



THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

The Birth of the Holy Spirit

Jesus was the Passover Lamb who came to earth to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. John the Baptist exclaimed in **John 1:29 (ESV)**²⁹ ... *“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! The Lamb’s sacrifice was carried out on a cross. David Jeremiah says, “Between two thieves, hung the One prophesied; the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, from the tribe of Judah, the Son of David, born of a virgin, born in Bethlehem, the Suffering Servant who would cleanse people of their sins, all these prophecies were accomplished in Jesus’ life on earth.” They were complete at the moment Jesus said ... “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (John 19:30) But Jesus did not remain in that tomb. An angel proclaimed in Matthew 28:6 (ESV)⁶ *He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.**

Long before the life of Jesus, Job asked in **Job 14:14 (ESV)**¹⁴ *If a man dies, shall he live again?* ... Billy Graham said, “In the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have the answer to the great question of the ages: “If mortals die, can they live again?” The Bible teaches that because Christ lives, we also shall live. The greatest truth that you can ever hear is that Jesus Christ died but rose again, and that you, too, will die but can rise again into newness of life. The Bible teaches the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not a spiritual resurrection, as some would have us believe. Jesus’ very body was raised by God from the dead, and someday we will see Him.”

But how do we ‘get by’ in this life *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:13)* Jesus made provision to help us as we journey through this sin-filled world. That ‘provision’ was ‘born on earth’ at the time of Jewish feast.

Pentecost was the feast that occurred 50 days after Passover. Scripture reveals that the Lord Jesus existed before ever being born in a manger in Bethlehem. **John 1:1 (ESV)**¹ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14 (ESV)¹⁴ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* Yet, we call that day when Mary brought the Son of God into the world the day of His birth since it was the day of His earthly birth.*

The Third Person of the Trinity would be ‘born on earth’ on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost was the time when new grain from the summer wheat harvest was offered to the Lord. I have taken the title of this lesson from Augustine, an early Christian theologian, who called Pentecost the ‘birth of the Spirit’ since that was the day that the Holy Spirit of God first began to dwell permanently in the followers of Christ as had been announced by John the Baptist in **Mark 1:8 (ESV)**⁸ *I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*”

After His resurrection, Jesus remained on earth for 40 days and ministered to His disciples. He had already opened their minds to understand the Old Testament message about Himself (**Luke 24:44-48**), but they still needed Spirit-filled power.

Waiting

Read Acts 1:4-5 (ESV) ⁴ *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; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

With all those centuries of waiting for the Messiah, you might think the waiting would be done once Jesus had come, yet Jesus still tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Before His death, Jesus had told His disciples in **John 16:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

During the Old Testament times, God the Father was working. God the Son was working directly in the days of His flesh. When Christ returned to the right hand of God, and took His place as Mediator, the Father and the Son sent to us the Holy Spirit, the ‘Third Person’ of the Godhead, and He is here working in this world, and will remain here carrying on the work of the Spirit until the end of this age.

Holy Spirit baptism and believer’s baptism are two different things. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the Holy Spirit of God comes upon the one who accepts Christ as Savior at the moment of salvation. **Romans 10:9 (ESV)** ⁹ *because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* Believer’s baptism is the act by which a believer in Jesus Christ chooses to be baptized with water in order to give testimony of his/her faith. Believer’s baptism occurs after accepting Christ as Savior and receiving the Holy Spirit. Believer’s baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and our decision to follow Him. (**Romans 6:4**)

The ‘birth of the Spirit’ on this earth occurred on the Day of Pentecost. It was a one-time event just like Bethlehem and Calvary were one-time events. However, everyone who invites Christ into their heart experience the ‘birth of the Spirit’ in his/her life. Today, we most often call this experience the ‘new birth because of what Jesus said in **John 3:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

The ‘Birth of the Spirit’

Read Acts 2:1-4 (ESV) ¹ *When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

What better time than Pentecost, the harvest feast, for the coming of the Holy Spirit to earth!! Pentecost would signify the great harvest to everlasting life that Christ’s death had won. Those who received the Holy Spirit that day were to be the first of a vast multitude, the first of millions of believers to follow them down through the centuries into everlasting life!

In the Old Testament wind and fire often represent the Spirit of God. Ezekiel said in **Ezekiel 37:4-5 (ESV)** ⁴ *Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵*

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. Although this passage is an end-time prophesy concerning the nation of Israel, it also very much applies to anyone without Christ – we are just dry already dead bones until the breath of God comes upon us.

Concerning the Spirit's fire we read in **Numbers 9:15-16 (ESV)** ¹⁵ *On the day that the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the testimony. And at evening it was over the tabernacle like the appearance of fire until morning.* ¹⁶ *So it was always: the cloud covered it by day and the appearance of fire by night.* We also read in **Deuteronomy 4:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

We should not be surprised that when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the coming of the Spirit sounded like wind and looked like fire but it was Spirit. God's Spirit was now inside of God's children speaking through them. It is Jesus, the Living Word, who reveals the gospel story to us. When the Spirit of God came upon this group of believers, they spoke words of witness in languages they had not studied and did not know concerning Jesus to people of other languages. Sin at Babel had separated the people by confusing their languages. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost gathered them together.

Is speaking in tongues evidence for having the Holy Spirit?

There are three occasions in the book of Acts where speaking in tongues accompanied the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The first we just read. The next is when Peter was sent to the house of a Gentile by the name of Cornelius.

Read Acts 10:44-47 (ESV) ⁴⁴ *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.* ⁴⁵ *And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.* ⁴⁶ *For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God... Then Peter declared,* ⁴⁷ *“Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”*

This event serves as the 'proof text' that the power of the Holy Spirit was sent to Gentiles as well as Jews. The third incident occurred during the ministry of Paul.

Read Acts 19:6 (ESV) ⁶ *And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.*

Prior to this particular manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the speaking in tongues, Paul had asked the Ephesians if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They said in **Acts 19:2 (ESV)** *“No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”* Ephesus was a Roman city where many languages were spoken. When the Holy Spirit came upon them, these men could now speak the gospel in other languages – and prophesy in tongues that could be understood.

These occasions are the only places in scripture where speaking in tongues is an evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit. Throughout the book of Acts, thousands of people believed in Jesus and nothing is said about them

speaking in tongues. Nowhere in the New Testament is it taught that speaking in tongues is the only evidence a person has received the Holy Spirit. In fact, the New Testament teaches the opposite. We are told that every believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit, but not every believer speaks in tongues (*1 Corinthians 12:29-31*).

What occurred at Pentecost and the other biblical references were not glossolalia, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as ‘ecstatic utterances,’ of language-like sounds while in a state of ecstasy. They spoke in real languages they did not already know. There are some Christians, especially within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, who believe there is a supernatural explanation for glossolalia similar to that described in the New Testament. Among those Christian churches who do practice glossolalia, there is no uniform agreement as to its workings. For example, some say it is indeed a gift of the Holy Spirit, while others minimize its importance, saying Paul taught that the gift of “speaking in tongues” wasn’t nearly as important as the other gifts of the Holy Spirit. We do know that pagan religions all over the world are obsessed with tongues.

I do not see this as a topic for debate among Christians as long as no one tries to say that I am not saved since I have not spoken in tongues. One of the former Max chaplains told John and me that he speaks in tongues when he runs through the corn fields near his home. I say that is between him and the Lord.

Obedience to the Leading of the Spirit

Read Romans 12:1 (ESV) ¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

We must be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus Christ took on a body to accomplish God's will on earth, so we must yield our bodies to the power of the Holy Spirit within us. The Old Testament sacrifices were dead sacrifices, but we are to be living sacrifices. We can only become a living sacrifice through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thirsting and Trusting

Read John 7:37-39 (ESV) ³⁷ *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Even when we have received the Spirit’s power, it is easy to forget to continually drink of the Living Water that His Spirit provides. Followers of Christ are in the ‘water sharing business’. Let’s drink in the Spirit’s power and share His Living Water to those dying of spiritual thirst. Proclaiming the gift of living water – that is a language every follower of Christ should be speaking.