

Christ in Joel

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

We are a Baptist Church, did you know that? We're a Baptist Church.

They say that the difference between a Baptist Church and a Pentecostal Church is the Pentecostals fill the seats from the front, because that's where the Holy Spirit is, and Baptists fill from the back, because that's where the Baptists are.

We are a Baptist Church. And as a Baptist Church, we believe in the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But let me ask you, of the three persons of the Trinity, which do you understand the least?

The Holy Spirit? Nod, if correct? Not a lot of nods.

God is hard to understand, but I think that the Holy Spirit is the person of God, which is hardest to understand. The Apostles Creed is one of the bedrock statements of Christian faith.

It says, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only son, our Lord, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, da-da-da-da-da-da. All about the Son.

And one line is given to the Holy Spirit. I believe in the Holy Spirit. Before the Creed moves on to talk about the forgiveness of sins and the meaning of the Church.

One line for God, the Holy Spirit. And so today, I think it is important for us to learn more about who the Holy Spirit is. This is Pneumatology 101.

Pneumatology is the fancy theological word for the study of the Holy Spirit. So we're gonna go to class today. And I'm gonna give you some of the content that I was given from Bible College on who the Holy Spirit is.

Pneumatology 101. As you have heard, we are back in our Christ in Scripture project.

We have an ambitious goal over these two years to spend one week in every single one of the 66 books of the Bible and see how that book points us to the person of Jesus. So we are 28 sermons through the project.

And today we kick off a new series in The Minor Prophets. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. Also known as The Twelve or The Scroll of The Twelve.

The reason they are called Minor is not because they have an insignificant message, but they are just short. In fact, put together, the 12 books of The Minor Prophets equal roughly the length of Isaiah on its own.

That's why they are called The Minor Prophets. The story of The Minor Prophets is really God's voice speaking to His people, Israel and Judah, as they were going into exile. It's God's perspective on the exile.

All throughout The Minor Prophets, as we are going to see, God is calling out to His people, calling for them to return, to repent and return to God. And if they do that, God promises blessing.

And if they don't, God promises judgment upon their wickedness. So we come today to Christ in Joel. Rob has read for us a passage, hopefully a well-known passage in Joel chapter 2.

We're going to land there in a moment. But I want to start with the opening words of the Book of Joel, Joel chapter 1. The word of the Lord that came to Joel, son of Pethuel.

Hear this, you elders. Listen all who live in the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors?

Tell it to your children and let your children tell it to their children and their children to the next generation. What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten. What the great locusts have left, the young locusts have eaten.

What the young locusts have left, other locusts have eaten. That's how Joel opens. Scholars think that in the very near past of the community, the community to which Joel is writing, they had experienced a locust plague in the real world.

I was studying locust plagues and I came across some insane facts about locusts. How about this? One swarm of locusts can contain 10 billion individuals.

A swarm of locusts can devour in one day what would feed 40,000 people over one year. One day, a thousand newly hatched locusts can fit in one square foot. That's how small these things are.

And a single locust can travel 5,000 kilometres over the course of its life. That's more than the distance from Sydney to Perth. Sydney to Perth is 4,000 k's.

They can travel 5,000 k's. So a locust born in Perth can come and ravage our crops here in Sydney. That's why Joel is drawing on this traumatic plague that the people have just experienced, the locust swarm.

And Joel brings it up as a spiritual metaphor for the destruction that they have experienced at the hands of Assyria and Babylon in the exile.

Joel is using this locust image as an image of the judgment that God has brought on Israel because of their sin. In chapter 1, it talks about this locust swarm, and it calls it the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord.

I won't go kind of in detail into what the day of the Lord means, but in Joel chapter 1, he's looking backwards at the exile.

When the armies came, Assyria first, then Babylon, then Persia, then Greece, then Rome, when those armies came, it was a day of judgment, the day of the Lord.

And then in chapter 2 of Joel, he looks forward to a future day of the Lord, when not just Israel will be judged, but all nations will be judged for their wickedness and sin.

And then right when you start to feel like Joel is kind of just heavy and doomy, at the end of chapter 2, there's a pivot to hope. And that's where the passage that Rob read for us comes from, the great promise of the Holy Spirit.

