

4. The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Be Filled With The Holy Spirit

I was blessed to have a powerful encounter with the Holy Spirit when I gave my life to Christ. The Spirit gave me such a convincing experience that I never doubted I was a Christian from that point on. After walking with Christ for a while, I realized that my experience with the Holy Spirit was not normative. I look back at that time in my life when God was drawing me, and I recall how sinful my former lifestyle was—and how gracious God has been with me. I am convinced that I was so close to hell that it was like spiritual darkness to light when the Lord turned me around. I still have a long way to go, but my heart was and is hungry and thirsty for Christ, and by the grace of God, I trust that I will always be hungry for more of the Lord. As Christians, we never stop learning about the depth of the love and grace of God.

I have walked with the Lord for more than forty-seven years and been a part of many different types of churches, having worshipped with Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Charismatic groups of believers, so my experiences of church life have been varied. I have seen a lot that is genuine as well as that which is spurious, too. All these church experiences have helped me to gain different perspectives. Indeed, the Body of Christ is a multi-faceted jewel that God is shaping to make up His jewels, His treasured possession, on the Day when He comes for His Church:

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him (Malachi 3:17, KJV).

On the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him (Malachi 3:17, NIV).

The Lord called me to Himself in a Pentecostal church in the USA. I grew up as a commercial fisherman in England, but when I returned to my hometown, I could not find a church similar in style to the one I experienced when I made my decision for Christ. I attended an Evangelical church that gave me a foundation in the Word of God and taught me how to share my faith.

When a ministering couple that I knew from the Pentecostal church in the USA came to England to visit, they didn't want to go with us to the church we were part of because they were not of their denomination. I remember thinking that this was a divisive attitude and should not be seen in the Body of Christ, the Church. I felt that this attitude grieved the Spirit of God. I wanted to love the church just as Christ loves the church, regardless of the style of expression. We can all be blind to our preferences. Can any of us claim to have unquestionable discernment? Despite our differences and our individual preferences, God loves the WHOLE church.

Can you think of a time when you were uncomfortable in a Church meeting or a social situation that was unfamiliar to you? What made you uncomfortable, and how did you deal with this experience? Did you learn anything from it?

There was and is much to learn about walking in tandem with the Spirit of God. I certainly don't claim to know everything, but I thank God for how He has led me. The various church assemblies

I have been blessed to be a part of have all taught me something. Early in my walk with the Lord, I learned about the Holy Spirit's moving through the Word of God and the gifts of the Spirit.

What I share in this study, and perhaps the next one, too, is in no way meant to diminish the brightness of the reflection of Christ in His precious jewels, i.e., the believers that make up the Body of Christ. Each part of the Body of Christ emphasizes different values and ministries, and I am convinced that the Lord does not prefer one reflection of the jewel of His Church over another. We will all be caught up together when Christ comes for His Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We must all learn to live out our faith among the family of God and truly answer the prayer of Jesus: **“That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21)**. My own experience of church life led me to think about how the different emphases in the Body of Christ came about, especially when it comes to the topic of the Holy Spirit.

Waves of the Holy Spirit

When we consider the moving of the Holy Spirit in the Church worldwide since the early 1900s, we can see three distinct waves of the Holy Spirit's revealing Himself and His ministry to the Church. The first happened in the USA with the Azusa Street revival of 1906 (Los Angeles) that birthed the Pentecostal church. The second wave was an outpouring known as the Charismatic movement, starting in Van Nuys, California, in the 1960s-1970s. Many Catholic churches, the Anglican Church, and other Orthodox churches were impacted by the Charismatic movement. Both these waves soon swept the world, renewing many dry and dusty churches thirsty for more of God.

Since the 1990s, I believe we are seeing a Third Wave of the Holy Spirit, popularized by C. Peter Wagner in his book, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, where the Lord is reviving churches, whose theology has kept them distinct from the two waves before it. These third-wave churches do not want to emphasize speaking in tongues or prophecy. They want to pray for the sick but don't emphasize the gifts of the Spirit in a Pentecostal church manner. Whatever expression of the church you are a part of, I think we can learn a lot from our brothers and sisters who reflect Christ's life differently.

