July 20th.

The crowd of 3,000 was justifiably both amazed and perplexed at the same time wondering what was happening. This was a most unusual behavior and circumstances of events.

Peter’s reaction to the mockers on Pentecost was to confront them. They couldn’t have gotten drunk because it was only 9:00 a.m., i.e. the third hour. (This implies that either the 120 had just concluded a Matins service or an all-night vigil.) Then Peter quoted the above passage from Joel 2:28 to explain what was happening (Acts 2:16-21); that is, the Holy Spirit was being poured out as Joel predicted. Peter further stated to them (Acts 2:17-36):

- They all knew Jesus of Nazareth, that He was attested by miracles, wonders and signs.
- By God’s foreknowledge, He was lawlessly crucified.
- God raised Him up, since death couldn’t hold Him.
- We (the 120) were all witnesses of this.
- Now that Jesus is exalted to the Right Hand of God, we have received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit.
- God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and asked what they should do. Peter said, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your

children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39). Three thousand souls were then added to their numbers.

John Chrysostom points out⁸ the tone of Peter’s address as being one of gentleness and humility. He calls them “men of Judea” (Acts 2:14), “men of Israel” (Acts 2:22), “men and brothers” (Acts 2:29), “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36), and concludes with “the promise is to you and your children” (Acts 2:39).

Gift of Languages in the Worship Service

In the mid 50’s AD, another use of the Gift of Languages had developed in the Church of Corinth in the worship service. It is this use of the Gift of Tongues that began to develop in many Protestant Churches in the 19th and 20th Century.

Some of the Church of Corinth had the Gift of Languages that they received at Pentecost. One of these was the Bishop of Corinth, Silas, who traveled with Paul on the Second Missionary Journey when Paul and Silas founded the Church of Corinth. Silas had been one of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-20) and was in the Upper Room at Pentecost. He was also one of the leading brethren in the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22) and was himself a prophet also (Acts 15:32) prior to the Second Missionary Journey. According to tradition, Peter and Paul met in Macedonia during the Second Missionary Journey and ordained Silas Bishop of Corinth prior to Paul’s arrival there. We note Silas’ arrival in Corinth with Timothy (Acts 18:5), but Paul is not recorded as leaving Corinth with Silas (Acts 18:18). Tradition lists Silas as the first Bishop of Corinth (Unger, Bible Dictionary, p. 1025).

In writing to the Corinthians about three years after founding the Church, Paul had to correct them in a number of matters, one of which was the use of the Gift of Languages. Corinth’s use of the Gift of Languages is somewhat unique and references to the Gift of Languages is rarely mentioned in the writings of the Church Fathers from the 1st to the 5th Centuries. Tertullian (2nd Century), refers to the use of the Gift of Languages in an ecstasy or a rapture of having occurred over the course of history to produce psalms, visions and prayers (Against Marcion, V. viii). An example of an “ecstasy” producing a vision is the Apostle Paul at prayer in the Temple in Jerusalem: he was in a trance and saw Christ speaking to him (Acts 22:17-18). No mention of languages is made, but Paul was certainly in an “ecstatic” state. Tertullian implies that this has historically occurred privately, not in the public worship. Lack of reference by any of the Fathers to its use in the worship would lead one to conclude that the Gift of Languages was not of very widespread use in the worship. Miracles, Healing, Prophecy and other gifts are mentioned frequently by the Fathers, but not languages.

Paul’s admonition to Corinth was aimed at getting them to focus on love (1 Corinthians 13:1ff) and on edifying the other members of the Body (1 Corinthians 14:1-19) rather than just edifying themselves (1 Corinthians 14:4). We sometimes misread Paul’s letter to Corinth and assume all the Churches were like them. In fact, the Early Church worship was patterned after the Synagogue worship and had an organized format. Some of the Apostles wrote liturgies also, adapting the synagogue worship to focus on the things concerning Jesus. For example, James, the Lord’s brother (and Bishop of Jerusalem) wrote a liturgy that still exists today. It’s so long

⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, VII.