So I want to pause right there in that passage, the passage about the giving of the Spirit, and do a little Nematology 101.

I want to look at the Holy Spirit through kind of three stages, the person of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, and the presence of the Spirit. The person, power, and presence of the Spirit. Firstly, the person of the Spirit.

That is who the Spirit is. And we can say three things. Firstly, the Spirit is Spirit.

Now, that sounds like a silly thing to say, but what I mean is the capital S, Holy Spirit, is made of the substance of lowercase s, Spirit. So, what are the opening words of the Bible? The first four words.

In the beginning, God.

In four words, the Bible makes an astonishing theological claim that before there was matter, this stuff, flesh, atoms, molecules, protons, neutrons, electrons, the forces of gravity, before there was matter, there was Spirit, in the beginning, God.

That means that everything that you and I see, everything that we are in matter came from Spirit. Spirit is more real than matter. That might sound like a weird thing to say.

It's a very weird thing to say in 2026, because we live in a world that is dominated by this thing called philosophical naturalism, which is the view that there is nothing apart from matter, apart from what you can see, smell, taste, hear and touch.

But the Bible opens with the opposite claim. In the beginning, God, everything that is visible came from what is invisible. We keep reading in Genesis 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now, the earth was formless and empty. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.

And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. There, for the first time, the word Spirit appears in the Bible. In the first two verses.

The Hebrew word is Ruach. Everyone say Ruach. And clear your throat, Ruach.

That's the Hebrew word for Spirit. It's also the word for wind and breath and mind. The word Ruach appears 378 times in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, the equivalent in Greek is Pneuma, from which we get pneumonia, sickness of the lungs. It means wind and breath and spirit.

And so right there, in the first two verses of creation, you have heaven and earth, spirit and matter, God and human beings. And human beings, when you read Genesis, are made from the dust of the earth.

We're made of matter, but God breathes into us his what? Spirit. And we come alive.

And so human beings are this curious mix of matter and spirit. And so for us today, we have to learn how to engage with the God who is spirit.

Do you remember in John 4, Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman, he says, God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in what? Spirit and truth. So for us to engage with God requires strengthening our spiritual muscles.

In Hebrews 11, the author writes, faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.

By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what is visible. This is spirit and matter.

And the need for us in communing with the Holy Spirit to learn how to know Him in spirit and in truth. The Spirit is spirit. Secondly, the Spirit is He.

The Spirit is He. Now by that, I do not mean that the Spirit is biologically male, as opposed to female, but I mean that the Spirit is a person. It's a He.

Sorry. He is a He. He is not an it.

In fact, in the United States, they do a study every couple of years called the State of Theology. And in the State of Theology study, they survey the American church to find out what heresies they still believe.

And this 2022 study found that 60% of American Christians think that the Holy Spirit is a force and not a person. Now we NorthernLife Baptist, we would never commit that theological heresy. We know that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a force.

He is a he. In John 14 to 17, Jesus is with his disciples in the upper room. And there's this passage of scripture that is so helpful for us to understand the Spirit.

Jesus says, I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own.

He will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. Are you getting a picture?

The Spirit is a he. In fact, I learnt this in Bible College. This is so cool for all the grammar nerds out there.

In that passage, we have fantastic theology and terrible grammar. Because Greek is a gendered language. English is not really gendered.

Greek has masculine words like artos, bread is masculine, but zoe is feminine. And then you have neuter words, which are not masculine or feminine. The word pneuma, spirit, is a neuter word, meaning it's not masculine or feminine.

But John uses a masculine pronoun to talk about the neuter spirit. I'm seeing so many blank looks right now. I should not talk about grammar.

The point is, John is breaking the rules of language to make the point that the spirit is a person, he, the spirit of truth.

And so I understand when we pray, sometimes we say things like, come Holy Spirit, we want to hear what you have to say, would you make it manifest, make it manifest among us. We say it in reference to the Holy Spirit.

And that's okay because it comes from a good heart, but that is heresy, because the Holy Spirit is a person, he is a he with a will. In some traditions of the church, we don't make very much of the Holy Spirit.

