

The Spirit Came Down

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- [0 : 00] Gospel of John. If you're using the Pew Bible, I believe it's page 860. Page 860, or John chapter 1.
- We're working our way through the story of Jesus, according to John the Apostle. And last Sunday, what we looked at was the story of Jesus' debut, we could call it.
- The day that he started to be known publicly to the people of Israel. And we listened to John tell the story of how John the Baptizer was there out in the wilderness, baptizing people, teaching and preaching, until that day after the delegation from Jerusalem came to check him out.
- The day after, Jesus emerged from the crowds himself, came out to John, was baptized by John. And that day, John's message changed.
- From one is coming, to this is the one. Look at him. We talked about what it meant, that he is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.
- [1 : 24] Now, we could move on in the story here, and see how Jesus begins to get his disciples. But I think that there's one more thing that we just can really meditate on, this moment of Jesus' baptism.
- And it comes in verses 32 to 34. The thing that just struck me in those words, three times, John mentions the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit. Let me read it for us. This is the testimony that John the Baptizer gave about Jesus. Then John gave this testimony.
- I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him.
- But the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.
- [2 : 34] I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one. Three times in John's testimony, he mentions the Spirit.
- I saw the Spirit coming down. I saw it come to rest on him and remain on him. I saw the Spirit, the one that God had told me to watch for.
- And this one, God said to me, he gave me this sign, the one that you see the Spirit come down on, he's the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.
- Three times he mentions the Holy Spirit. And so for this morning, I want to just take a few moments to consider what's the significance of this, this coming of the Spirit upon Jesus.
- It's perhaps something that we could easily overlook or just pass over and move on to other things. But why is this so important? Why does he take such great pain to show us, to emphasize the Spirit came down upon him?
- [3 : 51] Who is the Spirit? To get a clear picture of this, we have to kind of reach back into the Old Testament. The Spirit is that person of the Trinity that we perhaps understand the least.
- He's the one who's often at work behind the scenes, and yet he's there right from the beginning, right from creation. He was there as the world was spoke into being by God.

The Spirit is often known throughout the Old Testament and seen throughout the stories of Israel as the one who would come upon people and enable them to do God's special work, to kind of equip them with skills and abilities that they otherwise would not have had.

Moses was described as someone who had the Spirit and the power of the Spirit on him. It talks there in Numbers 11 about how God took some of the same Spirit that he had put upon Moses and put it on the elders of Israel.

And as a result, they prophesied. They spoke words from God for the people to hear. Many of you will know the stories of the judges, people who God put his Spirit upon and enabled them to lead his people, Israel.

[5 : 45] Samson was one such person. The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat.

The Spirit would often give supernatural strength and power to people. But as we look closely at how the Spirit works all throughout those old stories, stories of the people of Israel, one of the things that we notice is that he seems to come and go.

He doesn't often just stay with that person. Even Samson himself was described as the Spirit of the Lord came upon him several times throughout his life, often right before he was about to do something, right before he was about to go into battle and fight the Lord's enemies.

There's a temporary nature to how God worked in the past. He would come upon people by his Spirit, enabling them to do his specific work in that specific moment.

And then sometimes, often, what we see is that he would leave or that person would then just continue to live their normal life until the next moment when the Spirit would come upon them.

[7 : 13] And one of the examples that's really clear of this is Saul, King Saul. The Spirit of God came powerfully upon him.

1 Samuel 11, verse 6. And when that happened, he then led the people of Israel into battle against the enemy people who were threatening Israel.

But those of us who know the story of Saul also know that there came this moment where the Spirit of the Lord left Saul. And in this case, it was permanent.

He departed from Saul. 1 Samuel 16, verse 14. David, the man after God's own heart and the king which followed Saul, he prayed this in his prayer, Psalm 51.

He said, Do not cast me from your presence, Lord, or take your Holy Spirit from me. He was watching closely what happened with Saul.

