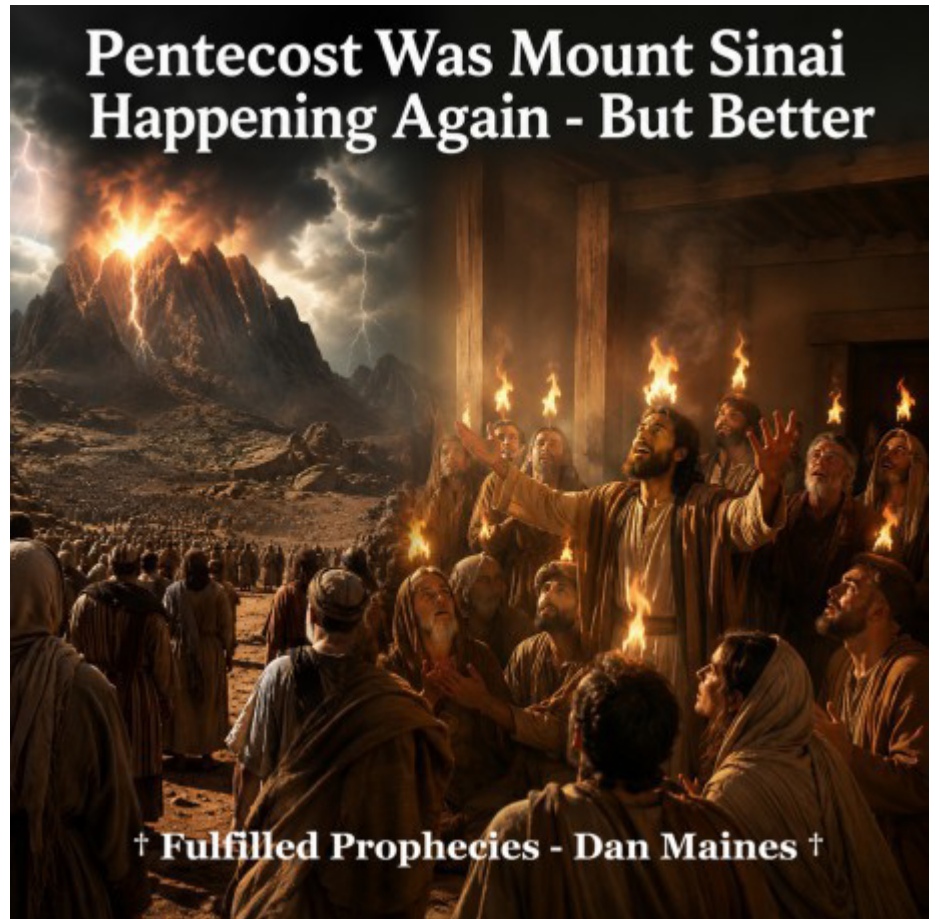


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**Covenant -
Pentecost Was
Mount Sinai
Happening Again -
But Better**



By Dan Maines

Pentecost Was Mount Sinai Happening Again - But Better

Introduction

† Pentecost wasn't an isolated miracle dropped into the book of Acts without an Old Testament background.

† Acts 2 deliberately echoes Mount Sinai, but Pentecost reveals something greater than what happened at the mountain.

† At Sinai there was fire, the voice of God, covenant, and a people being constituted before God. At Pentecost there was fire, inspired languages, the Holy Spirit, the New Covenant, and a people being gathered into Christ.

† One of the most striking contrasts is numerical. After the covenant at Sinai was violated, about 3,000 people died. At Pentecost, about 3,000 people received the word and were added.

† The contrast is powerful. Sinai exposes the judgment associated with covenant rebellion, while Pentecost announces the life and salvation found in Christ.

† Pentecost was Mount Sinai happening again, but better, because everything Sinai anticipated was reaching its greater reality in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

Exodus 19:16-19

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the entire mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder.

† Sinai was a visible manifestation of God's presence. Fire descended, the mountain shook, and God spoke to the people through Moses.

† The people were gathered before God as He established His covenant relationship with Israel (Exodus 19:3-6).

† Keep those details in mind, gathering, divine presence, fire, God's voice, and covenant. Acts 2 will bring those themes together again in a greater way.

Exodus 24:7-8

Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it as the people listened; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with

all these words."

† Sinai wasn't merely a spectacular display of power. It was covenant making.

† Israel stood before God as His covenant people, and the covenant was confirmed with blood.