But in some traditions, we maybe make too much to the detriment of God speaking to us in the Bible. But we want to find a balance that acknowledges that the Spirit is a person with a will.

And when we pray, come Holy Spirit, we're asking for God to do something among us. Which brings us to the third thing that we can say about the person of the Spirit. And that is, the Spirit is God.

The Spirit is God. You would, I think, be forgiven for thinking, based on the Apostles' Creed, that the Spirit is like a lesser God. Like a really good angel or something.

Because it talks about the Father, talks about the Son, and then one line on the Holy Spirit. But notice in the Great Commission, Jesus sending out his disciples. He says, baptise all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Name is singular. One name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus clearly knows that the Spirit is God.

It's not in the name of the Father and the Son, and also do it in the kind of power of the Holy Spirit. The singular name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed refers to the Holy Spirit as the Lord, the giver, the giver of life.

The Holy Spirit is God. When we talk about God, we're talking about a triune being, three in one. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is not the Father, the Father is not the Spirit, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, but all of them are God and the Spirit is God too.

I've heard it said before that if you deny the Trinity, you lose your soul, but if you try and explain the Trinity, you lose your mind. So I won't try and explain the Trinity apart from to say that the Spirit is God and the Spirit is a he.

Putting all this together, what can we say about the person of the Spirit? Dallas Willard has a helpful definition. Spirit is non-bodily personal power.

That's worth remembering, I think, because in that definition, you pull together all three pieces. The Spirit is non-bodily, meaning not material. We have to exercise the muscles of faith to commune with him.

The Spirit is personal. It's not like the force in Star Wars that you like, the Spirit is a person, and the Spirit is the power of God. Which brings us to the power of the Spirit.

We've looked at who the Spirit is, now we look at what the Spirit does.

When you trace the appearance of the word Ruach over the Old Testament, you find one of the first, in fact, the first time that the Spirit comes on a person is in Genesis 41, Joseph and administration.

For context, Joseph has just interpreted Pharaoh's dream. Do you remember that? He says, there's gonna be five years of plenty, then five years of famine.

So what you should do is store up all the grain during the five years of plenty, and then you'll have some leftover during the five years of famine. And Pharaoh says this in Genesis 41, the plan seems good to Pharaoh and to all his officials.

So Pharaoh asked them, can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the what? Spirit of God. That's one of the first times that the Holy Spirit fills a person, and it's to do the work of administration, Joseph and administration.

What about Bezalel and creativity? In Exodus, God gives Moses the instructions for the tabernacle, which is the portable presence of God in the tent.

And we read this, the Lord said to Moses, You see, I have chosen Bezalel, son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the what?

Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, and with all kinds of skills, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood and to engage in all kinds of crafts.

The Holy Spirit is empowering Bezalel to do creativity, to paint and craft and carve and deal with color and form and shape and all these creative things. What about Moses and prophecy? Numbers 11 verse 29.

Joshua is cranky at Moses because other people are prophesying. And Joshua was like, Moses, you got to put a stop to it. Moses says, Are you jealous for my sake?

I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his spirit on them. One more time, Joshua and leadership.

Moses said to the Lord, May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep

without a shepherd. So the Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom is the what? Spirit of leadership, and lay your hand on him. We could go on and on and on and on.

In the Old Testament, David's singing by the spirit, prophets prophesying by the spirit, Ezekiel seeing visions in the spirit. On and on and on. The Holy Spirit empowering a person.

Now, here's the key question. When Joseph is administrating, Bezalel crafting, Moses prophesying, Joshua leading, is it the human being doing that stuff? Or is it the Spirit of God doing that stuff?

Yes, is the correct answer. Bezalel is crafting and the Spirit is working through him. This tells us something so significant about the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is not separate entirely from human agency, but the power of the Spirit is God working in and through a human being. Sort of the line between the agency of the Spirit and human agency is not clear in Scripture.

When Moses was prophesying, it was him prophesying and the Spirit prophesying. When Joseph was administrating, it was the same. In fact, in the New Testament, you get the fruits of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit, two significant things.