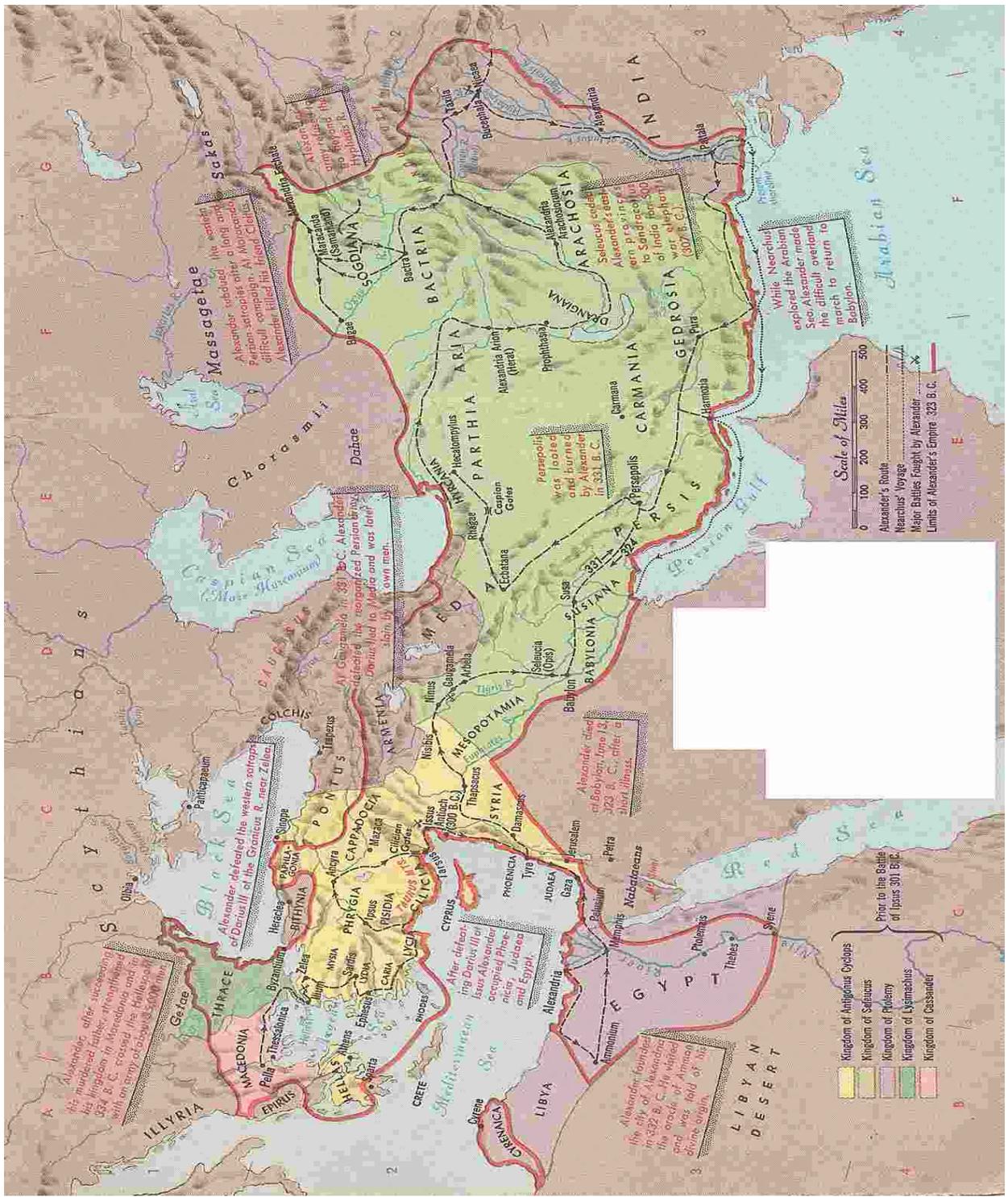
that it is rarely used, however. The Evangelist Mark (who evangelized Egypt) also wrote one that was used primarily by the Egyptian Church and the earliest manuscripts exist only in Coptic. (For the text of the Liturgies of James and Mark, see Roberts & Donaldson, Anti-Nicene Fathers, v.7). A liturgy is also attributed to Clement of Rome who was Bishop of Rome beginning c.67 AD.

Paul's comments to Corinth, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40) fits hand-in-glove with the existence of a liturgy in the Early Church. The "disorder" at Corinth also contrasts with that among the 120 at Pentecost: "They were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Paul continues: "If anyone speaks in a tongue (language), let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in Church, and let him speak to himself and to God" (1 Corinthians 14:28). "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the Churches of the Saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

One significant aspect of the Gift of Languages at Pentecost was a sign for unbelievers (Acts 2:7, 8, 11, 12) that something special was happening. Similarly, Paul said the Gift of Languages was a sign for the Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:22). It is not a "sign" for believers because they don't need a "sign" to know something special is happening. At Pentecost, Peter spoke up to interpret the sign. Without an interpreter in the Church of Corinth, Paul said, people will think they are out of their mind (1 Corinthians 14:23) just like people thought the 120 at Pentecost were drunk (Acts 2:12-15).

When Peter spoke up and explained what was happening (Acts 2:12-21), he acted as an interpreter to explain to the people that what they were seeing was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, which the people would have had no other way of knowing. Similarly in Corinth; Paul said, "If you bless with the spirit (i.e. speak in tongues), how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say, 'Amen' at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified" (1 Corinthians 14:16, 17). John Chrysostom stated that the "uninformed" refers to the laymen who do not hear the words "forever and ever" at the end, because they don't understand the language, and thus don't join in on the "Amen" as the Liturgy prescribes (Homily xxxv on 1 Corinthians 14).

Chrysostom continued to say that Paul's specific instructions regarding interpretation of languages (1 Corinthians 14:27-28) and regarding judgment of prophecies (1 Corinthians 14:29-32) had to do with false teachers moving about in the first Century. "He said this that no diviner might throw himself in among them. For of this also at the beginning he warned them to beware, when he introduced a distinction between divination and prophecy (1 Corinthians 12:1-3, compare Acts 16:16). And now he warns them to discriminate and examine the matter, so that no Satanic teacher might secretly enter" (Homily xxxvi on 1 Corinthians 14).



Map of the Origins of Visitors to Jerusalem, 30 AD