

The Promised Spirit Arrives

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- [0:00] Father, thank you again for your word through which you speak to us by your spirit. And we do pray, Father, that you would help us to understand your word this morning and more than that, to live in light of it.
- We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, there are all sorts of promised events which, when they arrive, kickstart a new generation or a new era in history.
- So, for example, the birth of young Prince George, who turned six a couple of months ago, actually. He's on the next slide with his sister, Charlotte. They're all very cute. I think a lot of work had been done to get them there.
- But apparently, journalists had camped outside the hospital for three weeks straight, waiting for his arrival so they could get the first picture. And when he did arrive, Australia Post, on the next slide, created a new stamp just for Prince George.
- But more than that, his arrival kickstarted a whole new generation of royals, didn't it? The first great-grandson, great-great-great, whatever it is, that level, that generation.
- [1:12] Or think about the promise of the moon landing event on the next slide, which is 50 years old this year. The space race had already started and the Russians had already sent up Sputnik.
- But Apollo 11 promised to land on the moon. And when it did so, when it arrived successfully on the moon, it started a new era of scientific achievement.
- It had never been done before. Now it had. And scientific exploration with materials collected from the moon. It was, as they say, one giant leap for mankind. Well, today we remember another promised event, the arrival of the Spirit.
- And his arrival kickstarted not a new era of scientific exploration, but of worldwide gospel proclamation. And not a new generation of royals, but new generations of Christians.
- But first, let me remind you of the story so far. Luke, who wrote Acts, wrote his Gospel of Luke. So there's two volumes, volume one and volume two. And at the end of his first book, Dr. Luke, he was a doctor, wrote this on the next slide in chapter 24.
- [2:23] Jesus appeared to the 11 apostles then, plus other disciples. And he said, this is what is written. The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.
- And then he said, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.
- I'm going to send you what my father has promised. But stay in the city until you've been clothed with power from on high. I hear Jesus said that they were to preach the gospel.
- That is the good news about Jesus, how we can have forgiveness of sins and life eternal by trusting in him. And they were to preach that message to all nations. But before they could, they had to stay in the city of Jerusalem and wait for something or rather someone, the promised Holy Spirit.

It seems they needed his power to proclaim this gospel. And then in Acts chapter one, he repeats many of those ideas. In fact, in chapter one, verse three, after Jesus was raised from the dead, he spent 40 days giving many convincing proofs that he was not a ghost, but had really risen.

- [3:37] In verses four and five to eight, he repeats some of those themes of being witnesses and waiting for the Holy Spirit to come. And then in verse 11 of chapter one, he goes up to heaven and the apostles go back to Jerusalem and wait.

It's now been about seven days of waiting when the Spirit arrives. So at point one in your outlines and chapter two, verse one in your Bibles.

Here, Luke just sets the scene very briefly. He says, when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Now, before we get to the Spirit, it's worth pointing out that this day of Pentecost, which means 50th.

That's what the Greek word Pentecost means. It means 50th. It was also the name for a Jewish festival at the time, the festival of weeks. On the next slide is some verses from the Old Testament, which talks about this festival of weeks.

The Jews were to count off seven weeks, hence festival of weeks. And they were to do it from the first day of harvest. And then on the next day, they'll hold a festival thanking God for their harvest.

- [4:48] So it was seven weeks plus one day. By Jesus's time, it was to be counted from the Passover. And so seven weeks of seven days, seven times seven is 49.

Good. Excellent. Plus one. This is a hard one. 50. Yeah. So the festival happened on the 50th day. And the Greek word for 50th is Pentecost. Yeah.

So it originally referred to a Jewish festival. And that's why there were Jews who traveled all over to Jerusalem. It was one of the three pilgrim festivals.

And so there were lots of Jews staying in a crowded Jerusalem along with Jesus's followers. And verse one says that his followers were all together in one place, still waiting.

But who are they in verse one? Well, back in chapter one, verse 14, we have a group of the 11 apostles plus the women, plus Mary, plus Jesus's brothers who were all together there.

- [5:48] It could be that group that were again here in chapter two. Or in the very next verse, chapter one, verse 15, where Peter stood up among the believers, it was a group numbering about 120.

Most scholars think it was probably that group, that bigger group of Christians. If it was that group, it would have had to be a pretty big house to keep them all in. Either way, it's more than the 12 apostles that witness and receive the spirit.

That's important because the spirit's not just for a certain select few people. For when they're all together, look what happens in verse two. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. Here, the spirit arrives in spectacular fashion, doesn't he?

At first, there is a sound like a violent wind without the actual wind. It's kind of like the sound was making an announcement, preparing them for someone to arrive.

