

Jeremiah 31:31-34, John 7:37-44

In many different ways Y' had promised that there would be great changes when the Messiah came.

600 years before Christ's Jeremiah announced God's new covenant for the future [Jer 31:31ff].

**"The time is coming, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.....**

**It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers ... because they broke my covenant.**

**This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; ...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people."**

Amazingly this gracious promise was given at the time when Israel was in deep trouble because of its constant disobedience to The Lord God the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were about to be destroyed and the people deported to become servants of the King of Babylon.

God's original covenant with the people of Israel was given when Yahweh, [Y'] the Lord God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt. He told them "I will be your God" [Exod 6:7]. Moses led them to Sinai where God gave the law to Moses on the mountain. But even before Moses could bring down the tablets of stone with the 10 Commandments, the People of Israel had already turned from The Lord, and made themselves a golden calf which they proclaimed to be their God.

Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness for 40 years. Before they crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land, Moses warned the People of Israel that if they were not faithfully to God and did not keep their side of the covenant law they would lose God's protection and their enemies would get the better of them. Disobedience would lead to their being defeated and deported from the land as slaves. [Deut. 28:64-68].

It was a warning that became prophetic of Israel's history which continued to be a repeated pattern of turning to other gods and disregard for God's law.

When things were going well they ignored God and went their own way.

They forgot God.

They ignored God's prophets.

They worshipped other gods.

When things went badly for them and their enemies attacked and defeated them they repented and cried out to Yahweh, The Lord God, and over and over again the Lord God stepped in & rescued them.

**Habakkuk** the prophet was also given the task of warning the people of Israel at the same time as Jeremiah.

Israel was full of violence, corruption and injustice. The rich and powerful grew richer and oppressed the poor. Justice was corrupted by bribes and favouritism. The people were religious but they were living as if God did not care what standards they lived by. They had hearts of stone towards God and towards one another.

Habakkuk [1:1-7] called in lament to God

**"How Long O Lord!"**

He is asking, "Why don't you do something?"

Sometimes that is how we feel as we look at the way the world is:

**"How Long O Lord? Why don't you do something?"**

God replied to Habakkuk -

**"Look around I am doing something.**

**What do you see Habakkuk?"**

Habakkuk looks at his world and sees Babylon -  
evil, greedy, cruel,  
gradually taking over one nation after another.

The Lord answers Habakkuk,

**"I agree with you, Israel is in a mess.**

**I will keep my promise.**

**I'm going to send Babylon to sort Israel out."**

Shocked Habakkuk, asks, **"How on earth can you use such evil people to do your work?"**

The Lord promised Habakkuk that Babylon will also be judged. They will get their taste of justice. But it is necessary for Israel to be brought to its senses.

Like Jeremiah the prophet **Joel** also spoke of the days of the new Covenant when God promised to **"pour out my Spirit on all people"**.

As faithful Jews made their daily prayers, as they worshipped week by week in the Synagogue and on the Great festivals of the faith they were looking out for the coming of Messiah & the fulfilling of God's promises.

At the feast of Tabernacles, the people of God remembered the time in the wilderness when Y' had provided food and drink for them.

They gave thanks for the harvest and for God's continued blessing on them. They celebrated the feast for seven days. On the last great day of the feast a priest was chosen to take a golden jug to bring water from the pool of Siloam.

The water was poured out by the high priest at the foot of the altar along with another jug containing wine. It was a symbolic prayer for God to water the land, and a prayer for God's blessing of Salvation - for the coming of Messiah.

As the water was being poured out the Priests blew trumpets, Levites sang and the people processed around waving palm branches and chanting Psalms.

The final Psalm 118 ended with a prayer for God' to save them with the coming of the Messiah.

They thanked God saying,

**"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good;  
His love endures for ever."**

It is probably at that point that Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice,

**"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."**

Jesus was saying,

**"I am the true spring, not just to water the crops but to refresh the Spirit."**

Jesus was promising the same thing as Y' had promised through Jeremiah and through Joel. But this could not happen immediately, on the day Jesus spoke the words. As St John tells us, "By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive."

The Spirit could not be given at that time because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

But later, 50 days after the resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, a fundamental shift took place in God's dealings with His People.

In the OT only Kings and Priests and prophets were anointed with oil for the special work God gave them to do. Jesus too was anointed with the HS at his Baptism for the special work the Father had called Him to do. "The anointed one" is what the Hebrew word Messiah and the Greek word Christ both mean.

What was it that changed on the day of Pentecost?

The Holy Spirit of God has been at work in the world since the beginning of creation but what happened at Pentecost was something new.

God had always wanted a people of His own; a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. Not a people far off, quaking in fear at the bottom of a mountain, receiving the law on tablets of stone.

St Peter preaching in the Temple quoted God's promise through the prophet Joel,

**"I will pour out my Spirit on all people."**

Instead of the HS only being given to a few people the HS came on all believers.

He wanted a people cleansed and forgiven, dedicated to His service upon whom he could pour out His Holy Spirit. A people who carried God's word in their hearts, trusting God & living in obedience to His law.

The promise that Y' had given through Jeremiah was also fulfilled at Pentecost. God's purpose was to take away the heart of stone the heart of disobedience and for the Holy Spirit to be a living presence within His people.

What Jesus was promising at that feast was not something static like a set of rules to keep but a dynamic relationship. He said,

*Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*

In Lincolnshire where we live here is a nature sanctuary. It is a small valley called

**Snipe Dales - 27 springs**

The springs seep out of the chalk hills and run together creating a fresh water stream that doesn't run dry.

God's gift of His Holy Spirit is not like a measured cup of grace, that we have to carry carefully, a full cup that can spill, leak away, spill or evaporate.

You say some angry words, you forget to pray, and gradually the grace seeps away.

No the Holy Spirit is more like a spring of water.

The Holy Spirit convicts us our sin, leads us to repentance & teaches us how to walk in God's way.

If we are thirsty for God, if we believe in Jesus

He gives his Holy Spirit to live inside us;

#### PRAYER

Father God, we thank you that your gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for the Apostles but is for all Christians. May we know His abiding and life giving presence with us each day bubbling up within and flowing out to be a blessing to others. Amen.