When a person is exercising the gifts of the Spirit, teaching, mercy, helps, administration, is it the person doing the stuff or is it the Spirit doing the stuff? Yes.

When it comes to the gifts of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, when a person exhibits those virtues, is it the person doing it or is it the Holy Spirit doing it? Yes, both.

The Holy Spirit is the power of God working in a human being and through a human being.

So then, an important question is to ask, how do I know when it's me in the Spirit doing something, or how do I know when it's just me in the flesh without the Spirit? If both of those two things could look similar from the outside.

Dallas Willard, my second quote of the day, Dallas Willard says, the mark of the Spirit's activity is the incommensurability of the result with the effort. Incommensurability means you can't compare them.

What that means is that when a person is striving in the flesh to do something, it will have an outcome. But when a person is serving in the power of the Spirit, it will bear 100 times the fruit.

They're incomparable, incommensurable when a person is serving in line with the power of God working through them by his Spirit. The whole point of the Holy Spirit is God's power working in and through a human being to bless the world.

Tyler Staten says, The Spirit is the experiential agent of the Trinitarian God. The experiential agent of the Trinitarian God.

That means that the Holy Spirit is the person that makes real to us what God the Father has given and Christ the Son has accomplished. At risk of heresy, let me offer an analogy. I think it's one of the best analogies for the Trinity.

God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is like the Sun, S-U-N, the burning ball of gas. The Sun itself is God the Father, the source of all things. The rays of light that come down is Jesus Christ the Son.

The exact radiance of God's glory, as Hebrew says. And the feeling of warmth on your skin, and the vitamin D that is produced in you from exposure to the Sun, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. One God, one kind of being, but three separate roles.

The person of the Spirit is God making his power known in us. And so in Romans 5, Paul says that God's love is poured out into our hearts by the Spirit, because the Spirit is what connects us to God the Father.

That's the person of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit, and finally the presence of the Spirit. We've spoken about who the Spirit is and what the Spirit does, and now we come to how the Spirit fills.

And just like last time, last week, there's no three-step formula that's easy, in the Old Testament at least. Because sometimes the Holy Spirit comes at the laying on of hands, sometimes no hands.

Sometimes through prayer, like when Sampson prayed for strength to defeat the Philistines one last time. Sometimes no prayer. There's not really a very clear model from the Old Testament of how to be filled with the Spirit.

But what is made abundantly clear in the Old Testament is that the Holy Spirit is the empowerment of God in a human being for a temporary period of time. The Spirit came on Joshua for leadership, but it did not remain.

The Spirit came on David, but it did not remain. It came on Moses, on Saul, on so many characters, but the Spirit did not remain on those people. And so that's where we come to the great promise of Joel 2 that Rob read for us.

The promise is that God is going to pour out his Spirit on all people for all time. Not just pouring out his Spirit on the exceptional few for a short time, but he's going to pour out his Spirit on all people.

Let me read Joel 2, 28, that Rob read for us. Afterward, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your old men will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood for the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls. That's the best passage in Joel, in my opinion.

That's why I want to preach on that passage and not all the judgment. The great promise of Joel, Christ in Joel, is that one day God is going to pour out His Spirit on all people, sons and daughters, old people, young people.

All people will receive the Spirit when God breathes it on us. And then comes Jesus. Jesus, it says in Matthew, was conceived of the Holy Spirit in Mary.

Jesus was baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, descending on him like a dove. Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus as a person full of the Holy Spirit.

And as Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit, he gives the Holy Spirit as well. In Luke 4, we read Jesus reading a passage from Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. The Spirit of the Lord is on Jesus.

And so all of Jesus' ministry is empowered by the Spirit. When he's teaching, healing, delivering, speaking in parables, when he's just doing life with his disciples, when he dies on the cross and rises again, it is by the power of the Spirit.

And then we come to Pentecost. The promise of Joel is fulfilled in Pentecost. Pentecost Sunday is seven weeks after Easter.

Seven times 749, round that up to 50. Pentecost meaning 50. And in Pentecost, Joel chapter 2 is fulfilled.

Earlier this year, at Pentecost Sunday in May, we made a video of our body reading the passage from Acts chapter 2 in different languages. Check it out again.