- [7:00] You know, like in the movies when someone blows a trumpet to prepare people for the king to enter into the room or something like that. In fact, on the next slide, that's kind of what happened with God at Mount Sinai.

So Israel heard a trumpet blast preparing them and then God descended on Mount Sinai in fire. Well, here there is a sound from heaven preparing them for the arrival of someone from heaven.

And he does arrive. It's the spirit. He descends like a tongue of fire. Fire, again, represents God's presence like at Sinai or the burning bush of Moses, you might remember.

But notice in verse 3 that the spirit descends on each one of them. And again, this is huge. We take this for granted, but this is a massive change.

In the Old Testament, not all God's people got God's spirit, you see. Only certain leaders and prophets and the like. But here the spirit is given not just to the apostles, but to each one of them.

[8:03] God's presence is now with every one of his people. Now, this is part of the new covenant that Jesus made possible by his death and resurrection. The new covenant, we're on the next slide.

God would put his spirit in our hearts to move us and help us follow his ways. And whereby the spirit, everyone would know God from the least to the greatest.

Know him directly, personally, as our heavenly father. Or on the next slide, as Paul puts it, that the spirit is the spirit that brought about our adoption to sonship.

So we can call God father or the spirit that marks us and seals us, guaranteeing that we will remain God's children with the inheritance to come.

You see, Jesus' death pays the price for our sins, the price of our adoption into God's family. But it's the spirit who changes our hearts to want to be adopted in the first place, to want to believe.

[9:04] And then the spirit is like a new surname that stays with us and gives us a new identity. Like surnames give us a new identity as members of a particular family.

Or the spirit is like adoption papers, which seal and guarantee our status as God's children. So our hope is certain. And in case that's all not enough, he's also the one that continues to work in our hearts and minds, through our consciences, actually, to help us keep trusting Jesus and keep following God.

For example, you know how sometimes you don't want to come to church? Not you personally, no, other people, right? Actually, I sometimes feel like staying in bed on a Sunday morning.

But then your conscience prompts you to get up or to get going, doesn't it? Doesn't it? Or is this just me? I'm the only one who doesn't like coming to church? No? All right. But that's the spirit, you see.

Or when you're going through a tough time and you suddenly remember a promise of God that pop into your mind, that's God's spirit at work. Or despite your difficulties and not knowing your future, you feel determined to keep trusting Jesus.

[10:17] Again, that's the spirit helping us. The Jews had none of that, or most of them at least, because they did not have the spirit. They didn't have God's ongoing presence nor God's open access to call him Father, nor God's inward help to follow him continually.

And I wonder whether we forget what a privilege we have. In fact, I had. I was working on this passage this week and it kind of just hit me.

I often take the spirit for granted. But it's an extraordinary privilege that God's people didn't have in the Old Testament. But having said all that, Luke's real purpose here is to show the spirit's arrival actually kickstarts worldwide gospel proclamation.

Just as Jesus promised at the end of Luke 24. After all, that's why the spirit comes like a tongue in verse 3, because he's about to help people speak. And that's exactly what we see happen in verse 4.

You see verse 4? All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them.

- [11:32] You see what happens when they're filled with the spirit? They speak, don't they? And the tongues they speak are not the type of tongues we hear in charismatic churches or that are perhaps referred to in 1 Corinthians 14.

Here, they are actual languages of the nations. Because look at what we read in verse 5 and following. It says, Artily amazed, they asked, Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?

Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues.

You see, here are Jews gathered from every nation of the known world. Luke emphasizes that every nation, doesn't he? He gives us 15 different places. To cover the known world.

And these Jews hear this sound of Christians speaking their own dialect. So they gather around this house. And presumably the Christians are coming out, continuing to speak.

- [12:59] And the crowd recognizes them as Galileans. Perhaps because of their accents. Like when I try and speak Mandarin with an Aussie accent. Niau mate.

I'm sorry if I've just murdered your language. The point is, as Galileans, they would not have known these other languages. But here they are, speaking them intelligibly.

Here is the power of the Spirit. Not to speak charismatic languages, but recognizable languages. From every nation of the known world. And what are they speaking? Well, verse 11.

The wonders. The wonders. Or literally, the mighty acts of God. Now, what are these acts? Well, it could have been things from the Old Testament.

Or even the sending of the Spirit. But it certainly would have included the message about Jesus. What God has done through Christ. How do I know?

- [13:56] Well, because that's exactly what Peter goes on to talk about. Chapter 2 is a long chapter. And it has a lot of Peter's sermon in it. We're only looking up to verse 21 this week. But just look down to verse 22 just for a sneak peek.

At the bottom of your page there. And notice how Peter talks about what God has done through Jesus. So verse 22. Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God.

