

3. The Holy Spirit Comes with Power; This Is What Was Spoken: Acts 2:1-21

Acts chapter 2 opens with the apostles obeying the Lord's command and waiting in Jerusalem. Luke recorded these commands in Luke 24:45-49:

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; **but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**" [Emphasis added].

Acts 2 will follow faithfully the events forecast in this passage by Luke: Peter will teach the death, burial, resurrection of the gospel, and he will preach repentance and forgiveness of men. The apostles will be in Jerusalem until they receive the promised power from on high.

In Acts 1:4-5, Luke again recorded the Lord telling the apostles what was going to happen and what they were to do:

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for **the gift my Father promised**, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be **baptized with the Holy Spirit.**" [Emphasis added].

The final verse of chapter 1 gives the antecedent to *they* of the first verse of chapter 2: "26 Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to **the eleven apostles.**" [Emphasis added]. As Acts 1 made clear, the apostles were the only ones to whom Christ promised this clothing of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Comes with Power

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Jesus had promised the apostles an immersion, a clothing (endowment), of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came, his coming was clear to the senses of all who witnessed. The sound was like a violent wind from heaven. Since it filled the entire house, all could hear it. They all saw what was like tongues of fire. In the meaning of the grammar, the Spirit came to rest on the apostles; for the antecedent of *them* is still the word, *apostles*, of Acts 1:26. It is clear that the Holy Spirit enabled only the apostles, who were here endowed with the Holy Spirit. Others could only receive individual gifts, by the laying on the apostles' hands. Today, many believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit was universally given, contrary to the teaching of any scripture.

The Power of the Holy Spirit—Limited and Temporary

That this measure of the Holy Spirit, given only to the apostles, was not universally given is clear in Acts 8:14-19 where the converts could not receive even spiritual gifts until the apostles laid their hands on them:

14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money 19 and said, "Give me also this ability so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

These new Christians did not receive the Holy Spirit as a part of their conversion. It was by the laying on of an apostle's hands. Simon knew that the real power was the ability to pass on a spiritual gift. This measure of the Holy Spirit—the ability to perform spiritual gifts by the laying on of the apostles' hands—receives one of the most detailed explanations in the New Testament, covering three entire chapters in 1 Cor 12, 13, and 14. The exclusive powers of the apostles—the baptism of the Holy Spirit—ended when they died. The exclusive power of those early Christians—individual spiritual gifts—ended when these first century Christians, upon whom the apostles laid their hands, died. The end of spiritual gifts is expressly taught in 1 Cor 13:8-10:

But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

That perfection is, of course, the scriptures that equip us for every good work. Paul wrote in 2 Tim 3:16-17, "16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." James agreed that we have a perfect law in James 1:25, "25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does."

In order to justify the false teaching that tongues and miracles exist today, many pervert the teaching of 1 Cor 13:8-9. Some claim that *perfection* means the Christ, who is perfect; others claim that *perfection* means heaven, which is perfect. The word translated *perfection* in the NIV is an adjective not a noun. W. E. Vine defines the word in this way:

PERFECT

1. teleios. . . It is used thus . . . 1 Cor 13:10 (referring to the complete revelation of God's will and ways, whether in the completed Scriptures or in the hereafter); (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

Both the KJV and ASV versions translate the word as an adjective and with the clause, ". . . when *that which is perfect* is come. . ." The passage is not referring to Christ, for then it would read, "When he who is perfect is come." Christ cannot be *that which*. The passage is not referring to heaven, for Paul said in the last verse, 1 Cor 13:13, "13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." When heaven comes, faith will give way to certainty, assurance, and sight. Heb 11:1 teaches, "11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." When the perfection of heaven comes, faith will become reality. Likewise, when heaven comes, hope will no longer exist, for hope will be realized. Paul wrote in Rom 8:24-25, "24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." When the perfection of heaven comes, our hope will be realized. If faith, hope, and love remain, Paul cannot be speaking of heaven.

Therefore, the overwhelming endowment of the Holy Spirit came only to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost. The individual gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as tongues, healings, prophecy, came only to the disciples on whom the apostles laid their hands. This intervention of the Holy Spirit ended with the lives of those so endowed in the 1st century.

As the Apostles Speak, the Listeners Hear in Their Own Languages

Acts 2:5-11

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia 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!"

In verse 4, Luke had told how the apostles spoke in other tongues, "4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." In verse 5, Luke said that there were Jews from "every nation under heaven." This fulfills the express statement of Jesus, "47 And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

What is happening here is not gibberish, nor is it one single language; but each one heard in his own language. They were so amazed that they said, "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues." People from all over the world were present. As these people returned to the far reaches of Asia and Asia Minor, Africa, Europe, Mesopotamia, and the entire Arab world, they must have taken the gospel message with them; and their trade routes could have reasonably taken the message even farther.

