



**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June 10.30am Ps.119:9–16 Acts 2**

**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 10.00am Bible Study**

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 10.30am Ps.119:17–24 Acts 3 (Followed by picnic lunch)**

*Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 6.00pm – meal with Yan Hadley*

**Prayer for Ukraine:** Heavenly Father, destroy the works of the enemies, divide their tongues, frustrate their efforts, and bring their counsels to naught; cause the enemy to fight within their own ranks, weaken their cause, force them to abandon the war and return home in shame, never to return! But may all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You—may those who love Your salvation always say, “*Let God be exalted!*” In Jesus’ Name, Amen!

**Remember.** *We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labour prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1Thessalonians 1:2-3*

**Thought for the Month:** Remorse before Calvary is of God; remorse after you have been to Calvary is of the devil. Repent of your sin, yes; but do not make your sin a subject for long and melancholy meditation. Why should I cheat God by spending my time and energy on remorse? I am greater than my sins. *Martin Luther*

**This is that:** *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Holy Spirit on all people.* <sup>Acts.2:17</sup>

The Bible was written with one purpose in mind—to explain God’s plan of salvation for mankind and Jesus is God’s plan of Salvation: *Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."* <sup>Jn.14:6</sup> *No one else can save us. Indeed, we can be saved only by the power of the one named Jesus and not by any other person.* <sup>Acts.4:12</sup> The Law that was given to Moses under the Old Covenant (with all its rules and regulations) pointed to this wonderful plan of salvation in Jesus: *You search the Scriptures [the OT] because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.* <sup>Jn.5:39-40</sup> So when Jesus completed God’s plan of salvation, those rituals of the Old Covenant became obsolete: *This is the covenant I will make with Israel after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds. I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God. And they will be my people... By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.* <sup>Heb.8:10-13</sup>

However, there is a direct link between the Old Covenant’s laws and the New Covenant’s liberty. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, their status changed from a horde of nobodies to a holy nation, from disorganised slaves to organised citizens—and the turning point was **Passover**. At that first Passover, each Israelite family killed a lamb and painted its blood on the door-posts of their houses before going inside to eat the lamb. When God’s judgement came on Egypt, the angel “*passed-over*” every house with blood on the door-posts and the family inside that house was saved from death. This event was then celebrated each year as a reminder that God had saved them from death, emancipated them from slavery and established them as a nation. Many hundreds of years later, another “*Lamb*” appeared: *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”* <sup>Jn.1:29</sup> This Lamb was killed at the festival of Passover and resulted in people being saved from spiritual death, being emancipated from spiritual slavery and being established as a spiritual nation. *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.* <sup>1Cor.5:7</sup> *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* <sup>Rom.6:22-23</sup> *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* <sup>1Pet.2:9-10</sup>

Unlike the other nations around them, Israel didn’t need a king or a ruler because God was their King and Ruler. They weren’t “*monarchists*” ruled by a monarch; they weren’t a “*republic*” ruled by

**69 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. CT14 9EW – [www.dealpentecostal.co.uk](http://www.dealpentecostal.co.uk)**

**[dealpentecostal@gmail.com](mailto:dealpentecostal@gmail.com) — 07710 182013**

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their citizens; they weren't "*socialists*" where production and distribution of goods are owned and controlled collectively; they weren't "*communists*" where everything is owned collectively—the new nation of Israel was a "*theocracy*" under God's protection. Sadly, they soon rejected God as their King: *Now then, stand still and watch this great thing the LORD is going to do right before your eyes. Isn't the wheat being harvested today? I will call on the LORD, and he'll send thunder and rain. Then you will realize what a wicked thing you did in the LORD's presence when you asked for a king.*" Then Samuel called on the LORD. That day the LORD sent thunder and rain so that all the people feared the LORD and Samuel very much. All the people pleaded with Samuel, "Pray to the LORD your God for us so that we will not die. We have added another evil thing to all our other sins by asking for a king." "Don't be afraid," Samuel told the people. "You did do all these evil things. But don't turn away from the LORD. Instead, serve the LORD wholeheartedly. Don't turn away to follow other gods. They can't help or rescue you, because they don't exist."<sup>1Sam.12:16-21</sup>