[8 : 20] He watched. He saw how God took his Spirit from Saul and cast him from his presence, so to speak. And so he prayed this.

And so there's a very real sense in which the Spirit came upon people all throughout those days to enable them to do a specific work of God, giving them supernatural power, giving them the ability to speak words which were from God.

But even though God did that for those select few people, put his Spirit upon them, the story of Israel is still very much a downward spiral.

The problem of sin remained. The people did not listen to the prophets that he sent or obey the kings and the leaders and the judges that he raised up.

And so there's need for something more. There's need for something better. And so God spoke through Isaiah about a coming time in which he would deal with this problem.

[9 : 36] Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 to 2. If you have your Bible with you, I encourage you to turn there. Isaiah chapter 11.

Isaiah chapter 11. This is what the Lord declared through his prophet. He said, A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse.

From his roots, a branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding.

The Spirit of counsel and of might. The Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord. And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. So what did Isaiah declare?

He said that there is one coming. He comes and he uses a bit of a tree metaphor here to refer to the family of Jesse, which of course was King David's father.

[10 : 43] There is one coming from the family of Jesse, the family of David. If Jesse is a stump or the roots, then this one who's coming is a branch that will grow off of this family tree.

And what's the first thing that he tells us about this one who is to come? The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him.

God's own Spirit. The Spirit of Yahweh will rest on this one, this descendant of Jesse.

And what will be the outcome of that? What will that mean? Isaiah goes on to tell us the kinds of qualities that this descendant will have because the Spirit is resting on him.

He will have wisdom. He will have understanding. He will have counsel, the ability to counsel. He will have might. He will have power.

[11 : 51] He will have the knowledge and fear of the Lord. And then Isaiah goes on to tell us what this coming one will do because he has this enabling from the Spirit.

He says in verse 3, He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears.

But with righteousness he will judge the needy. With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. As I was thinking about this I thought how does this really connect to us?

Maybe you know of a situation in your life right now where somebody that you care about somebody that you love is in some kind of conflict or dispute with someone else.

Maybe a marriage issue or family falling out. two people that you care about and you long to see this dispute this conflict fixed.

[13 : 06] But as one who stands on the outside looking in you're not even completely sure just what has gone on what has been said what has been done what was meant by what was said.

You want this situation this conflict to be resolved. But how will that happen when from your perspective not even sure what's really at the root what's really caused this.

It's to this kind of situation which happens all over the place in our world that these words are good news. This coming one this descendant of Jesse of David he will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears.

His judgment his verdict his decisions will not be based on mere outward appearance on what he perceives in the situation.

he will not be swayed by bias or by his connection to the person. No, this one who comes because he has the spirit of the Lord upon him and has wisdom from the spirit understanding counsel and might he will judge with righteousness.

[14 : 36] He will give decisions that are just that are right. And the sense here is that he will do it for the people of the earth and not discriminately, not just for those who can afford to buy his legal advice or counsel.

He will give it even to the needy and to the poor. It talks about how this branch of Jesse will take care of the problem of wickedness in our world.

Deal with the problem of injustice. In verse five, righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist, the central feature of his rule when he comes will be acting rightly.

It will be faithfulness. It will be keeping his promises. That's something that we all long for as we think of our government. One who will keep his promise and do everything that he has said he will do.

And when he comes, Isaiah goes on, I'm not going to read all of this, the wolf will live with the lamb, the infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

[16:07] Verse 8, they will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain. This branch of Jesse, when he comes, will bring about a time in this world such as this world has never seen.

When all living things will live in peace and harmony. When there will be no violence, no fear of harm.

These are wonderful words. This is not all that Isaiah has to say about this one on whom the spirit will rest.

Flip forward to Isaiah chapter 42. Isaiah chapter 42. Isaiah the Lord speaking through Isaiah said this, here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.

I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. So instead of referring to him here as the branch or the shoot of Jesse, he refers to him here.