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were together in one place. The Minor Prophets.

It's like me, you, Udiamo, Pallare, Chioscona, Nella nostra propria lingua nativa.

And in the last day, speak God, I will be of the Spirit.

And your old people will dream.

In that time, my spirit will fill my lips, as a man and a woman, and they will read my message.

And I will give a miracle in the sky above, and draw on the earth below, blood and fire and smoke.

The sun will become dark, and the moon will be red like blood. Then the day of the Lord will come, this great and magnificent day.

Not given to the exceptional few, but to all those who believe in Jesus. Can I get a show of hands if you understood any language other than English in that video? Lots of people.

I only speak English, so I was reading the left side of that screen. That is Joel chapter 2 fulfilled. The person, the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Pneumatology 101 complete. Come back at some point for Pneumatology 102. Ephesians chapter 5.

Paul says, do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit.

Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the application from this theological lecture. Be filled with the Spirit.

Can I ask you, do you have the Holy Spirit? Thank you. If you have put your trust in Jesus, if you have declared that he is your Lord and Saviour, you have the Holy Spirit.

There's no question. And yet also, Scripture seems to attest to the fact, and church history confirms, that at special times, in special ways, for special purposes, God seems to make manifest his Holy Spirit in a powerful way.

And so for 2,000 years, the church has prayed, come Holy Spirit. It's a simple prayer, inviting God by his Spirit to make himself manifest in us, to do a powerful work in us and through us.

And so when we, when I ask you, do you have the Spirit, I know you have the Spirit if you trust Jesus, but we can pray that he might give us a special feeling of the Spirit today.

Paul says be filled with the Spirit, not just have like 10% capacity of the Spirit. The word is play ro-o, overflow, be full of the Spirit. And that happens as we sing to the Lord.

You know, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit as the body of Christ. Paul talks about that in Ephesians 2. Together, God by his Spirit dwells among us, and I am the temple of the Lord.

You singular are the temple of the Lord. Your body is the place where Christ by his Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit dwells among us.

And so we're going to have a time in a moment to pray for the Holy Spirit to come in our lives in a special way. But before we do that, I want to share a brief story about John Wesley.

John Wesley was an Anglican priest in the 1700s, and he went to America to be a missionary, I think in Alabama. And he's just serving and preaching and doing the stuff, and nothing is happening.

He's working as hard as he can studying and preaching and giving his heart away, his life away, and nothing is happening.

Finally, John Wesley comes back to London on a furlough, and he meets a couple of people, a couple of cool stories that I'm not going into. And he goes to a prayer meeting on Aldersgate Street.

And in this prayer meeting, they're studying, of all things, Martin Luther's commentary on Romans.

Not exactly thrilling reading, but it is during this time of prayer and reading scripture, reading Martin Luther's words, that John Wesley was filled with the Spirit in a new way, that God made known to him the reality of the salvation and the life

that he enjoys in Christ. What was previously something that John knew with his head, he came to know with his whole heart and his whole life. Later on, Wesley described that moment with these words, I felt my heart strangely warmed.

He was filled full of the Spirit. John Wesley went on to have an incredibly fruitful ministry, founding the Methodist Church, changing the global church for discipleship and for the glory of God.

And it came from this moment of being filled with the Spirit. So I want to invite you to pray that prayer with me, come Holy Spirit. It might lead us in a time of silence.

You might bring yourself before the Lord and then we'll pray and sing together. So let's just have a moment of silence and pray, come Holy Spirit together.

God, we stand before you without music and without hype, without trying to manufacture anything in this moment. But we stand before you in silence, and we just pray, come Holy Spirit.

You're not a force to be wielded at our will, but you are a person to be adored. We thank you for your power that you work in us. We thank you that you gift us for the equipping of the body of Christ and the glory of God.

And so I pray right now, Holy Spirit, that you would come and work with us in the way that we've never known before. Oh, my brothers and sisters, today, fill us afresh in a powerful way.

Would you pour the love of God into our hearts today in a way that we've never known before? Would you make real to us the life that we have in Christ? Would you speak to us and work through us?

Come, Holy Spirit, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen.