

The DNA of the Church



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In the final verses of Exodus, of all places, we find the first hints of Pentecost. The people have just pulled together all their resources to build a tabernacle for the Lord. They have detailed instructions for crafting this most holy of places, which would become a sign of God's presence among them. The tabernacle would also be their launching pad, a place from which they would move out of the desert and into the promised land.

When this tabernacle was complete, [the final verses of Exodus](#) tell us that "a cloud covered the Tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. ... Now whenever the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey, following it. But if the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were until it lifted" (Exodus 40:34,36-37, NLT).

Depending on the translation, the word for "tabernacle" can mean a place to meet or a place that moves. That tells us that from the very

beginning there has always been a relationship between the presence of God and the journey of faith. It also teaches us that God never meant for his tabernacle to get stuck in one place. It was built to move when God moves, always in the direction of his promises.

That scene from Exodus is our backdrop for Pentecost. The book of Acts begins with the resurrected Jesus telling his followers, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8, NLT). What God did first with the tabernacle in Exodus He is about to do with all believers, placing the laws and commandments of Moses into the person of Jesus Christ. Those who receive Christ into their hearts become God’s tabernacle. On that first Pentecost, this plan was confirmed with cloud and fire, just as with the Exodus tabernacle. And just like the first tabernacle, when he moves, we are invited to move with him.

Movement has been in the Church’s DNA from the beginning. The Kingdom of God is designed to move. It goes where God goes. He has no desire to make us comfortable out there in the desert. Nor does he intend to leave us to fend for ourselves.

Acts 1:8 promises power. “When the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will receive power”—the same power the Israelites had who fought with enemies twice their size and won, who found food enough to feed hundreds of thousands of people, who received miracle after miracle of God’s provision. The power they had, we now have. When we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives we are no longer victims but people with power to move out of our bad circumstances and into better ones.

Of course, in Exodus it was not a person but a community that built the tabernacle and moved out of bondage and toward the promises of God. In Nehemiah it was a community that rebuilt the temple and restored the wall. In Acts, it was a community that received the Holy Spirit, then flowed out into the streets building that community from

a couple-dozen to a few thousand in one day.

Clearly, the filling of the Holy Spirit is not first of all an individual, emotional experience but something given the community to strengthen and empower us for the work of the Kingdom. Paul asks the Corinthians, “Don’t you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16, NLT). He says to the Ephesians, “Together, we are his house ... carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord” (Ephesians 2:20-21, NLT).

The tabernacle is where God meets us and how we know when to move. As William Temple says, no one who is filled with the Spirit of God can keep that Spirit to himself. “Where the Spirit is, he flows forth. And where there is no flowing forth, he is not there.”

Is there a flowing forth in your life? Are you going someplace spiritually? Are you closer to God’s promises for your life than you were a year ago? Five years ago? Or are you still out there in the desert of indecision, waiting for one more sign? Meanwhile, God is calling us forward and His design for His children is not to make us comfortable but to make us great. May you be filled with the Holy Spirit and placed in the path of his promises.

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I follow Jesus.