† Jesus later identified His own blood with the New Covenant, showing that something greater than Sinai was being established through Him (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20).

† Pentecost therefore shouldn't be separated from covenant fulfillment. The Spirit was being poured out upon the people of the New Covenant established through Christ.

Exodus 32:27-28

And he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: 'Every man of you put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.

† Israel broke the covenant almost immediately through the sin of the golden calf.

† The result was judgment, and about 3,000 people fell that day.

† That number becomes extremely important when we arrive at Acts 2.

† Luke records another event involving about 3,000 people, but this time they aren't falling under covenant judgment. They're receiving the word and being added to the community of Christ.

† The correspondence is difficult to miss. About 3,000 fell in the aftermath of Sinai's covenant rebellion, while about 3,000 received the word at Pentecost.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of

Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord: "I will put My law within them and write it on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

- † Jeremiah explicitly contrasted the coming New Covenant with the covenant associated with the Exodus and Sinai.
- † The problem wasn't God's faithfulness. The people broke the covenant.
- † The promised solution was a New Covenant in which God's work would reach inward, into the heart of His people.
- † This prepares us for Pentecost. The New Covenant wouldn't simply place commands before people externally. God would give His Spirit to His people (Ezekiel 36:26-27).
- † What Sinai anticipated externally, the New Covenant brought to its greater spiritual reality through Christ.

Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly a noise like a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues that looked like fire appeared to them, distributing themselves, and a tongue rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with different tongues, as the Spirit was giving them the ability to speak out.

- † The similarities with Sinai are remarkable. God's people were assembled, heaven acted, supernatural sound accompanied the event, fire appeared, and God communicated His message.

- † But there was an important difference. At Sinai the fire descended upon the mountain. At Pentecost the fire rested upon the people.

- † God's presence was no longer being pictured as centered upon a physical mountain or sanctuary. His people were becoming His dwelling through the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22).

- † The languages weren't meaningless noise. People from different nations heard the mighty works of God in their own

languages (Acts 2:5-11).

† Sinai had God's voice associated with the formation of Old Covenant Israel. Pentecost had Spirit-empowered proclamation associated with the formation of the New Covenant people in Christ.

Acts 2:16-18

but this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters will prophesy, And your young men will see visions, And your old men will have dreams; And even on My male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days, And they will prophesy.

† Peter didn't tell his audience that Joel's prophecy concerned people thousands of years in their future. He said, this is that.

† Pentecost was fulfillment taking place before their eyes.

† The Spirit was being poured out during the last days of the Old Covenant age as the New Covenant order was being revealed and established (Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 8:13).

† The people standing before Peter were witnessing the promised transition from the covenant centered upon Moses to the covenant centered upon Christ.

Acts 2:36-39

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what are we to do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

† Notice where the message struck them, they were pierced in their hearts.

† Jeremiah had promised a New Covenant involving the heart,

and Pentecost displays that covenant transformation.

† Peter's message centered completely upon Jesus as Lord and Christ.

† Moses was the mediator at Sinai, but Jesus is the mediator of the better covenant (Hebrews 8:6; Hebrews 9:15).

† The promise of the Spirit confirmed that the promised New Covenant age was arriving through Christ.

Acts 2:41-42

So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

† Here is the stunning contrast with Exodus 32. About 3,000 fell after Israel's covenant rebellion at Sinai, while about 3,000 received the word and were added at Pentecost.

† At Sinai, about 3,000 experienced judgment. At Pentecost, about 3,000 received the gospel.

† The parallel highlights the superiority of what God was accomplishing through Christ.

† Pentecost wasn't simply the birthday of an institution disconnected from Israel's story. It was part of the fulfillment of Israel's covenant promises through Jesus Christ.

† God was gathering the faithful remnant of Israel first, and the gospel would then continue outward to the nations (Acts 1:8; Romans 1:16).

† The New Covenant people were being gathered around Jesus, filled with the Spirit, instructed by the apostles, and joined together in fellowship.

2 Corinthians 3:6-8

who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, engraved in letters on stones, came with glory so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even

more with glory?

† Paul gives us the theological contrast behind Sinai and the New Covenant.

† The covenant written on stones had glory, but that glory was temporary and passing away.

† The ministry of the Spirit possessed greater glory because it belonged to the New Covenant reality established through Christ.

† This makes the contrast between the two groups of about 3,000 even more meaningful. The old ministry exposed sin and brought condemnation, while the New Covenant ministry proclaimed righteousness and life (2 Corinthians 3:9).