To you by miracles, wonders and signs. Which God did among you through him. As you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.

And you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead. You notice how Peter says it's all about what God has done through Christ.

Here are the wonders of God. The mighty acts that these Christians were declaring that day. In fact, later on in chapter 2 verse 38. Peter even calls this same crowd to repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

- [15:06] Just like Jesus promised they would at the end of Luke 24. And remember on the next slide. The end of Luke 24. Where repentance and forgiveness will be preached to all nations.

Well, here they are. Clothed with power. By the Holy Spirit. And preaching repentance in the name of Jesus. To Jews from all nations.

Oh sure, it's not Gentiles yet. But here is the beginning of what Jesus promised there. The point is the Spirit's arrival has kick-started worldwide gospel proclamation.

This is what the day of Pentecost is all about. Enabling Christians to speak the gospel to all nations. And in case we're in any doubt, Peter tells us this is what it means.

Point 2. So back in chapter 2 verse 12. The crowd is amazed and they ask, what does this mean? In verse 13. Some think instead of filled with the Spirit, they're filled with wine and drunk.

[16:07] But then verse 14. Peter stood up. And with the 11 raised his voice. Addressed the crowd. And said, fellow Jews. And all of you who live in Jerusalem.

Let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk as you suppose. It's only 9 in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

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.

Even on my servants, both men and women. I will pour out my Spirit in those days. And they will prophesy. Peter says to the crowd that what they're seeing is the fulfillment.

Not just of what Jesus said in Luke 24, which the crowd didn't hear. But the fulfillment of what God said in Joel. Which as Jews, this crowd would have heard before.

[17:08] All these Christians prophesying was a sign that God has poured out his Spirit on all his people. Sons and daughters. Young and old. Men and women.

Even on servants. All God's people receive God's Spirit like we saw before. But here it's not to enable us to believe or to mark us as God's children.

Or to help us follow God, even though those things are true. Here it's to speak, do you notice? Or as Joel puts it, to prophesy. He even repeats it, doesn't he, twice.

The point of Pentecost is not the miraculous. Even though there are miraculous things happening, absolutely. But those miraculous things lead to something else.

To speaking. That's the point of Pentecost. But what about the visions and dreams then? Well, the dreams and visions were one way the Old Testament prophets were given the message to speak.

[18:09] God can still give dreams and visions to people today. You may have heard stories of Muslims having dreams and being led to faith in Christ.

In fact, I heard of one just a few weeks ago, actually. But it's usually because they don't have access to the Bible or the Gospel. I was talking with an ex-missionary who had been working in Egypt for over 10 years, over a decade.

And he knew of many Muslims who had had dreams and come to hear of the Gospel about Christ. And I asked him once, I said, once they hear the Gospel, once they get a Bible, do they keep having the dreams?

He said, oh no, not really. But they tend to stop. Now, what's more, the Christians here in Acts, they didn't have dreams or visions, did they? Because they already had their minds open back in Luke 24.

They already knew the Gospel. And so the focus here is on prophesying or speaking the Gospel. This is the primary purpose of the Spirit at Pentecost.

[19:11] To kick-start worldwide proclamation to enable all Christians to speak about Jesus, even sons and daughters. I know of a couple of kids from this service, actually.

A son from one family was telling his basketball mate as he was traveling in his mate's car with his mate's mum driving in the front seat about how his mate should come to church and hear about Jesus.

He was prophesying. Or take a daughter of another family. She was telling her classmates at school that you need to know Jesus to be safe from hell. The parents said, oh, you've got to be careful about that.

I reckon that's great. She's going to be a street evangelist one day. This is the purpose of the Spirit, to move in people's hearts, to give them boldness, to see opportunities and take them, even kids, that they might proclaim Christ.

Why? Well, because of the time we're living in. You notice verse 17? The Spirit's arrival also marks the last days.

[20:09] The days between Jesus' first and second coming. And so we are living in those days now. Before the last day when Jesus will return to judge and put our world right.

And so now is the time to proclaim the gospel to all nations. So that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus can be saved. Do you see verse 19?

I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. The signs and wonders are all those things we see in the Bible and in history between Jesus' first coming and his second one.

I mean, remember when he was crucified? The sun went dark for three hours and that sort of thing. They signal that there will be a day of the Lord which will be glorious. Because Jesus will return and put our world right.

[21:14] No more suffering or sin. No more droughts or injustice. I mean, did you hear about the Melbourne professor from Melbourne University who's just been sentenced to 10 years jail in Iran?

She was over there visiting. She does Middle Eastern studies. She was just arrested out of the blue. Sent to jail for 10 years. And now our government department is trying to liaise to get her out. Jesus will return and put all things right.