Fifty days after Passover—at **Pentecost**—God gave the Israelites the **Law** for guidance on how to live honourably and reverently as God's people. *Now obey me completely. Keep my covenant. If you do, then out of all of the nations you will be my special treasure. The whole earth is mine. But you will be a kingdom of priests to serve me. You will be my holy nation.*<sup>Ex.19:5-6</sup> God had asked Moses to go up a mountain where He spoke directly to him amidst thunder, lightning, fire and smoke—which absolutely terrified the people: *They said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself. Then we'll listen. But don't let God speak to us. If he does, we'll die."* Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. God has come to put you to the test. He wants you to have respect for him. That will keep you from sinning."<sup>Ex.20:19-20</sup> But whilst God was giving His laws to Moses and writing them down on a stone tablet, the people rebelled against God by making a golden calf which they then worshipped—and this resulted in God punishing them leaving 3000 people dead. *The Levites did as Moses commanded. About 3,000 of the people died that day... The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a terrible sin. But now I will go up to the LORD. Maybe if I pray to him, he will forgive your sin."*<sup>Ex.32:28-</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Earlier, God had changed their patriarch's name from Jacob to Israel (which means "*God fights*") as a constant reminder that as the **Children of Israel**, God would fight for them and give them victory. However, God has standards and to teach the people who God was and what His standards were, He gave them rules: *I am the LORD. I brought you up out of Egypt to be your God. So be holy, because I am holy.*<sup>Lev.11:45</sup> Much later, Paul explained that the purpose of the Law was to teach about sin and to bring them to faith. *Is there a conflict, then, between God's law and God's promises? Absolutely not! If the law could give us new life, we could be made right with God by obeying it. But the Scriptures declare that we are all prisoners of sin, so we receive God's promise of freedom only by believing in Jesus Christ. Before the way of faith in Christ was available to us, we were placed under guard by the law. We were kept in protective custody, so to speak, until the way of faith was revealed. Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it protected us until we could be made right with God through faith. And now that the way of faith has come, we no longer need the law as our guardian.*<sup>Gal.3:21-25</sup> The law code had a perfectly legitimate function. Without its clear guidelines for right and wrong, moral behaviour would be mostly guesswork. Apart from the succinct, surgical command, "You shall not covet," I could have dressed covetousness up to look like a virtue and ruined my life with it. Don't you remember how it was? I do, perfectly well. The law code started out as an excellent piece of work. What happened, though, was that sin found a way to pervert the command into a temptation, making a piece of "forbidden fruit" out of it. The law code, instead of being used to guide me, was used to seduce me. Without all the paraphernalia of the law code, sin looked pretty dull and lifeless, and I went along without paying much attention to it. But once sin got its hands on the law code and decked itself out in all that finery, I was fooled, and fell for it. The very command that was supposed to guide me into life was cleverly used to trip me up, throwing me headlong. So sin was plenty alive, and I was stone dead. But the law code itself is God's good and common sense, each command sane and holy counsel."<sup>Rom.7:7-12</sup>

However, there was a point to these events—they were illustrations of God's plan of salvation for mankind. **Passover** prefigured Jesus dying on the cross as the Lamb of God. *John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*<sup>John.1:29</sup> Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen."<sup>Acts.4:27-28</sup> The giving

of the Law at **Pentecost** (50 days after Passover), prefigured the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when God would write His laws on people's hearts instead of writing them on a stone. And He continues to write them on people's hearts today—our conscience! *I 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. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*<sup>Ezek.36:26-27</sup> The power to do what we do comes from God. He has given us the power to serve under a new covenant. The covenant is not based on the written Law of Moses. It comes from the Holy Spirit. **The written Law kills, but the Spirit gives life.** The Law was written in letters on stone. Even though it was a way of serving God, it led to death... Since all of that is true, won't the work of the Holy Spirit be even more glorious? The Law that sentences people to death is glorious. How much more glorious is the work of the Spirit! His work makes people right with God. The glory of the old covenant is nothing compared with the far greater glory of the new. The glory of the old is fading away. How much greater is the glory of the new! It will last forever.<sup>2Cor.3:5-11</sup> In keeping with the type, and to illustrate that **the written Law kills, but the Spirit gives life**, the same number of people that died on the first Day of Pentecost when Moses received the Law, were saved when Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost when God gave the Holy Spirit. *With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*<sup>Acts.2:40-41</sup>