† Pentecost wasn't God repairing Sinai. It was God bringing His covenant purpose to its intended fulfillment in Christ.

Hebrews 12:18-24

For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words, which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. For they could not cope with the command, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

† Hebrews makes the contrast unmistakable. Christians haven't come to the physical mountain of Sinai. We've come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem.

† Sinai could be touched. The Zion of the New Covenant is heavenly.

† Sinai produced fear and separation. Through Jesus, God's people have access to the heavenly assembly and the

presence of God.

† Moses stood as mediator at Sinai. Jesus stands as mediator of the New Covenant.

† Everything is better, the mountain is better, the city is better, the mediator is better, the blood is better, and the covenant is better.

† Pentecost belongs to this movement from Sinai to Zion, from Moses to Christ, and from the Old Covenant order to the New Covenant kingdom.

Historical References

† Josephus describes Pentecost as one of the great Jewish pilgrimage festivals when large numbers of Jews gathered at Jerusalem, helping explain why Acts records Jews from many regions present when the Spirit was poured out. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 14, Chapter 13.

† Josephus also records the importance of the Jewish pilgrimage festivals and the enormous gatherings associated with them. This historical setting agrees with Acts 2, where Jews from many nations were gathered in Jerusalem. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 2, Chapter 3.

† Philo of Alexandria associated the giving of the Law at Sinai with extraordinary divine communication and described God's voice in striking supernatural terms. His description shows that Jewish readers already connected Sinai with God's powerful public revelation. Philo, *On the Decalogue*, 32-35.

† Early Christian writer Irenaeus connected the giving of the Holy Spirit with the gathering of people from many nations into unity through Christ. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 3, Chapter 17.

† These historical witnesses don't establish the doctrine, Scripture does. They help us understand the Jewish festival setting and how ancient Jewish and Christian writers understood Sinai, Pentecost, and the gathering of God's people.

How It Applies To Us Today

† We don't stand trembling at the base of Sinai waiting for another covenant. We belong to the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ.

† We don't need another Pentecost. The Spirit was poured out exactly as the prophets promised, and the New Covenant kingdom was established through Christ.

† We don't approach God through Moses, the Levitical priesthood, an earthly temple, or a physical mountain. We come to God through Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† Pentecost reminds us that Christianity isn't God's backup plan after Israel failed. Christ was the destination toward which the covenant story was moving.

† Sinai pointed forward. Pentecost announced fulfillment. The approximately 3,000 who fell and the approximately 3,000 who received the word form a powerful picture of judgment giving way to the life announced through the gospel.

† We now live on the fulfilled side of that covenant transition. Our citizenship is in the heavenly Jerusalem, our mediator is Jesus Christ, and our access to God is through Him.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Was Pentecost literally another Mount Sinai?

A: No. Pentecost wasn't a second geographical Sinai. Acts 2 intentionally contains themes that strongly echo Sinai, including gathering, divine manifestation, fire, God's communication, and covenant formation. The New Testament then explicitly contrasts Sinai with the New Covenant Mount Zion (Hebrews 12:18-24).

Q: Why is the number 3,000 important?

A: Exodus records about 3,000 falling after the golden calf rebellion, while Acts records about 3,000 receiving the word and being added at Pentecost (Exodus 32:28; Acts 2:41). The contrast fits the New Testament distinction between the ministry associated with death and the greater ministry of the Spirit (2

Corinthians 3:6-8).

Q: Were the tongues at Pentecost actual languages?

A: Yes. The people heard the disciples speaking in their own languages about the mighty works of God (Acts 2:6-11).

Q: Did Pentecost fulfill Old Testament prophecy?

A: Yes. Peter directly identified what was happening by saying, this is that which had been spoken through Joel (Acts 2:16-18).

Q: Did Pentecost mean the Old Covenant had completely disappeared that same day?

A: No. The New Covenant had been established through Christ, but the Old Covenant order was still growing old and approaching its final disappearance during that first-century transition (Hebrews 8:13). Its earthly temple system remained until Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in AD 70.

Q: Where are God's people gathered now?

A: Hebrews says believers have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Exodus 19:16-19; Exodus 24:7-8; Exodus 32:27-28; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:16-18; Acts 2:36-39; Acts 2:41-42; 2 Corinthians 3:6-8; Hebrews 12:18-24

† Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 14, Chapter 13; Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 3; Philo, On the Decalogue, 32-35; Irenaeus, Against Heresies, Book 3, Chapter 17

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