It'll be glorious, won't it? But that day will also include judgment for our sins. And so now is the time to proclaim the Lord Jesus to all nations so that they can call on his name and be saved from that judgment.

You see, the Spirit's arrival on the day of Pentecost kick-started a new era, not of space exploration, but of gospel proclamation. So people can be saved.

So there could be new generation, not of royals, but of Christians before the last day comes. So what does all this mean for us today? Well, firstly, have you called on the name of the Lord Jesus to be saved?

[22:25] That's the first thing. Because we are in the last days now. The last day could come at any moment when it will be too late. And so the only way to be saved from judgment on that day is to call on the name of Jesus, to trust in him.

Have you done that? And for us who have, then second, do we realise the privilege of having the Spirit? As I mentioned before, to have God's ongoing presence, to have that open access to call him personally, directly, our Father.

Do you realise what a privilege it is? And do we thank God for the gift of the Spirit? And thirdly, the gift of the Spirit is to help us also speak of Christ.

That's the big application because that was the big purpose of Pentecost. To kickstart that gospel proclamation so people can call on Jesus and be saved.

Now, the Spirit doesn't generally help us to share Christ by speaking another language. Though I do know of people who have become Christians and they've found that they're quite gifted suddenly at languages.

[23:41] And they're doing Bible translation at the moment, actually. Rather, the Spirit enables us by prompting us to take opportunities. I mean, sharing the Christ, the gospel, is hard enough, isn't it?

You know, the heart starts pounding and you're a bit nervous, not sure how it's going to work out. Can you imagine trying to do it without the Spirit's help? The Spirit works through us and our conscious prompting us and equipping us with boldness and the like.

Helping us to say something about Christ. Of course, sometimes we hesitate and the opportunity goes. I remember sometime there was a non-Christian mate who was complaining about the state of the world.

And I thought, oh, here's an opportunity to talk about the hope of the world to come. Just what do I say? And there the opportunity went. Have that ever happened to you? And so I resolved, I was determined the next time I was chatting to look for any opportunity and to take it.

And I did. I'd like to say he became a Christian, but he didn't. And yet even that determination and that boldness was also the Spirit working in us, helping us. I like on the next slide in Acts chapter 4 verse 31, where they are filled with the Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

[24:57] I mean, right now there are Christians in Africa refusing to forsake Christ despite being threatened with death. How are they able to do that? The Spirit's help.

And sometimes the Spirit even gives us the words to say, like at that bottom reference there in Luke 12. I remember talking to a pastor of a church in the city. And he was talking with a new Christian who shared the gospel.

And she even said, look, I wasn't quite sure what to say, but it came out really well. I was even surprised. That was the Spirit. This is how the Spirit enables us to share Christ.

Of course, sharing Christ will look different for each of us. Some will do it more than others. I mean, in the book of Acts, all the Christians speak the word, but the apostles speak it way more.

And we can do it in different ways. For some of us, it might simply be sending a Christmas card this Christmas with a Bible verse on it to our grandchildren or those from our family who have turned away and just put a verse, perhaps like John 3, 16.

[26:05] For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. Yeah. Or for others, it might mean offering to pray for a neighbor who's going through a tough time and then waiting for an opportunity to share with them the hope we have.

Not Bible bashing them. That's not what I'm talking about. But doing it graciously, gently, taking those opportunities. For others, when your colleagues ask you about the weekend, it might mean, including in your conversation, that you went to church and were encouraged about Jesus again.

They might not ask you about your weekend ever again. But that's one way you could do it. I think I've told you about a lady from my old church before, Florence, who, when I visited her in hospital one time, had her Bible.

She'd read it while she was in the hospital bed and she'd keep it on her bedside. And she'd even offer to read a psalm to the person in the bed next to her. But just, she'd offer, she wouldn't force it, and hoping that it might lead to a gospel conversation.

And she said to me, and Andrew, the best thing is they can't run away. Whatever it is, we ought to take the opportunity to speak about Christ where we come, where we can, so that people can call on his name and be saved.

[27:24] The arrival of Apollo 11 on the moon may have kick-started a new era of scientific exploration and the birth of Prince George, a new generation of royals. But the arrival of the promised spirit kick-started a new era of gospel proclamation and generations of Christians.

Let's pray that we'll be part of it. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for the gift of your spirit. We thank you that you do not leave us alone in this world, but you come and dwell with us by your spirit who works through our hearts and consciences, prompting us to keep trusting Jesus and even sharing Jesus with others.

Our Father, we know that this is not easy, particularly in our world and the current climate. So please help us by your spirit to look out for opportunities and have the words to say to share Christ with others, that they too might call on his name and be saved.

We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.