The purpose of the Old Covenant (the Law) was to signpost the coming Messiah: *Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be made righteous by faith.*<sup>Gal.3:24</sup> And when Jesus came, He introduced a different Covenant—the **New Covenant**: *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.*<sup>Lk.22:19-20</sup> This New Covenant—which replaced the Old Covenant—was established with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus died as the Passover Lamb.

For the Jews, the Day of Pentecost was also the beginning of their main harvest. Harvest time actually began 2 days after the beginning of Passover when the priests cut the first sheaf of grain, which was then waved before God as an offering. *The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month... When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.*<sup>Lev23:5-11</sup> This symbolised Jesus rising from the dead—which happened on the same day that the priests were waving their sheaf of firstfruits! *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*<sup>1Cor.15:20</sup> But the main harvest began fifty days later when the priests gave an offering to God of two loaves made from the first of the grain harvested: *The day you brought the grain for the wave offering was the day after the Sabbath. Count off seven full weeks from that day. Count off 50 days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath. On that day bring me an offering of your first grain. Bring two loaves of bread that are made with 16 cups of fine flour. They must be baked with yeast. Bring them to me as a wave offering from the first share of your crops. That applies no matter where you live.*<sup>Lev.23:15-17</sup>

So, at the same time as the priests were celebrating the beginning of the main harvest, God started His main harvest of souls by sending the Holy Spirit and converting people under the New Covenant! For the Jews, the harvest season continued until the Feast of Tabernacles when they were expected to spend 7 days in "booths" (tents) before returning to their permanent home—to remind them that they were nomads for 40 years. *So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest... Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.*<sup>Lev.23:39-43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> And God's spiritual harvest will continue until Jesus returns at the **Final Resurrection** to lead us to our permanent (eternal) home. *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. For while we are in this tent, we groan and*

*are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*<sup>1Cor.5:1-5</sup>

When Peter said: “*This is that*” he meant that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy and that it is **Harvest Time!** *And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*

*Acts.2:21; Joel.2:32*

Right now we are in the main spiritual harvest time: Jesus said, ‘My food is to do what my Father sent me to do. My food is to finish his work. You say, ‘Four months more, and then it will be harvest time.’ But I tell you, open your eyes! Look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest right now. Those who gather the crop are already getting paid. They are already harvesting the crop for eternal life. So those who plant and those who gather can now be glad together. Here is a true saying. ‘One plants and another gathers.’ I sent you to gather what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work. You have gathered the benefits of their work.’<sup>Jn.4:34-38</sup> We are in the “day of God’s grace” where all who call on the Name of Jesus will be saved: *As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. For he says, “In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation.*<sup>2Cor.6:1-2</sup> But when Jesus returns, the harvest time will end—so let’s keep on working while we can: *The Lord is not slow to keep his promise. He is not slow in the way some people understand it. He is patient with you. He doesn’t want anyone to be destroyed. Instead, he wants all people to turn away from their sins.*<sup>2Pet.3:9</sup>

### Questions

What was the significance of the Jewish festival of Passover?

What was the significance of the Jewish festival of Pentecost?

What happened on the day of Pentecost? (Acts 2)

What is the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?

What are the “*last days*” that Peter spoke about on the day of Pentecost?

**Puritan Prayer:** Out of love for Christ, help me to show my thankfulness, to seek and know Your will from love, to hold Your will in love—and to daily keep this state of thought. You have led me to place all my nature and happiness in oneness with Christ, in having thought and mind centred only on Him and in being like Him as I communicate good to others. This is my heaven on earth—but I need the force, energy and impulses of Your Spirit to carry me on my way to the New Jerusalem. Here it is my duty to be as Christ in this world, to do what He would do, to live as He would live, to walk in love and meekness—then He will be known and I will have peace in life and in death.