Some churches have separated themselves from other churches based on their understanding of the Holy Spirit, partly because of the emphasis of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches on a second experience known as "the baptism of the Spirit." To refer to the example I gave earlier, this was why my friends from the Pentecostal church did not want to go to church with us in England. They didn't put it into words, but they separated themselves because the church my wife and I attended at that time did not practice the gifts of the Spirit as my friends did. They were used to a church emphasizing the gifts of prophecy and tongues. From my vantage point of being in a church that didn't share that same focus, what I saw in my friends at that time was an elitist attitude that looked down on their brothers and sisters in Christ who did not share their particular emphasis. (I would still consider them as friends to this day, by the way!) We are all influenced by those around us and by the teaching we receive. I think we are probably all guilty of judging others in the Body of Christ at some point.

In my opinion, this attitude grieves the Holy Spirit and can result in the Spirit of God departing from public meetings. This point of view can lead to a situation where some feel that they must "pump up" the things of the Spirit in an emotional manner. Have you ever been in a meeting like that? However, the gifts and presence of God do not need man's help to impart God's grace. If our public meetings become dry, we must ensure that we take care of our relationships with others in the Body of Christ. Broken relationships in the Church and unforgiveness are the main blockages to the moving of the Holy Spirit.

The things of the Holy Spirit are not to be like the land of Egypt, where the farmers pumped up the water to irrigate the fields. In his last words to the Israelites just before they entered the land after they came out of Egypt, Moses talked about what the land of Canaan (Israel) would be like:

The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and **irrigated it by foot** as in a vegetable garden (Deuteronomy 11:10, Emphasis added).

This passage of Scripture is what is known as "typology." Egypt was a picture of the world system keeping us in bondage, i.e., slavery to sin. Pharaoh is a type of Satan, the slave driver. Moses was the deliverer. Passover was a type of the crucifixion of Jesus and the shedding of the blood of the Lamb for judgment to pass by. The land they were entering is a typology of living the Christian life. The land of Egypt, irrigated by the foot, speaks of having to work hard by the sweat of our brow, using a foot pump to bring water to the fields. The "land" of Israel speaks of the things of the Spirit of God happening "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord" (Zechariah 4:6).

What we can never do by our own power in fleshly works, God does supernaturally. This is how we are born into the Kingdom of God and continually learn to walk with Christ in the power of His Spirit.

I love this analogy because, when we read the New Testament, the Spirit came spontaneously upon people without any effort by man. In each of the accounts of the Holy Spirit's coming to individuals, we do not see people "coerced" in how to speak in tongues or give a word of prophecy. The Holy Spirit fell upon believers in a way that was clear evidence that God included Jews and Gentiles into one Body of Christ.

For the rest of our study today, let's look at how the Holy Spirit came upon believers in the Book of Acts. We will ask ourselves why He came in such a way. We can never put God into a box and say that this is the only way the Holy Spirit fills believers. God has a habit of doing things differently than we think. Indeed, He doesn't *need* our help to fill a person with His Spirit. He chooses whom He will use and how He will move. God chooses to move in a sovereign way through His people.

The Four Visible Manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

The Scriptures give us four distinct occasions when the Holy Spirit came upon groups of people with a visible manifestation of His power: Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10, and Acts 19. The Holy Spirit

dramatically fell on the new believers on these four occasions. They spoke in tongues, prophesied, or moved in some other gift. The first time was when the Holy Spirit came upon Jewish believers waiting for His coming.

The Jewish Believers Receive the Spirit of God

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly **a sound** like the blowing of **a violent wind** came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be **tongues of fire** that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were **filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them **declaring the wonders of God** in our own tongues!” ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine” (Acts 2:1-13).

Since the other accounts have no mention of tongues of fire, what do you think could be the reason(s) why the Holy Spirit appeared to the Jewish believers as tongues of fire in this instance?

When Solomon finished building the temple of the Lord, 2 Chronicles recorded the coming together of the Israelites to dedicate it, with Solomon praying out loud before all of Israel. The fire of the Lord fell upon the temple:

¹When Solomon finished praying, **fire came down** from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. ²The priests could not enter the temple of the Lord because the glory of the Lord filled it. ³When all the Israelites **saw the fire coming down** and the glory of the Lord above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “He is good; his love endures forever” (2 Chronicles 7:1-3, Emphasis added).