[17:29] The Lord refers to this coming one as my servant. He refers to him as the one in whom I delight. Think back to that moment when Jesus was baptized.

God spoke from heaven audibly in an audible voice in that moment. We can read that in the gospels and what did he say? This is my beloved son.

with him I am well pleased in whom I delight. My chosen one in John chapter one verse thirty four.

This is what John the baptizer said. I have seen and I testify that this is God's chosen one. God is the son of God.

At this place in the gospel of John there's two different variations in the manuscripts that we have available today. There's back and forth over which reading is correct.

[18:38] Is it this is the son of God or is it this is God's chosen one? I'm not a world-class scholar so I can't really venture into that too much but the leaning is probably the evidence probably leans to that the reading is this is God's chosen one with the thought that John the baptizer was actually saying that day this one Jesus whom you see he is the servant spoken of here in Isaiah my servant whom I uphold my chosen one in whom I delight and what is said about him the servant of the Lord by Isaiah I will put my spirit on him I will put my own spirit says God on him and what will he do with this gift this enabling he will bring justice to the nations what a statement what a promise what a thing to look forward to in our world especially with the way it is that we see today in the news he will bring justice to the nations

Isaiah goes on to describe some of the way that he will do that because this has been promised by others we could look at some of those old conquerors Alexander the great you know the empires king of Babylon the king of the Persians and the Medes they had a promise of justice as well but their way of bringing that about was through conquest where they just run into the place take it over do what they will there but the way that this servant of the Lord Isaiah speaks about will bring justice stands in contrast to that what does Isaiah say he says this servant he will not shout or cry out or raise his voice in the streets a bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out there's a sense in which this coming servant of the

Lord he comes in silence he comes out of the quiet he comes with a gentleness and a care and a concern for those who are weak those who are bruised those who are downtrodden those who are needy those old conquering kings and emperors they they just strolled into the place without regard for people and took over trampled over whoever got in their way not this coming one there's something special about this coming one in faithfulness he will bring forth what is right justice he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth and in his teaching the islands will put their hope again we see this key identifier of who this servant of the

Lord is he is the one on whom God will put his spirit and so when we come to this moment where Jesus emerges from the crowds and is baptized and John sees the spirit of the Lord come down upon him this is big this doesn't just mean that Jesus is is is the one that John has been saying you know the one who's ranks higher than I this this is even bigger than that this is the Messiah this is the servant of the Lord this is the branch of Jesse look at him I saw the spirit come down on him and remain on him not like King Saul where the spirit came and departed no the spirit came down upon him and remained on him here to stay this is how we know that

Jesus is the one the one who has been promised and he is so much more than than we ever imagined as we begin to look at these old prophecies given in the Old Testament not long after Jesus was baptized he would come to this moment where it says in the power of the spirit he came into Galilee and he went to the town of Nazareth which was his hometown the place where his family was living he went into the synagogue there and he opened up the scroll of Isaiah and this is what he read the spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor he has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind to set the oppressed free to proclaim the year of the

[24 : 28] Lord's favor that's Isaiah 61 Jesus read those words in the synagogue then he handed the scroll back to where they set it down and he began by saying to them teaching them he said today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing in other words the spirit of the Lord is upon me is written ultimately about me and I am here to proclaim good news I have been specially anointed and set apart by God to proclaim good news and to bring all these wonderful things that you can read about in Isaiah 61 John declared it this is the one on whom the spirit came down Jesus he knew who he was he knew he had God's spirit upon him and he proclaimed it finally we come to this last mention of the spirit in this passage

John the baptizer out there in the river says the man on whom you see this is God speaking to John the baptizer the man on whom you see the spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit it's an interesting phrase if we look carefully back through what we've been through already here in John three times John has made it crystal clear I baptize with water verse 26 I baptize with water John said verse 31 I came baptizing with water verse 33 the one who sent me to baptize with water but the one that you see in front of you now the Lamb of God he is the one who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit with

