

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT
The Holy Spirit
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I'm not the kind of person that in a group dynamics class can have someone say to me "Close your eyes and fall backward," and not know in advance who's going to get there and what is going to be there. I generally do not have a practice in my life of falling backwards unless I know that someone reliable is going to be there to catch me. If someone reliable is there, just for the experience of trust, I would go ahead.

Probably the reason I've been sharing with you and will continue for the next number of Sunday evenings on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from scriptures is that there are many, many people today who are exhorting us in the name of the Lord to have various kinds of experience. I'm for experience but I want to make sure there is a trustworthiness of scriptural support for that experience whether to commit myself to it. I think that we who believe in the Spirit filled dimension have been challenged by those who are born again believers in Christ that have not shored in our understanding of the Spirit's work to support our experience with scripture. So that's what we've been trying to do.

Also I would like to say that when we share from the scripture in regard to the doctrine of the Spirit that one of the things that scripture does is if you will it provides the parameter or the border of the channel through which an aqueduct or a river might flow.

And experience is very much like a river. It can just flow anywhere. Anyone can have experience. What the scripture does is it gives a course of direction for an experience. This again is so important. When various people have "experiences with the Lord" or spiritual experiences that aren't even related to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The scriptures present some kind of channel in which God has ordained that experience. If the experience is flowing outside the channel of the scripture wait a minute!

I indicated last week that there were two major objections I felt that were the kind of key objections by persons in the non charismatic element of the church who have asked us as charismatic or Pentecostals, challenged us in our faith from the scripture. The two objections were these.

One, you cannot develop a doctrine of the experience of the Holy Spirit from the book of Acts. The book of Acts is an historical book it's a narrative. It tells about action. It tells who's doing what, when they're doing it and where they're doing it. Doctrine comes from the epistles, from the teaching from systematic discourse. I used the word "didactic" quite a bit last week and forgot to define it. That's deadly. Let me take a moment to do that.

Didactic is organized, systematic kind of teaching. I always have an outline. I'm unable to speak without an outline. That's didactic. Systematic and orderly development of the topic.

The second objection that is made by brothers and sisters in the Lord who do not share our position is even if you could develop doctrine from the book of Acts, the book of Acts does not itself say what you say it says.

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So it's with that second objection in view that I want to share in the next few weeks. I want to look especially with a microscopic look at Acts 1:1, 4-5, 8. Jesus here is in his last appearance to the disciples. Luke begins Acts with this statement. "In my former book [that's the gospel of Luke] Theophilus [the person to whom the history is being written] I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach."

That is a tremendously significant statement. It tells us how the early church perceived the ministry of Jesus. The early believers did not perceive the ministry of Jesus as something that ended when he was taken up into heaven and then the work of the church started. The ministry of Jesus by Luke, the historian of the church, was perceived in two dimensions. First the ministry of Jesus in his human flesh. That's the gospel of Luke. And secondly, the ministry of Jesus in his spiritual body. That is the church.

Luke is saying as he begins volume 2 of Christian origins, "What I'm going to tell you now is simply the continuation of what Jesus did and taught." There's actually two phases to the ministry of Jesus. His speaking and his acting. Volume 1 covered his virgin birth through his resurrection. Volume 1 was only the beginning of what he began to say and do. Now what he's saying to us in the whole of Acts, the 28 chapters, is his is what Jesus continues to do and to say. And how does he continue to do and say it? Through his body.

Therefore we can immediately begin to expect some things about the ministry of the Spirit by comparing how the Spirit was in relationship with Jesus in the gospels. We can begin perhaps to get a perspective of how the Spirit may choose to be in relationship to the spiritual body of Jesus the church.

I've tried to look at the gospels and look at the relationship of the Spirit to Jesus. There is some uniqueness of the Spirit's relationship with Jesus that is not repeated in the spiritual body of the church – his virgin birth, his sinless life, and the like. But there are certain key parallels that we ought to recognize. Four significant associations or relationship of the Spirit to Jesus because it bears on the Spirit's relationship to us.

First of all we learn from the gospels that Jesus is conceived of the Holy Spirit. This is a miracle of God that which is conceived in Mary, Joseph is told in Matthew 1, is conceived of the Holy Spirit. Divine birth. I want to parallel that then of the experience of the Spirit in the life of the believer. If the Spirit was operative or active in the physical conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary bringing the eternal second person of the godhead, Jesus Christ, into the womb of Mary, it the union of sperm and egg, if he was active in that miracle then on a spiritual level also the Spirit is active in regenerating our experience in bringing the life of God into us so that we ourselves become the sons and daughters of God. We belong to the lineage or genealogy of God.