So, why am I referencing Solomon's temple? Because the believers filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost were the new Israel and the new temple of the Lord. God was testifying to the nation that the New Covenant believers (Jeremiah 31:31) in Jesus were the new expression of God's love and grace. The tongues of fire resting on believers on the Day of Pentecost expressed the glory of God on each believer. Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers about the church collectively being God's temple: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Doctor Luke (the writer of the Book of Acts) gives a second example of the Holy Spirit's coming upon another segment of society, referencing the Holy Spirit's coming to the Samaritans.

The Samaritans Receive the Spirit of God

¹⁴When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. ¹⁵When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money ¹⁹and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰Peter answered: "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money! (Acts 8:14-20).

Why do you think the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any Samaritan believers until this time? (v. 16).

Peter was given the keys of the kingdom: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). The Jewish believers were closed-minded to the idea of the Samaritans becoming believers. In their minds, they were half-Jews and half-Gentile and, therefore, not worthy of God working in their midst. God chose Peter not only to be a witness to how the Spirit fell but also to be the one who laid hands on them. We are not told if they spoke in tongues or not, but again, something visible happened to the Samaritans that made one of the Samaritans, Simon (v. 18), desire the same kind of power. He wanted the Holy Spirit's power so much that he offered to buy it from Peter.

A little later, the Lord decided that the time was right for Peter again to open the door of faith, this time to the Gentiles. Peter had such a bias against the Gentiles that God had to convince him with a vision to show him that even the Gentiles were called to be a part of the church (Acts 10:9-16).

The Gentiles Receive the Spirit

⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." ⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ⁴⁷"Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." ⁴⁸So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days (Acts 10:43-48).

When the Holy Spirit wanted to bring the Gentiles into the Body of Christ, He had to overcome the biases in the believing Jewish community. He gave the Apostle Peter a vision of unclean animals being brought before him to eat. Peter refused three times to eat the "unclean animals."

Just at this time, the servants of Cornelius the centurion arrived, inviting Peter to come to Caesarea and speak to the Gentiles (those who were considered "unclean" to the Jews). Peter obeyed. At the meeting, without Peter laying his hands on them, and in the middle of his talk, the Holy Spirit came upon the new Gentile believers dramatically. This time, Peter didn't even lay hands on them as he did with the Samaritans (Acts 8:17), perhaps because it was ingrained in Peter that it was not only "unclean" to go into a Gentile home but even more so to touch them. The Spirit fell on the new Gentile believers, not even waiting for Peter to finish his message!

The other time that the Holy Spirit came upon people dramatically was in Acts 19 with the disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus, in what is now Southwest Turkey.

The Disciples of John the Baptist Receive the Spirit

¹While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. ⁴Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. ⁷There were about twelve men in all (Acts 19:1-7).

In the above account, Paul met twelve disciples of John the Baptist (v. 7) in the city of Ephesus. These individuals believed in John's message and responded to the call to be ready for the Kingdom of God by being baptized as a token of their repentance. Likely, they had not heard the Gospel or the teaching about what Jesus had accomplished by His crucifixion. Paul had to explain that John preached a message of repentance in preparation for the coming of Christ, the Messiah, but now the time had fully come, and the way was made open for them to be full disciples and believers in the finished work of Christ on the cross. When Paul laid hands on them and prayed for them, they spoke in tongues and prophesied. The writer of the Book of Acts, Doctor Luke, shows us by these four examples that the Holy Spirit came upon the Jews, the Samaritans, the Gentiles, and the disciples of John the Baptist. They were waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming of the Kingdom of God.

[What do these four examples teach us about the Holy Spirit's coming upon believers?](#)

- 1) The Holy Spirit is not dependent on Christian leaders' laying on of hands to be filled with the Spirit.
- 2) The Samaritans did not speak in tongues, but they still had an outward sign, a visual experience with God, that made Simon, the Samaritan, desire such power.
- 3) When the Holy Spirit comes upon believers, gifts of the Spirit sometimes operate, as with John the Baptist's disciples and the 120 believers on the Day of Pentecost.

Let us be hungry and thirsty to experience all that God desires to give us, for it is His power at work within us that He wants to impart to His Church and to the world!

Prayer: Lord, help us be open to Your Holy Spirit and available for all that You would have us do. We honor Your presence, and we acknowledge that You are sovereign. Thank You for continually leading, teaching, and surprising us with Your amazing grace.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com