God's Spirit now what does that mean there's more to say about that than we have time for this morning but we can just simply go with the metaphor to baptize means to put into or some would take it as to wash or to cleanse John makes it clear the washing the baptism that I do it's with the earthly it's in water but the one who is coming and now has come look at him he's the one who will put you into the spirit who will wash or cleanse you by his Holy Spirit and this is what we've been waiting for this is what we've needed as I mentioned earlier the problem of sin God put his spirit on a select few on the leaders on the prophets but the people on the whole continue to spiral downward in disobedience in rebellion against

God there's need not just for the leaders to have the spirit but for the people themselves to have God's spirit upon them and in them and so what does John declare this one Jesus he is the one who will bring the spirit to you put God's spirit in you and this too was foretold by the prophets Joel we could look at others too there's Ezekiel there's Jeremiah there's others but Joel said this God speaking through him said afterward I will pour out my spirit on all people your sons and daughters will prophesy your old men will dream dreams your young men will see visions even on my servants both men and women I will pour out my spirit in those days this one that you see coming up out of the water he's the one who will bring and give the spirit to you the very spirit of

God think about that we look at those stories of Samson and King David and the prophets and we think man wouldn't that have been awesome to have supernatural strength by God's spirit to have the spirit upon us the good news is is that Jesus has come to put his spirit upon us now it may not result in supernatural strength or some of those things that we read about in the Old Testament the spirit has many gifts and we're not going to get into that this morning but what a wonderful gift it is as we look at this story of Jesus baptism I think it's all too easy to think to ourselves you know what does this really have to do with me Jesus got the spirit upon him what does this have to do with me but if we look closely at what that means that the spirit is upon him

[30 : 11] I hope that we have seen this morning through some of those Old Testament prophecies that this means everything this means that this is God's chosen one this is the one who will come again someday to bring about all that we hope for and long for in our world to bring justice to the nations to bring peace and harmony such as this world has never seen that's something that we can receive that we can be a part of and enter into because of this moment when God put his spirit upon him we might wonder why did Jesus need God's spirit why did he even need God's spirit John's already told us that Jesus was the word who was God at the very beginning that all things were made through him so why did he need

God's spirit to enable him if he has the power to do it already and my answer to that is that the son of God has come into our world on a very specific mission as we talked about last Sunday to be a substitute one who will take away our sins and in order to be an acceptable substitute he must be truly one of us and live the human life as a human being and so in a sense you could put it this way he in order to to be an acceptable substitute for us he cannot as it were cheat by just using his divine power to do everything he must live the human life as a human being and so the miracles the words that he spoke from God as a prophet were done were performed in reliance upon the

Holy Spirit and his enabling without the spirit this whole story would change this whole story would change we need we need the spirit what God does each person of who he is the father the son and the spirit they work together and we see that again here at Jesus baptism our opportunity to have the spirit comes through this one who will baptize us put us into wash us cleanse us by the spirit and so him having the spirit that day come down upon him means everything for us our hope is anchored there this is critical how does this touch our lives in the week ahead we've been talking in first

Peter about a lot of good things that we have to look forward to an inheritance kept in heaven for us that will never spoil or fade Peter says there in all of this you greatly rejoice and I think that we could bring those words over and apply them to these wonderful truths as well in what the spirit upon Jesus and Jesus will do in the future when he comes again in all of these things we can greatly rejoice though now for a little while we may be going through some stuff we may be going through some trials look at the hope that we have in Christ this one who will come and in the power of the spirit change this world and make it new forever let's meditate on that this week and I hope and I pray that we will find joy from the Lord as we do let's pray father father in heaven thank you for your word thank you that you keep your promises thank you for sending

Jesus thank you for putting your spirit upon him we can't wait for the day when he comes back help us to be patient help us to continue to trust you we love you continue to do your good work in our hearts by your spirit's power we ask this in Jesus name amen