

From the Last Supper to Pentecost

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From the Last Supper to Pentecost is a journey through the pivotal events that laid the foundation of Christian faith. Beginning with the profound moments of the Last Supper, where Jesus shared His final meal with His disciples and instituted the practice of Communion, the narrative moves through His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, His trials, crucifixion, and triumphant resurrection. This journey continues with the Ascension of Jesus, as He blessed His disciples and was taken up into heaven, and culminates in the powerful arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The transformation of the disciples from followers to leaders, empowered by the Holy Spirit, marks the birth of the early church. This story captures the essence of sacrifice, redemption, and the birth of a new covenant, highlighting the enduring impact of these events on the growth and spread of Christianity.

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I. The Garden of Gethsemane

Jesus' Agony in the Garden

Jesus asks Peter, James, and John to keep watch while He prays (Matthew 26:36-38): After the Last Supper, Jesus led His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, a garden located at the foot of the Mount of Olives. This was a familiar place to Jesus, where He often went to pray and find solitude. Upon arriving, He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray" (Matthew 26:36). Taking Peter, James, and John along with Him, He began to be sorrowful and troubled. He confided in them, saying, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me" (Matthew 26:37-38). Jesus desired their presence and support as He faced the weight of the impending events.

Jesus prays, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39): Going a little farther, Jesus fell with His face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39). In this moment of intense anguish, Jesus expressed His human desire to avoid the suffering that lay ahead. However, His prayer also demonstrated His unwavering commitment to fulfilling the Father's will. He prayed with such fervor that His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground, highlighting the extreme emotional and spiritual agony He was experiencing (Luke 22:44).

The Disciples' Sleep and Jesus' Arrest

Jesus finds His disciples sleeping and says, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41): After praying, Jesus returned to find Peter, James, and John sleeping. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" He then admonished them, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:40-41). Jesus recognized their good intentions but also their human frailty. Despite their devotion, they struggled to stay awake in the late hours of the night, overcome by exhaustion.

Jesus went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matthew

26:42). Again, He returned to find His disciples sleeping, their eyes heavy. Leaving them once more, He prayed the same prayer a third time, fully surrendering to the Father's plan (Matthew 26:44).

Judas arrives with a crowd, betraying Jesus with a kiss, leading to Jesus' arrest (Matthew 26:48-50): As Jesus finished praying and returned to His disciples, He found them sleeping yet again. He said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" (Matthew 26:45-46).

At that moment, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived with a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and elders of the people. Judas had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him" (Matthew 26:48). Going directly to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Jesus responded, "Do what you came for, friend" (Matthew 26:49-50).

The men stepped forward, seized Jesus, and arrested Him. Peter, in a misguided attempt to defend Jesus, drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Jesus immediately healed the man and admonished Peter, "Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52; Luke 22:51). He then willingly submitted to arrest, fulfilling the Scriptures and setting in motion the events leading to His crucifixion.

II. The Trials and Crucifixion

Peter's Denial

Peter denies Jesus three times, as predicted, and weeps bitterly when the rooster crows (Matthew 26:69-75): Following Jesus' arrest, Peter followed Him at a distance right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome. Peter's loyalty led him to stay close, but his fear of association with Jesus would soon manifest.

While Peter was sitting in the courtyard, a servant girl approached him and said, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee." But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said (Matthew 26:69-70).

Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" (Matthew 26:71-72).

After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed (Matthew 26:73-74).

At that moment, Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). Peter's sorrow and repentance were profound, marking a turning point in his journey of faith.

Jesus Before Pilate

Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate, who finds no basis for a charge but yields to the crowd's demand for crucifixion (Matthew 27:24): After Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin, He was brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for sentencing. The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of claiming to be the King of the Jews, a charge of treason against Rome.

Pilate questioned Jesus, asking, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "You have said so." Despite further questioning, Jesus remained silent, astonishing Pilate (Matthew 27:11-14).

