

Lesson 2 12 August, 2018

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Lesson Scope: Acts 2

References in brackets refer to Acts 2 unless otherwise specified

Lesson Focus

The Holy Spirit was already at work in the world under the Old Covenant. A few men, such as John the Baptist, were given the Spirit of God for life. Others, such as Bezaleel, seem to have been empowered for unique assignments. But God by the mouth of Joel promised to “pour out [His] spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).

Jesus confirmed the promise of the Spirit’s coming and explained more of his nature and work. To Nicodemus, He compared the work of the Spirit with the wind. It has no visible presence, but its effects are very evident. To the woman at the well, He referred to the Spirit as an internal artesian well that gives nourishment for everlasting life. To the disciples, He promised the Comforter, “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17), who would “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8).

Just before He ascended, Jesus had instructed the disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Spirit descended upon the believers in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and the promises of Jesus Christ. This event marks the birth of the New Testament church.

The events of this lesson mark the birth of the New Testament church. While the hopes of Israel were centred on the Messiah and an earthly kingdom, God had a greater plan in mind.

Christ came to earth to teach and to give His life, but He now directs His kingdom from His place at the Father’s side. In His place, He has sent the Holy Spirit to indwell every believer. The Messianic kingdom is not limited to a geographical or physical empire, but is spiritual and universal. The only limiting factor is man’s will.

The church was born among those who were faithful to God under the Old Covenant. God did have the salvation of the Gentiles in mind, but the first step in forming the New Testament church was to help faithful

Jews to understand the work of Christ and apply it to their lives. Old Testament prophecies provided the springboard for Peter's message, the work of Christ was the central theme, and the call to repentance and baptism showed the appropriate response to truth.

We do want to see the Spirit's present work portrayed in this initial outpouring. Many look for dramatic repetitions of the scene here in the beginning of Acts 2, but they minimize the lordship of Christ and everyday expressions of His presence. While we do not look for the miracles of flaming tongues or speaking in tongues, the work of the Spirit in the life of a believer is nevertheless a miracle.

We look for the fruit of the Spirit as evidence of His presence, as well as alignment with the Word of God and submission to the church of Jesus Christ.

Lesson Aim: To present truths related to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Theme Verse: **John 14:26.** But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Lesson Text:

The Gift

Acts 2:1-4

¹ (KJV) And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Message

Acts 2:5-6

⁵ (KJV) And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. ⁶ Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man

heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:14-18

¹⁴ (KJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: ¹⁵ For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: ¹⁸ And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

Acts 2:22-24

²² (KJV) Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: ²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Acts 2:33-36

³³ (KJV) Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. ³⁴ For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵ Until I make thy foes thy footstool. ³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

The Increase

Acts 2:37-41

³⁷ (KJV) Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? ³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. ⁴⁰ And with many other words did he testify

and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. ⁴¹
Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

Acts 2:46-47

⁴⁶ (KJV)

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, ⁴⁷ Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Questions for Study

The Gift

1. Explain the significance of the rushing wind and the tongues of fire to this occasion.
2. What were the immediate effects of this great infilling?

The Message

3. How did this outpouring differ from the Spirit's work among men under the Old Covenant?
4. Evaluate Peter's sermon. Who was his audience? What was his message to them?
5. What are the elements of Spirit-filled preaching?

The Increase

6. Why is baptism a necessary step of those who receive the Holy Ghost?
7. What is the connection between the Spirit's power to convict and His power to comfort?
8. What are the elements of Spirit-filled living?

Analysing the Passage

The Feast of Pentecost was one of the three great annual feasts which all adult males were required to attend. The fulfillment of this feast, mentioned here in Acts 2, reveals much about the Old Testament symbolism.

The Feast of Pentecost at the end of the grain harvest foretold a great harvest that would follow the work of Christ. The two loaves that were waved are of special interest. Bread itself signifies life and nourishment. The two loaves prefigure Jew and Gentile blending as one in the New

Testament church. The other tongues referred to in verse 4 and following were actual languages and not just meaningless jargon. The speech of the apostles was edifying to those who heard it.

Many who had gathered for the Feast of Pentecost were devout (2:5) in the observance of the Old Testament Law. What they lacked was an understanding of Christ's redemptive work.

It would not be logical to assume drunkenness (2:15) at the third hour of the day (nine o'clock in the morning).

Peter's message (2:14-40) shows the Holy Spirit at work enabling him to point out the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies as well as apply truth to present issues in a way that convicted his audience and moved them to conversion.

The singleness of heart that characterized the believers' fellowship (2:46) contains in the Greek the thought of "smoothness, no stumbling-stones." The Spirit's presence produces a unity otherwise impossible.

Principles and Applications

The Gift

1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit completed God's provisions for the New Testament church (2:1). At Christ's ascension, the need for a Comforter became obvious. But so soon, the void was filled more completely than anyone could have dreamed! The waiting was over and work could begin.

2. The sound from heaven and the accompanying miracles are evidence that the Father had sent the Holy Spirit (2:2-4). God did not leave the disciples or any who heard them that day wondering if the Spirit's presence was real. What attracted the audience? The sound and the miracles may have attracted attention, but it was the message that kept their attention.

The Message

3. The Holy Spirit empowers men for preaching (2:14). He did not put into Peter's mind Scriptures that Peter had never studied. But the Spirit enabled Peter to put the Scriptures into logical sequence and make practical applications that reached the hearts of his audience.

4. The outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (2:16-18). Just as Joel had said, the Spirit came upon young and old, men and women alike, even servants and maidens, rather than a privileged few as

under the Old Covenant. The prophecy of “all flesh” and “whosoever” was perhaps not even fully understood on this first day of the early church, but we today rejoice in the boundlessness of God’s provisions.

5. Christ’s death, resurrection, and exaltation prepared the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit (2:22-36). The next step in God’s plan was and continues to be the fulfillment of the Great Commission, a work which is only possible with the aid of the Holy Spirit. As Spirit-filled believers present the truth about Christ and His work, the Spirit can work in the hearts of the listeners.

The Increase

6. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and brings them to the point of decision (2:3-7). The preacher can preach of man’s sinfulness and Christ’s provisions, but it is the Spirit who tailors the message to the needs of each heart. The point of decision is not a single golden moment. Rather, we choose daily to follow the Spirit’s voice.

7. The Holy Ghost is available to all who accept God’s call to salvation (2:39-41). Here in Acts 2, we see that the Spirit came to a group of believers. Except for the Samaritans (8: 14-17), the group at Cornelius’s house (10:44-45), and a small group at Ephesus (19:1-7), since that time, the Holy Ghost has come on each person individually as he responds to God’s call. The only limiting factor is the will of man.

8. Heeding the Spirit’s promptings produces joyful obedience to the Word (2:41). We see the joy of the Lord very evident in those who stand alone or face opposition. The key to joy is obedience rather than an emotional whirl of activities and relationships.

9. The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the beginning of the New Testament church (2:41, 47). Now the apostles’ understanding of God’s plan

for His people in the New Testament age became clear. To the fledgling number of one hundred twenty souls, the Lord added and added again.

10. The Holy Spirit unifies the church (2:46-47). Language barriers, differences in knowledge and frame of reference, and pending geographical separations existed and could have stressed the new believers. But the Spirit united them in the fellowship of the apostles’ doctrine, baptism upon repentance for sins, the fear of God, and love for one another. Today the same differences exist, yet where the Spirit is present, we can experience unity.

Important Teachings

1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit completed God's provisions for the New Testament church (2:1).
2. The sound from heaven and the accompanying miracles are evidence that the Father had sent the Holy Spirit (2:2-4).
3. The Holy Spirit empowers men for preaching (2:14).
4. The outpouring of the Spirit fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (2:16-18).
5. Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation prepared the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit (2:22-36).
6. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and brings them to the point of decision (2:37).
7. The Holy Ghost is available to all who accept God's call to salvation (2:39-41).
8. Heeding the Spirit's promptings produces joyful obedience to the Word (2:41).
9. The coming of the Holy Spirit marks the beginning of the New Testament church (2:41, 47).
10. The Holy Spirit unifies the church (2:46-47).
11. The Holy Spirit came in God's perfect time to those who awaited Him (2:1).
12. The Holy Spirit is a divine gift (2:38).

Answers to Questions

1. Explain the significance of the rushing wind and the tongues of fire to this occasion.

These are apt illustrations of the Spirit's presence and work. Wind is a powerful yet unseen force. In Ezekiel 37, we see that wind brought the breath of life to lifeless corpses. John 3 emphasizes the effects of wind, which are the fruit of the Spirit. Fire enlightens, and the Spirit brings a fuller understanding of truth. Fire penetrates and purifies, and the Spirit searches the innermost recesses of our hearts. Fire warms, and the Spirit brings courage and zeal.

2. What were the immediate effects of this great infilling?

They were all filled: filled with truth, filled with meaning and purpose for life, filled with a message and a desire to share the message with others. They began to speak, not the speech of their former life but the

speech of this new and powerful gift of God. They were miraculously able to speak in languages that all could understand.

3. How did this outpouring differ from the Spirit's work among men under the Old Covenant?

The Holy Spirit came upon all flesh, versus previously only to specific individuals for special occasions. He filled even sons and daughters, servants and maidens versus previously prophets and great men of God.

4. Evaluate Peter's sermon. Who was his audience? What was his message to them?

His audience was largely men who were devout Jews. Some of them lived locally, but many of them were gathered from the reaches of the Roman Empire to observe the Feast of Pentecost. Peter's message was that Joel's prophecy has been fulfilled. Jesus is the Messiah. He is the Lord of our lives, but we have rejected and crucified Him. We must repent to find remission of sins.

5. What are the elements of Spirit-filled preaching?

One is a Spirit-filled preacher. This vessel at the Spirit's direction will preach from the Scriptures. He will preach "Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2), as well as subjection to the lordship of Christ. He will make practical applications to present needs. Another important part is an audience that is open to the Spirit's direction as well. When the Spirit pricks, they open themselves to the help of the preacher and amend their lives.

6. Why is baptism a necessary step of those who receive the Holy Ghost?

First, repentance is usually only as sincere as it is open. Requesting baptism acknowledges a sinful past life. Also, baptism unites the new believer with others who can support and nurture him. Baptism is an ordinance of submission, both to Christ and to His body, the church. Without the church many who once were sincere are led away from truth.

7. What is the connection between the Spirit's power to convict and His power to comfort?

The Spirit guides us into all truth. When there are areas in our lives that are not according to truth, He convicts us. When we have made the necessary adjustments and our life is according to truth, He comforts us.

8. What are the elements of Spirit-filled living?

The elements include unity, worship, obedience, and fellowship. The outworking of these elements brings praise to God, relaxed and fulfilling interpersonal relationships, church life that affects everyday living, and a witness to the world that adds to the church.

Summarizing the Lesson

The events of the day of Pentecost were a part of God's plan. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Corinthians 6:16). Although some things happened at the birth of the New Testament church that would never happen again, the Spirit is still speaking through us as faithful witnesses of Christ in our day. The Gospel message and the Spirit's life-changing power continue to reach all nations.

Research Guide

1. Read the chapter titled "God the Holy Ghost" in *Doctrines of the Bible*, pages 70-77.
2. Read the Scriptures under "Holy Spirit" in *Nave's Topical Bible*, pages 562-567.