

The Day the Spirit Came for Everyone

The Spirit of Christ

Acts chapter one, verses four through five, and verse eight.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, you heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:4-5, 8

Luke chapter twenty-four, verse forty-nine.

And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

LUKE 24:49

Wait.

That is the last instruction Jesus gives before He ascends. Not go. Not preach. Not do anything at all. Wait. Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

If you had been in that room, you might have found that instruction hard to sit with. The mission was urgent. The world was waiting. Jesus had already told them what they were being sent to do,

witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, to the end of the earth. And now He tells them to sit still and wait for a promise they cannot yet see.

We spent time already tracing why the Spirit had to come at all, how the King had to be enthroned before He could pour out what He had been given. That coronation is not undone here. It is the reason the waiting makes sense. The disciples were not waiting because nothing had happened yet. Everything had happened. The King had already ascended, already been seated, already received what the Father promised Him. What they were waiting for was the moment that promise would reach them. They were not waiting for comfort. They were waiting for what was about to be given, and what was about to be given would turn out to be more than one thing at once.

To understand why that gift was so significant, it helps to see how the Spirit had worked among God's people up to this point, and how He had not.

Across the story of Israel, and across the centuries of Jewish thought and writing that followed it, the Spirit of God shows up again and again, but almost always in the same way. He rests on a particular person for a particular task. A priest is anointed. A prophet is called and equipped to speak. A king is set apart to rule. The Spirit comes as a gift given to accomplish something, not as something every person in Israel could simply expect to carry. It was never treated as the ordinary possession of an ordinary believer, and it was never treated as something bound up with a person's basic standing before God. You could be right with God and never receive it. It was a gift added on top, given to the few, for the sake of the many.

There is a moment buried in the book of Numbers that shows just how deeply this was felt, even by the man most closely associated with the Spirit in the entire Old Testament. Moses has

just watched two men, Eldad and Medad, prophesy in the camp without his permission, and Joshua asks him to stop them. Listen to how Moses answers.

Numbers chapter eleven, verse twenty-nine.

But Moses said to him, are you jealous for my sake?
Would that all the LORD's people were prophets,
that the LORD would put his Spirit on them.

NUMBERS 11:29

Think about who is saying that. This is the one man in the entire Old Testament most saturated with the Spirit of God, the one who spoke with the Lord face to face, and even he says it plainly. He wishes it were not just for him. He wishes it belonged to everyone. Even the man living closest to the old pattern could sense that the old pattern was not the final word.

That wish sits unanswered for well over a thousand years.

Then comes the day of Pentecost.

Acts chapter two, verses one through four.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

ACTS 2:1-4

Sit with that for a moment before we try to explain it. A sound like wind, filling the house. Something like fire, resting over each person there, not just the leaders, not just the eleven, but each one. And then the strange, sudden gift of speech, ordinary people speaking in ways they had never learned. Luke does not rush past this. He wants us to feel the weight of it before he tells us what it means.

It is Peter who tells us what it means.

Acts chapter two, verses fourteen through twenty-one.

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel, and in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

ACTS 2:14-21

Peter does not stand up to defend the disciples against the charge of drunkenness and leave it there. He reaches straight back to the prophet Joel, and through Joel, all the way back to that old, unanswered wish. What Moses spoke aloud in the wilderness, sons and daughters, servants and elders, all of them, is what Peter now says is happening in front of everyone's eyes. The gift that was once reserved for the few has been given to all flesh. The barrier is down. Peter is not offering a private interpretation here. He is naming, in real time, what everyone standing in that street had just watched happen.

It is worth pausing on what kind of gift this actually is, because it can be described in more than one way, and both descriptions are true.

We had already traced Ezekiel's promise and Jeremiah's promise in an earlier session, that God would give His people a new heart, and put His law within them, and write it on their hearts rather than on stone. Read again what Jeremiah said God would do.

Jeremiah chapter thirty-one, verse thirty-three.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD, I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

JEREMIAH 31:33

And what Ezekiel said as well.

Ezekiel chapter thirty-six, verses twenty-six through twenty-seven.

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

EZEKIEL 36:26-27

Read Pentecost against those promises, and it is the day the covenant God spoke of arrives. This is not the law given on tablets of stone at a mountain, but the law taken up inside a person, written where no one else can see it, kept not by outward compulsion but by an inward transformation only God could work. Something has moved from outside a person to inside them, permanently.

But that is not the only true way to describe what happened. Some who have given their lives to studying this book insist that the dominant note of Pentecost is not covenant renewal but empowerment, that the primary thing this gift does is take a room full of ordinary, frightened people, not just the eleven, but everyone gathered there waiting on the promise, and turn all of them into witnesses who cannot be made to stop speaking. And when you watch what happens next in the book of Acts, it is hard to argue otherwise. Peter, who denied Christ three times in a courtyard just weeks before, stands in public and preaches with a boldness that gets him hauled before the very council that condemned Jesus. That kind of change does not usually come from the inside quietly. It comes from being sent.

Here is what is worth reasoning through rather than rushing past. Both of these are true at once, and they are not competing with each other. The same Spirit who seals the covenant in the heart is the Spirit who sends the church outward into the world. What happens inside a person and what happens through a person are not two separate gifts arriving at the same time by coincidence.

They are one gift doing what it was always going to do. The law written on the heart does not stay quietly there. A heart remade by God does not stay silent. Pentecost is the covenant sealed and the mission launched, in the very same breath.

There is one more thing worth seeing before we leave that morning in Jerusalem.

None of this happened in isolation. The King had already been enthroned. What began that day did not stay contained in one room, or one city. It moved from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, and it has been moving ever since, carried by ordinary people who were simply willing to be filled and then go. That is still how the King's reign advances. Not by force, and not automatically, but through people who wait, and then move when they are sent.

So the question in front of us is not really a private one. It is not only about your own experience of the Spirit. It is about whether you are the next place that reign moves through, or the next place it quietly stalls.

Are you actually waiting on the Spirit, expectantly, the way that room in Jerusalem waited? Or has waiting quietly become something else for you, indifference dressed up as patience, or religious busyness that never leaves room for anything to be given?

And when He does move in you, what happens next. Do you yield the way Peter yielded, stepping into what is being asked of you without needing to be talked into it? Or do you find yourself negotiating, the way Moses once did at a burning bush, offering reason after reason why this task belongs to someone else, someone more capable, someone with a better voice, someone who is not you?

Peter did not have himself figured out that morning. Neither did Moses, back at the bush. What both of them eventually had was a willingness to be used by the King who called them. That is still what He is looking for. Not someone impressive. Someone willing.

Group Discussion Questions

- 1 Before Pentecost, the Spirit rested only on specific people set apart for specific tasks. What difference does it make that the Spirit is now given to all believers rather than a select few?
- 2 Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem before they were sent out. Why do you think waiting mattered so much before the mission could begin?
- 3 Peter's sermon connects Pentecost to Joel's prophecy and, further back, to Moses' own wish in Numbers 11:29. Why does it matter that this had been waited on for so long?

Personal Reflection Questions

- 1 Are you actually waiting on the Spirit with expectation, or has waiting quietly become something closer to indifference or religious busyness?
- 2 When the Spirit moves in you, do you tend to yield right away, like Peter, or do you find yourself negotiating, like Moses at the burning bush?
- 3 Where in your life right now might the King's reign be waiting to move, not through your ability, but through your willingness?

REFERENCES

Dunn, J. D. G. (1970). *Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. SCM Press.

Menzies, R. P. (1994). *Empowered for witness: The Spirit in Luke-Acts*. Sheffield Academic Press.