There is an order or ranking in nature. Cats don't give birth to dogs and vice versa. Things do not give birth to things higher than themselves. Nor do things give birth to things lower than themselves. There's sort of a ranking. Humans beget humans. How is the race of God begotten? How can the scriptures say to us that we are the sons and daughters of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ and destined for eternal relationship with him? Not simply as mortal beings but as the divine sons and daughters of God. God living in us. How does that happen? It happens through the work of the Spirit in our lives. No one can be born of God unless the Spirit

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of God brings that to birth. Isn't that what Jesus said? Man must be born of water and of the Spirit.

So what the Spirit is the agent in the womb of Mary in the physically ushering in of Jesus in the world, the Spirit in the womb of our spiritual experience begets Jesus in us in the new birth. There's a parallel there of the Spirit's work.

A second parallel in the life of Jesus as the Spirit then relates to us as well is that when Jesus begins his public ministry this event is described of him. That Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan. As he was praying the heavens were opened and a voice came from heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved Son, with thee I am well pleased," and the Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove."

Notice in Jesus' beginning of his public ministry there was a physical act of the Spirit coming upon him. In fact Luke says rather clearly in a rather strange verse, 3:22 "The Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove." What does this mean? Had Jesus been absent of the Spirit prior to this time? Obviously he had not been absent of the Spirit prior to this time. He is conceived of the Spirit of God. How can he be conceived of the Spirit of God and yet the Spirit of God descend upon him?

We, who have come into Pentecostal or charismatic experience, find this perfectly capable of understanding when it is related to our own lives. Because in John 20 Jesus breathed the Spirit, re-generatively or in a salvation sense into the believers. They are regenerated of the Spirit, yet there is in Acts 2 a baptism in the Spirit and a coming of the Spirit upon them. The parallels are very unique and interesting. Jesus does not begin his public ministry until the Spirit of God has descended upon him. And the church, in Acts 2, does not begin its ministry to the world until the Spirit has come upon it. It is not to say that a person cannot have the Spirit of God. Jesus had the Spirit of God before the Spirit of God descended upon him. But if you will, it is his inaugural moment.

I see Jesus' baptism with the Spirit's decent somewhat in terms of an analogy or comparison in our modern electoral process here in America. It's the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November every four years, we elect a president of the United States. He is elected but he does not take office until January 20th. In those two and half-three months, he is president elect. Everyone knows he's the president but he does not yet act as president until January 20th.

Jesus' 30 years before his baptism he is Messiah elect. He does not begin to really act as Messiah until that moment at his baptism and the Spirit of God descending upon him. The Spirit is said to descend upon him in bodily form as a dove. I would say of this that when the Spirit descends upon Jesus or when the Spirit descends in the book of Acts upon believers it is an experience, which involves the body. It is an experience, which is felt. It is more than simply inwardly acting upon a truth whether or not something has happened. The Spirit's presence in that moment becomes profoundly real.

How do you picture the scene? Jesus is coming up out of the waters of baptism and Luke says "The Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove." Does this mean that a bird landed on Jesus' shoulder? Why would this be said of Jesus, that at that moment a very fortunate moment, a bird flying in the sky circled down and lighted upon Jesus and the early church read in that

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significance that just at the right moment the bird came and they labeled the bird “the Holy Spirit.” Then did the bird take off? What is this? What was it, something that was seen by evidently those by with spiritual eyes to see something physically came upon Jesus. The Spirit descended upon him in bodily form. Luke makes a point of saying that. The Spirit of course is without bodily form as a rule. But the Spirit in this moment assumes some kind of bodily characteristic, which is in the form of a dove and comes upon Jesus.

John has an intriguing statement in John 1:33. John the baptist identifies the Spirit as “He, the Messiah, will be he one upon whom the Spirit comes and abides.” I think we may be in the realm of the surrealism. Tremendously imaginative moments that can’t be captioned. I’m not sure you can take a picture at this moment of what is happening in Jesus. But if I understand the scripture rightly at this point the Spirit takes bodily form and comes upon Jesus. I feel that He enters him in a bodily way. And the Spirit does not again leave.

He is empowered in away from that moment on. Shortly after that he will say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he’s anointed me to preach the good news.” There’s mystery here, I’ll grant that. I’m not going to try to make a case for how the Spirit came upon Jesus. But simply to say that there was a coming upon Jesus. It had physical properties to it. The Spirit normally is not seen. I’ve seen the Spirit work but I haven’t seen the Spirit. Yet this unique phrase – descended upon him in bodily form as a dove.

When you look at the book of Acts and you find believers coming into experience with the Holy Spirit, you find verb terms that are used in describing the coming of the Holy Spirit in a very powerful, personal, bodily way. Two terms specifically:

“Poured out” – three times in Acts 2 the Spirit is being described on the day of Pentecost as being poured out. Joel prophesied “In the last days I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Acts 2:17-18. And then Peter goes on to say in Acts 2:33 “exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus has received from the Father, the promised Holy Spirit and has poured forth what you now see and hear.” That suggests to me that when the Spirit comes upon us in this charismatic or Pentecostal sense one *knows* that the Spirit has come upon them. You don’t have any doubt if you’re standing under a pitcher if somebody pours it on you, that you got wet. The person who walks away from a supposed encounter with the Spirit and says “I think that I had an experience with the Spirit but I’m not quite sure.” I wouldn’t be sure that there was an experience there in light of the distinct language used in respect to poured forth. Poured forth.

And of course there’s tremendous symbolism too in the water that it’s like if you’re thirsty. It’s not like pouring it on your head and soaking you, some sort of game. But it’s like the human being is dry ground. And we are made from the dust of the earth. The Spirit of God is coming upon us to give life to the arid soil of our being. And to give power. Poured forth. An experience which is felt.

Another term which is used in the book of Acts to describe this coming of the Spirit upon believers is the word “fall upon.” The Spirit falling upon us. Let’s look at some scriptures where this is used. Keeping in mind the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove on Jesus. There was something physical associated with the act of the Spirit’s coming.

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Acts 8:16. The New International Version you will find is good readable translation but it is not pin point accuracy in its terms and it will sometimes take strong verbs in the Greek in order to make them more understandable. People sometimes struggle with the term if it's used in its direct translation will substitute another word for it. They consistently do this with a particular Greek word.

8:16. In regard to the church of Samaria. Because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them. The verb there is “the Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them.” If Paul had wanted to use “the Spirit had not yet come upon them” he would have used another Greek word, the more normal word for come. Instead he uses “to fall upon.” I'll give some instances where it's used in scripture to let you know the force of it. But that's one case. The Spirit had not yet fallen upon them. That is the believers in going to Samaria one of the things they assessed is had the Spirit fallen.

In Acts 10:44 at Cornelius' house “While Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit [and here again we have *epipto* – fell – on all who heard the message. Acts 11:15 Peter recounting the experience described in Acts 10 “As I began to speak the Holy Spirit *fell* on them as he had fallen on us at the beginning.” Then in 19:6 Paul at Ephesus when he lays hands on these Ephesian dozen “When Paul placed his hands on them the Holy Spirit fell on them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.”

It's very striking to trace down this word *epipto* and its usage in other places in the gospel and Acts. It's used in both the literal and symbolic sense. Acts 20:10 is one place where it's used literally. Paul is preaching this sermon at Troas and the guy falls out of the window – Eutychus. Paul rushes down and *falls* on the young man. The NIV has “threw himself.” Falls on the young man and put his arms around him.” That's physical isn't it?

Another place where the verb is used is Acts 20:37 Paul is saying good bye to the pastors at Ephesus. They're afraid they're going to see him no more. “They all wept as they *fell* on him and kissed him.”

Luke 15:20 the prodigal son is returning home. What does his father do? His father runs to him and *falls* on his neck and kisses him.”

The term is also used in a symbolic sense – fear falling on people or a quarrel falling upon people. What strikes me though is this phrase “fall upon.” It's as though the early believers when the Spirit comes there is a bodily recognition that he has come. I'm beginning to understand some behavior I've seen in Pentecostal meetings that I've never quite had a handle on. People falling down. The falling down can get to be spiritual trip. On the other hand it can be a unique manifestation of spiritual presence. But there is a sense in the book of Acts that the Spirit comes. I don't know how he falls – to describe the fall of the Spirit. Falling like the falling light of a dove. Falling upon the believer. That contact with God, many of you have experienced that. It is profound. It shakes you to your very beginning. It causes your insides to all of a sudden be so cleansed and free and exhilarated.

Under the Spirit's decent in my own life, I have been at those times weeping and intensely joyful that I can possibly describe. How can that be – weeping with tears that cannot be restrained but inwardly full of joy. The Spirit has fallen.

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I use these terms to indicate that there is an encounter and experience with the Holy Spirit that is not simply doctrinal. You don't simply walk away from it and kind of claim it by faith and hope you've had it. But to whet your appetite for the profound experience of the Spirit in our lives, that he might fall upon us.

I hunger for that kind of relationship with God. When the Spirit isn't falling what we have to do is kind of gear things up, program things down. Whatever. The Spirit comes upon us there's the remarkable impression that he makes. There's union between the two. The Spirit came in bodily form as a dove upon Jesus and the Spirit *fell* upon the early disciples. And was poured forth.

There are two of the works of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life. He ministered in the power of the Spirit. "He upon whom you see the Spirit descend and abide, the same is the Messiah and the Spirit aided upon Christ." So Luke 4:1 Jesus in his ministry says, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. So the Spirit was continually present throughout Jesus' ministry. He did his works in the power of the Spirit. Then Romans 8:11 the Spirit was active as the agent in the resurrection of Christ. The Spirit also will be active in our own resurrection. "The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead will also quicken your mortal bodies and raise you from the dead." There's a parallel of the ministry of the Spirit in Jesus' life to the ministry in our lives.

Acts 1:1 deals with that, the continuation of what Jesus did and taught. That's what is to happen with us. Jesus continues to do and to teach through the descent and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

That has been my longest treatment this evening. Let me quickly look at two other things.

Acts 1:4-5 Jesus specifically tells the disciples "Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Spirit." Here Jesus describes the coming of the Spirit in terms of a promise. The promise he kept.

How do you know when the promise has come? In Acts 2:17-18 when the Spirit has been given Peter refers to this promise by quoting Joel. It is a promise that goes back to the Old Testament "In the last days I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see vision. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below. Blood fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

This is a marvelous verse that Peter quotes from Joel saying that in the day in which we now live there is an a.m. and a p.m. to that day. The a.m. of the day is the descent of the Spirit. The p.m. when the day sets is when the heavens themselves begin to be convulsed and you know when that happens the Son of man is coming. We have not yet seen the p.m. part of those verses. It's still as far as we know the a.m. part. The Spirit is still descending upon all flesh.

Peter then specifically says to the audience that is listening to him in verses 33 "Exalted to the right hand of God he [Jesus] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit that is poured

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out what you no see and hear.” He’s telling the unsaved audience Jesus has poured forth from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, which you now see and hear. That is the promise has qualities to it that are visible and audible. You see and hear. The promise has those qualities to it. What did this multitude see? They saw disciples filled with the Spirit and heard them speaking to the Lord in languages of praise, which they had never learned. The promise had these qualities to it. Peter then goes on to say in verses 38 and 39 “You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are afar off. All whom the Lord our God will call upon.” The promise is not to the apostolic age. The promise is not to a select few who do the good works of Christian piety. The promise is not to pastors and teachers but all the rest of the lay people. The promise is to all. Going back to verse 33, the promise has properties, which are visible and audible. The promise of the Spirit.

The promise, I think when the Lord makes a promise he really intends to keep it. His words can be relied upon.

One other thing Jesus said in regard to the coming of the Spirit. Acts 1:8 “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the world.” You will receive power. Sometimes we focus on the supernatural manifestation of the Spirit in terms of his presence – tongues. We need to recognize that Jesus saw the long-term result of the promise of the Spirit as giving one power. You will receive power when the Spirit comes upon you to be my witnesses.

I’d like to talk for a moment or two about what power is not. There are several words that can be used in the Greek language for the word “power”. One is for authority. Another means power. Jesus is described as both ministering with authority and with power. The two words can be somewhat synonymous. There can be a difference though. I may be given the authority to do something but that doesn’t mean I have the power to carry it out. Jesus is specifically telling his disciples “I am going to give you power.” He had already given them authority. I’m going to give you power.

There are some who have said, since the word is *dunamis* that what therefore is to characterize every believer is this *dunamis*. We derive the word “dynamite” from that. So you as a believer are to be dynamite. I know it wasn’t the Lord’s intention that we be exploding Christians. Going off in all directions. We are not released in one big bang! There’s something deeper than that in the concept of power that simply something that goes off or explodes.

Also power is not manifest uniformly to every believer. I realize now from looking at the book of Acts that power has different manifestations to different believers. At the day of Pentecost there were 120 present but only one preached. In Acts 2:43 and Acts 4:33 and Acts 5:12 & 6 the Spirit had come upon all believers but only the apostles were doing signs and wonder and miracles. Later Phillip and Stephen would join them. The power had not come upon the mass as it had the apostles. They were given power built was in differing manifestations. In fact to Peter was given a unique measure of power that was not even given the rest of the apostles. So it isn’t that when the Spirit is given all of a sudden everybody starts doing the same thing with equal velocity. Rather it is the Spirit, what power is, what *dunamis* means is to be able or to be capable. Jesus is saying you will receive the ability to be capable when the Spirit comes upon you. What were they to be capable to do? They had a world to reach.

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In the Mediterranean world there were 250 million people estimated at that time. When Jesus speaks these words, Acts 1, there were 120 believers. That means each believer had about 1.8 million people to witness to. In Palestine it was a ratio of one to 33,000. Jesus says I make you when the Spirit comes capable for that task.

How do these believers become capable? Some of them become capable, Acts 2:47, in that they simply become capable of ministering to the people that are being saved. The Lord added to their number daily those that were being saved. It takes people who want to assume responsibility to do that.

Acts 3:1 Peter and John saw a man crippled from birth. What does the Spirit do? Give them the power to be capable where they would normally be incapable to deal with the situation. A man crippled from birth everybody else had been incapable to deal with him. But the Spirit comes upon them and gives them capability to say to this man, Rise up and walk.

In Acts 6:8 Stephen suddenly is made capable in a way that he had never been before when he begins doing mighty signs and wonders. In Acts 9:36 Dorcas was made capable by the Spirit to do Acts of mercy to other believers. In Acts there's a great deal of variety in how the Spirit makes different people capable. It's not all one thing.

Someone from time to time will say, "Look at this person who is outstanding in the evangelical world but does not claim to have had the baptism in the Spirit. How can you say that that person has not been baptized in the Spirit." I'd never say that. It's for us to compare our experience with the scripture and I'd leave it that. What we are saying is that the Spirit comes upon each person to bring them to the level of capability that the Spirit wants. Simply because someone is functioning on a great level of capability does not mean that if the Spirit came upon them in a greater way they'd function more capably by the Spirit.

On the other hand we must be careful not to judge. Some person may be capable in the Spirit and have what the world perceives as a very small ministry. Yet in terms of their personality the Spirit is powerful upon them. The flow of the Spirit somewhat depends upon two things. It depends upon the source of supply, which is limitless. And it also depends somewhat on the size of the reservoir. A lot of things go to making that up. Our human temperament, background, training, proclivities. All these kinds of things. The Spirit too can overflow and over abound if he so chooses. Or put in a very simple way, one person may have a bigger cup than another. Five talents instead of two.

But the Spirit coming in power may do everything from making a Dorcas more capable of turning out her works and acts of love to a Peter having his shadow have profound significant influence upon the healing of others.

I think this coming of the Spirit in making us powerful and capable is best illustrated with 1 Samuel 10:6, a place where you have in the Old Testament described exactly what the Spirit does when he comes with power and what Jesus is promising in Acts 1:8. The scripture's context has to do with Saul's first meeting with Samuel. Samuel the prophet has been told of the Lord, this guy Saul is to be king. Saul had been nothing up to that point. Never even thought about being king. Samuel says to Saul, 10:6, "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon you in power. You will prophesy and you will be changed into a different person." That seems to me

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to describe exactly what Jesus is telling these disciples in Acts 1. The Spirit will come upon you and you will be changed into a different person. Responsibilities you thought you'd never be capable of fulfilling in the past, you're going to fulfill them in the future. Vision and dreams which we may have had that you thought were impossible to take place to fulfill, you're going to see them come about. Moments before in your life when you shrank from testimony and you ran in cowardice and fear you're now going to be able to face. The Spirit will come upon you and empower you and you will be as a different person.

I trust these moments of teaching have been a resource and blessing to you.

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