Acts 2:12-13

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Some who heard were amazed and perplexed, others were mocking. The group of the amazed and perplexed asked the first important question of the day, "What does this mean?" Beginning in verse 14 Peter answers this and other important questions about this glorious day.

This Is What Was Spoken

Acts 2:14

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!"

Peter first clears the air on the apostles' mental state. It is just too early in the morning for them to be drunk. He makes two important points to start with: let me explain this to you and listen carefully to what I say. He begins by quoting the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:16-21

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "'In the last days, God says,

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
19 I will show wonders in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

The phrase *this is what* makes certain that the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled before their very eyes. Joel had foretold the signs and wonders of the day, but most importantly he named the day when all that they had just witnessed would come to pass as the great and glorious day of the Lord. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was the beginning of these last days, as signified by the rent of the veil of the temple from top to bottom in Matt 27:51-54:

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

The Old Testament passed away, as described in Col 2:13-15:

. . . God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

The New Testament took effect, as described in Heb 8:6, 8-10, 12, 13:

6 But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.

8 But God found fault with the people and said:

"The time is coming, declares the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.

10 This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel

12 For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more."

13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

The rest of Acts will chronicle, among many other important events, the signs and miracles that followed the apostles and those that believed.

The Great and Glorious Day of the Lord

In naming this day of Pentecost the great and glorious day of the Lord, Joel signified that the kingdom of God came on that day, as foretold by Christ, Joel, and Isaiah. Jesus had taught that it would come in lifetime of those living in Matt 16:28, "28 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Not only did Peter say, "This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel, but Joel said that the great and glorious day of the Lord would be when deliverance went forth from Jerusalem in Joel 2:32:

for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the Lord has said,
among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.

Isaiah also pinpointed this time and place in Isa 2:2-3:

2 In the last days
the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established
as chief among the mountains;
it will be raised above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.

3 Many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Many people fail to see that this day marks the forward march of citizens in Christ's kingdom. In sincerity, many fail to see that Christ was raised to sit at God's right hand in his kingdom, and they still wait for that day when Christ comes to reign in an earthly kingdom, which they believe is yet to come. However, Paul wrote of the kingdom come in the past tense in Eph 1:19-23, relating it to this very day—the day upon which his church and kingdom came to all mankind:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly

realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

From this great and glorious day of the Lord, in Jerusalem, the kingdom and the church become synonymous in describing God's people: First, we are citizens in the kingdom and second, as called out from the world, we are members of his church, which is his body, over which he is head.

Failure to see this day as in the last days and this day as the great and glorious day of the Lord has led to all sorts of millennial theories – too numerous to discuss here. However, from this great and glorious day when Christ came in his kingdom, until the very end of the last days, there is only one other great day – the last day. The last day is the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Malachi prophesied of that day in the very last verse of the Old Testament, Mal 4:5-6:

5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the judgment day, described by Paul as the day of the Lord in 1 Thess 5:1-3:

1 Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.

Peter also described this day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3:10: "10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare."

The last days began with the advent of the kingdom of Christ on the day of Pentecost and it will end at the Day of Judgment, and the deliverance of the kingdom to the Father. 1 Cor 15:22-26 teaches:

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Calling on the Name of the Lord

The last verse in the passage from Joel, quoted by Peter, speaks to the salvation available on this great and glorious day of the Lord. Joel said, and Peter quoted, in Act 2:21, "21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Christ had promised this salvation in what we call the great commission in Mk 16:16: "16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." In the next section of Peter's sermon, he will tell those who ask, "Brothers, what shall we do?" exactly what to do to be saved. In spite of the specific teaching of Jesus, Peter, Paul and the rest of the inspired writers, many seize on this statement by Joel and say that all you have to do is call on the name of the Lord in order to be saved. These ignore the teachings on repentance, confession, and baptism

as commands to be obeyed in order to be saved. The scriptures that follow explain in detail what one must do to call "on the name of the Lord."

Paul began with this same quotation from Joel in Rom 10:12-13, "12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

Just previous to quoting Joel, Paul explained the necessity of belief in the Lord and of confession of the Lord in order to call on the name of the Lord. Paul beings in Rom 10:9-10 conditioning salvation on belief and confession:

9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

In Rom 10:13, Paul quotes Joel as cited above. In Rom 10:14, he conditions *calling on the name of Lord* and therefore, salvation on hearing and believing:

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

A man called Ananius told Paul what to do to be saved in Acts 22:16, "16 And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." Since *calling* is a present participle, it marks a time which begins at the time of the main verb and continues through the action of the main verb. In this case, *calling* begins with *get up, be baptized* and continues through the action of these main verbs.

From these scriptures, ones sees that *calling on the name of the Lord* begins with the preaching of the word, the hearing of the word, the believing of the word and believing in Christ, resolving to go forward (get up), confessing the name of the Lord, and being baptized. This same gospel plan will be repeated in every conversion in the Book of Acts as those who hear the word call on the name of the Lord and are saved.