

Who Can Account For This? (Acts 2:1-21)

* Everything has its own meaning but not everything requires explanation due to its simplicity. However, the ambiguous, perplexing occurrences in life usually call for an explanation, especially if they have to do with such vital areas as life eternal, (Mat 25:46). No wonder, that scientists cannot explain miracles until they find a close analogy to what they observed before and understood. But for all we know, there are always know-all- people who can explain everything; if you give them a minute, - they will give you “the world.” From a certain time up to now, there are also some people who may not be so smart, but they can provide a detailed report when it is necessary; if you give them your ear, they will tell you the truth about “the world”.

* Dear Friends, in our gathering today we celebrate the Day of Pentecost, which was considered as an ambiguous and perplexing event in history. But along with the celebration of the Day, you may wish to hear the explanation. So, if you give us about 10 minutes, we give you account of a couple things you will like to hear. Friends, thank you for your time. We think, it would be acceptable if we start with an introductory note and then consider it in detail.

* Looking for the meaning of the Day, we note that the sanctuary of this church is colored with red which specifically pertains to this day. In the symbolical language, the red color symbolizes the power of life, the passionate love, and the judgment. If we think about it carefully, there are many insights to talk about. Also we note that this Sunday distinguishes itself from ordinary Sundays by its annual reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the second chapter. This reading is accepted by all churches and denominations specifically for the feast of Pentecost. Of this Saint Luke gives the detailed explanation of the phenomenon we call *The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church*. With that outpouring, the apostles were baptized by the Holy Spirit caused their personal changing. It became obvious to many when the apostles went into a deadly confrontation with those opposed to Jesus. The apostles boldly proclaim Jesus’ resurrection and the forgiveness of sins for his sake. The opposition anticipated that the Messiah and his work never come back to life. However, on the 52nd day after his crucifixion, Jesus returned by the Spirit. From this point, the memorial Pentecost can be seen as the day of doom for people who hated the truth.

* Now, let’s say something about the historical account of the Jewish Pentecost. To cut a long story short, we just say that the Day of Pentecost refers to the receiving of the Law given by God to Israel through a human agent (Lev 10:11) after 50 days of travelling from Egypt to the Mount of Sinai. The character of the feast related to the gathering of the first harvest. According to the Mosaic Law, all males were to appear before the Lord in His sanctuary on that Day, (Exo 23:14-17). Along with the regular sacrifices,

there were the festive sacrifices as well; some information on this account is found in (Num 28:26-31).

The distinguishing mark of the Day was the presentation of the two loaves at the beginning.

In the time of Jesus, Pentecost was specified as a Day of commemoration and dedication; it also was a joyful and enthusiastic celebration.

* As it seems to us, the weather on that memorable daybreak was gorgeous; imagine, as it would be our eyes perceived the cloudless sky charming with its brilliancy peculiar only in the Holy Land. With the last blast of the trumpets, the temple's gates were opened and with the tens of thousands of pious Jews we would literally flood through those gates crowding the courts and rooms of the Temple. There were a lot of guests who made the Pentecost in Jerusalem the target of their pilgrimage. As we noted, they were bilingual; they spoke in the language of their country, and in Aramaic as Jews by birth. The apostles and other disciples were also in the Temple according to the custom (Exo 23:17), and the instruction of the Lord, (Luk 24:53; Act 1:4). At this gathering, the assembly of Jesus' disciples were praying and blessing the Lord with great anticipation.

* In the course of the ceremonial activities, presumably when the priests were offering the two wave-loaves with the accompanying sacrifices, suddenly a sound came out of heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and we heard as it filled the area where we were lodging. Then, divided tongues as of fire appeared to us and rested on each one of us. (Act 2:3). The sound was heard in the temple; so, being alerted, some Jews rushed to our place. *What is that?* was a common question. Soon the large crowd surrounded the place where the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and as soon as the crowd saw the disciples speaking excitingly in different languages, they were perplexed even more; they demanded an explanation saying, *Who can account for this?*

* As the question is sounded in our midst, it echoes back to the beginning of this discourse where we mentioned the necessity of explaining the ambiguous and perplexing events. Certainly, the signs of the descending of the Holy Spirit were ambiguous and perplexing for the rest. That is why they kept on asking the burning question, *What does this mean?* (v.12). Again, as we mentioned in the beginning, there are always know-all- people on the scene who can explain everything, including the phenomenon of speaking in different languages. Therefore, when the question arose, soon the answer came, 'these people are in their cups.' In other words, *these people are filled with new wine*, said the know-it-alls, (Act 2:13).

Well, at least in order to prevent people from a wrong understanding of the phenomenon, Peter exclaimed, *these men are not drunk, as you suppose*, (v.15).

* Reflecting on this casuistry, we pose the rhetorical questionnaire for the perplexed Jews and for the rest of the world. First, do you think the Big Bang is a master of the universe? Second, do you think Hitler was the peacemaker? And the last, do you think that the devotional Jews deceive themselves by the imagery of God without a sense of justice? If all these questions don't surprise us with the 'Yes-Answers,' then, it also shouldn't surprise us when people believe that it is possible to speak the Basque language after drinking two or three cups of Burgundy.

* But on the day of Pentecost the situation with the believing in absurd things was discontinued with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In opposition to the people who have still believed fabrications, God enlightens His sons and daughters, and they prophesy, and His young men see visions, and His old men dream dreams: And on His men-servants and on maid-servants, God pours out from His Spirit, and they prophesy, (vv.17,18). With the returning of Jesus by the Spirit, a cardinal change happened with the apostles. This fact became obvious even to the opposition, when Peter lifted up his voice and boldly proclaimed Jesus' resurrection and upcoming judgment in the Temple, in front of the multitude and the opposition. Peter said loudly, "*Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words*, (v.14). Soon, the teaching of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake and the everlasting salvation for all who will believe, spread around the City and further in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. To that effect, the number of people who had believed the cock-and-bull stories decreased significantly. It turned out for many that Jesus was not a blasphemer or a false messiah but the Son of Almighty God, the Saviour of the world.

* And now, we witness of the transformation of our own, even though we are not perfect. In the past, we repented and were baptized. At that time, the Father had forgiven our sins for Christ's sake giving us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee; then, all believers upon whom God sent His Spirit became the partakers of the work of the proclamation starting by the apostles. By the testimony of the Holy Spirit through the disciples, the world constantly is called to repentance with the following promise of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake. God doesn't want anyone's death but desires the sinner's restoration at this favorable time. The long wait is ended, the true Life came in the world and is living among us, full of grace and truth.

Beloved, praise God through our Savior Who has filled us with great joy when we received Him.

Give Him all honor, blessing and glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Amen.