Pilate knew that it was out of self-interest that the Jewish leaders had handed Jesus over to him. During the festival, it was customary for the governor to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. Pilate offered them the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, a notorious prisoner (Matthew 27:15-17).

The chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. When Pilate asked, "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?" they all answered, "Crucify him!" Pilate asked, "Why? What crime has he committed?" But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" (Matthew 27:21-23).

Seeing that he was getting nowhere and that an uproar was starting, Pilate took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's

blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" (Matthew 27:24). The crowd answered, "His blood is on us and on our children!" Then Pilate released Barabbas to them, but he had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified (Matthew 27:25-26).

The Crucifixion

Jesus is crucified at Golgotha, prays for forgiveness for His executioners, and gives up His spirit (Luke 23:34; John 19:30): Jesus was led away to be crucified. They forced Simon of Cyrene to carry His cross. They came to a place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull") (Matthew 27:32-33).

There they crucified Him, along with two criminals—one on His right, the other on His left. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:33-34). The soldiers cast lots to divide His clothing and sat down to keep watch over Him there (Matthew 27:35-36).

Above His head, they placed the written charge against Him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matthew 27:37). Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:39-40).

From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?") (Matthew 27:45-46).

Knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When He had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (John 19:28-30).

At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life (Matthew 27:51-52).

The centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, and they were terrified, exclaiming, "Surely he was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:54).

III. The Resurrection

The Empty Tomb

Women find the stone rolled away and are told by an angel, "He is not here; He has risen" (Matthew 28:6): On the first day of the week, early in the morning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to visit the tomb where Jesus had been laid. They were bringing spices to anoint His body, as was the custom. As they approached, they felt a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord had come down from heaven, rolled back the stone, and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow (Matthew 28:1-3).

The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. Come and see the place where He lay" (Matthew 28:4-6). The women were astonished and filled with a mixture of fear and joy as they entered the tomb and saw that it was indeed empty.

The angel continued, "Then go quickly and tell His disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him.' Now I have told you" (Matthew 28:7). Trembling and bewildered, the women ran to tell the disciples the incredible news. Along the way, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings." They came to Him, clasped His feet, and worshiped Him. Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (Matthew 28:8-10).

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Jesus shows His hands and side to His disciples, proving His resurrection (John 20:19-20): Later that day, the disciples were gathered together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" (John 20:19). The disciples were startled and

frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. But Jesus reassured them, saying, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have" (Luke 24:38-39).

To further prove His resurrection, Jesus showed them His hands and side, where the nails and spear had pierced Him. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Jesus said again, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21). With that, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:22-23).

One of the twelve, Thomas, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:24-25).

A week later, Jesus appeared again to His disciples, and this time Thomas was with them. Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:27-29).

The Great Commission

Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations and baptize them (Matthew 28:19-20): After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples in Galilee, on a mountain where He had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted. Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:16-20).

This Great Commission was a mandate for the disciples to spread the message of Jesus Christ to all corners of the earth. They were to make disciples, baptize believers, and teach them to follow Jesus' commands. Jesus promised to be with

them always, empowering and guiding them through the Holy Spirit. This commission marked the beginning of the disciples' mission to evangelize the world and establish the early church, spreading the Gospel and transforming lives through the power of the risen Christ.

IV. The Ascension

Jesus' Ascension

Jesus blesses His disciples and is taken up into heaven (Luke 24:50-52): After His resurrection, Jesus spent forty days appearing to His disciples and teaching them about the kingdom of God. He provided them with final instructions and prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit. His appearances during this time reinforced their faith and deepened their understanding of His mission and the future role they would play.

On the fortieth day, Jesus led His disciples out to the vicinity of Bethany, a village on the Mount of Olives. Here, in this serene and significant location, Jesus chose to impart His final blessing and bid farewell to His followers. The disciples, aware that something momentous was about to happen, gathered closely around Him, their hearts filled with anticipation and reverence.

