

The Coming of the Spirit

Introduction

In the past few years, due to COVID 19 and the migrant of numerous people, the atmosphere of Hong Kong society had become negative, resulting in suicide, downturn of economy and short of confidence about future. Similarly, the attendance and offering in churches in Hong Kong were unable to resume to the figures before COVID 19. The situation of para-church organizations might be 3 to 4 times worse than churches.

For para-church organizations and churches, 45 years is a sufficient long time to build up stubborn traditions that limit themselves to grow or revitalize. In spite of this, EEHK continues to renovate itself. This is my wish to churches in Hong Kong as well. Today is the 45th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service of EEHK. I want to encourage each other using Acts 2:1-13.

1. The Fulfilment of the Old Testament

Acts 2:1 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.”

In Greek, it means the day of Pentecost was fully fulfilled. Jesus taught that new wine should be poured into new wineskins. Pentecost is one of the three important festivals in the Old Testament. It is an old custom lasted for thousand years that Jewish men should went to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost every year.

45 years is a sufficient long time for a spiritual community to become sluggish and difficult to move forward. A thousand year distress is more than enough for a spiritual community to keep on going astray and hard to return. However, God not only did not abolish Pentecost on account of the rebellion of Jewish people but also fulfilled Pentecost by the salvation of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Spirit. The new wineskin had to replace the old one.

Acts 2:1 “They were all with one accord in one place.”

After the ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost, a old era, the division came from the curse of Babel, had ended. This curse had made Jew, Gentile, peoples from different cultures (Filipinos, Indonesians, mainlanders and Hong Kong people) separate. But at this very moment, all peoples gathered under the gospel of Christ. God called Jew, Gentile and all who believed in Him to reach unity.

Before the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the old system was completely failed because of the sin of human and their resistance to salvation. But God used a new wineskin, new clothing and a new system to contain His flourishing grace and will. Therefore all the people fully gathered in one place in Pentecost.

2. The Initiation of the New Testament

The gathering that day was a renewal of a thousand-year old porous worship system. This renewal was pioneered by the salvation of Christ, initiated by the Holy Spirit. Maybe the hobbling of the society, churches and para-churches is the start of renewal by God.

The Holy Spirit is invisible, but its work could be heard and seen in the Books of Luke. Acts 2:2 says, at first there was a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. The sound filled the building of the only church at that time. “Fill” and “fulfill” are the two important phrases. When the Spirit of God came, His will was not only to “fulfill” the Old Testament by the salvation of Christ, but also to “fill” the community of the New Testament with the Holy Spirit. That was what the first Christian community heard in the house.

The work of the Holy Spirit was not only be heard but also be seen. The word used in Acts 2:3 is “appeared”

Acts 2:3-4 says when the Christians in church saw that cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them, they were filled by the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues. The Holy Spirit had started a new era heard by the whole church. The Holy Spirit changed the tongue of every Christian. They spoke with the other tongues which were the languages of the multitude gathered in Jerusalem. The Bible says not some of them heard their own languages but all of them. The coming of the Holy Spirit let the whole church see new change.

3. The Concern for Individual

The main point of the change is personal salvation. When we look closely, Acts 2:5-11 mentions “every nation”. Luke draws out a map carefully from east to north, then to west and finally to south.

Luke starts to draw from the east of Jewish land. Parthians, Medes and Elamites are located in Persian land, Iran in present time, in the east. Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia are located in the north of Jewish land, Iraq and Turkiye in present time. And then, Phrygia, Pamphylia and Egypt are located in the west of Jewish land. Lastly, Libya located in the south-west and Arab in the south. The Bible draws a circle from east to south and places Jewish land in the middle, between Mesopotamia and Cappadocia. It is not the middle in terms of geography but in terms of word order. This reminds us that the center of gospel is Jewish land where the first concentric circle for development began.

A group of villagers from Galilee, because of the power of the Holy Spirit, spoke in the languages of the multitude and had completed the first concentric circle. The EE gospel outreach in May was jointly organized by EE of Hong Kong, Philippines and Indonesian. There were more than 200 people committed to Christ. To achieve the same result (200 professions plus 200 commitments) by a gospel gathering, the attendance of the gospel gathering needs to have 20,000! It costs a lot to organize such a giant gospel gathering. But now, when just groups of Christians went out, drawing the concentric circles, the gospel was spread naturally. Brothers and sisters, are you willing to work with Christians from Philippines and Indonesian to draw the concentric circles?

4. The Vision for Eschatological

The Scripture starts with the people who lived in Jerusalem but ends with the strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes. Here Luke not only puts Rome on the map of the gospel, but also links it to the end of Acts. He has anticipated that the gospel will influence Roman Empire, the strongest nation in the world. As promised in the Bible, the kingdom of heaven must ruin the power of nations in the land. This portrays the eschatological scenario of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The eschatological scenario of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost is that the kingdom of God will actualize in the land finally. Roman Empire will submit under the gospel at last, give out its glory and bow down before the king Jesus Christ. This is the spiritual and historical reality that we can hear.

This historical reality is actualized by a group of unsung Galilaeans with country accent. They preached the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the speech of Peter later on, we see that God’s mighty action is the gospel of Jesus Christ which calls people to repent.

In an era that the society is full of shadow, Galilaeans had become vehicles of the Holy Spirit. Struck by social movement and pandemic, we have witnessed God’s providence on EEHK that enabled it to act as another concentric circle. It has begun to serve Filipinos, Indonesians and other ethnic minorities. The Holy Spirit does not change our tongues to speak Indonesian or Tagalog. Certainly, the Holy Spirit can do so but it has determined to change our hearts, called us to work with south-east Asian Christians and preach the gospel together.

Today, many pastors face various kinds of difficulties, hurts, comparisons and upsets. They cannot work with others and live in great sorrows. I encourage all of us to lower our dignity and work with the next generation. We draw a gospel concentric circle together in the crossroad of Hong Kong because God had placed a big threshing floor beside us. May God bless all of you.