As they stood together, Jesus lifted His hands and blessed them. "Then He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51). The act of lifting His hands was a symbolic gesture, invoking God's favor and protection over His disciples. It was a moment of deep spiritual significance, as Jesus conferred His peace and empowerment upon them.

As Jesus blessed them, a remarkable event unfolded. He began to ascend, rising from the ground and being lifted up into the sky. The disciples watched in awe and wonder as their Lord was taken up before their very eyes. "They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:10-11).

These two men, angels sent to provide comfort and assurance, reminded the disciples of Jesus' promise to return. Their words affirmed that Jesus' ascension was not an end but a transition. Jesus, now seated at the right hand of the Father, would continue to intercede for them and guide them through the Holy Spirit.

The disciples, having witnessed this extraordinary event, were filled with joy and worship. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, praising God continually. "And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they stayed continually at the temple, praising God" (Luke 24:52-53). Their hearts were encouraged, and their spirits were uplifted, knowing that Jesus was now in glory and that His promises would be fulfilled.

The ascension marked a pivotal moment in the history of the early church. It signified the completion of Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginning of His exalted reign in heaven. The disciples were now tasked with carrying forward His mission, empowered by the Holy Spirit. They awaited the promised Holy Spirit, who would equip them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jesus' ascension also serves as a powerful reminder to all believers of His ultimate authority and the hope of His return. It encourages Christians to live with a sense of purpose and anticipation, knowing that their Lord is reigning in glory and will one day return to establish His kingdom in its fullness.

In the meantime, believers are called to live out the Great Commission, sharing the Gospel, making disciples, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The ascension assures them that they do not undertake this mission alone but are empowered by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who continues to work through them to accomplish God's purposes on earth.

V. The Arrival of the Holy Spirit

Waiting in Jerusalem

The disciples, along with about 120 believers, devote themselves to prayer in the upper room (Acts 1:12-15): After Jesus' ascension, the disciples returned to

Jerusalem, as He had instructed. They gathered in an upper room, a place where they had often met with Jesus. This time, however, they were joined by about 120 believers, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. United in purpose and expectation, they devoted themselves to constant prayer, seeking God's guidance and awaiting the promised Holy Spirit.

"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (Acts 1:12-14).

This period of waiting was marked by a sense of anticipation and unity. The disciples had witnessed the resurrected Jesus and His ascension, and they held firmly to His promise that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit. Their communal prayers reflected their dependence on God and their readiness to receive His empowerment for the mission ahead.

Pentecost

The Holy Spirit fills the disciples, enabling them to speak in other tongues (Acts 2:1-4): When the day of Pentecost arrived, the believers were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

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This miraculous event occurred during the Jewish festival of Pentecost, a time when Jews from every nation were gathered in Jerusalem. The sound and the sight of the disciples speaking in various languages drew a large crowd. The people were bewildered, as they heard their own languages being spoken by the Galileans. "Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'" (Acts 2:12).

Peter's Sermon

Peter explains the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and calls for repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38): Amid the astonished crowd, Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the people. He explained that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of the prophecy spoken by the prophet Joel: "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" (Acts 2:17).

Peter proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified and whom God had raised from the dead, was both Lord and Messiah. He spoke with boldness and conviction, emphasizing that Jesus' resurrection was a testament to His divine authority and the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Peter's words pierced the hearts of the listeners, and they asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39). Peter's message was a call to repentance, faith, and baptism, with the assurance of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Birth of the Church

About three thousand people are baptized, and the early church grows in number and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:41-47): Peter's sermon, empowered by the Holy Spirit, had a profound impact. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. This remarkable growth marked the birth of the early church, a community rooted in faith, fellowship, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

The early believers were characterized by their devotion to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. They lived in a communal spirit, sharing their resources and caring for one another's needs. This new community was marked by a sense of awe, as God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. Their unity and love for one another were a powerful testimony to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

As they continued to meet together in the temple courts and in their homes, their numbers grew daily. The early church, born out of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, became a vibrant and dynamic movement that would spread the message of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth, fulfilling the Great Commission and establishing the foundation of Christian faith for generations to come.

