

# *Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant*

## #34 Descent Of The Holy Spirit

### The Spirit Arrives

Acts 2:1-4 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was marked by 3 symbolic phenomena. The coming of the Holy Spirit was marked with visible wonders on this specific day. It was the pattern of these 3 miraculous signs that marked the coming of the Spirit as a unique event.

They received a visual and an audio indication that the promised Holy Spirit of God had come.

1. The sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind that filled all the house where they were sitting.

Recall: Other blessings that drop from Heaven - Noah's rain, an angel of death, manna, quail, pillars of fire and the following cloud. We can thread our way through the Old Testament with stuff deliberately dropping from Heaven. Then Jesus comes down in the womb of Mary, and the dove at baptism, and the cloud Jesus took home-to the sound of a mighty wind that signals the coming of the Holy Spirit. God is in charge and shows up exactly when he intends. SOVEREIGN

2. Appearance of visible cloven tongues like as of fire which rested on each person.

Key Point #1: Fire, as well as wind, in the Bible symbolizes God's holy presence.

[Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2-6; 13:21-22; 19:18; 24:17; 40:38; Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16]

- ❖ Moses saw the bush that was burning and yet not consumed. God Himself was in the bush.

Exodus 3:2 "...the angel of the Lord appeared to [Moses] in flames of fire from within a bush."

Moses receives instructions that radically set the stage for the work of God. Similarly, the tongues of fire resting on each person represents the Holy Spirit who provides the strength for this shabby group of people to set the stage for the work of God.

- ❖ Israel was guided and protected by the pillar of fire in the wilderness.

- ❖ God descended upon Mt. Sinai in fire.

- ❖ John the Baptist predicted Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Luke 3:16b ...He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:

Key Point #2: Fire brings both heat and light.

- ❖ Heb. 12:29: Our God is a consuming fire.

- ❖ The heat of fire consumes the dross, purifying those who come in contact with it.

- ❖ Heat of fire pictures the zeal that should mark believers

❖ "The Spirit was to be a Spirit of burning, thawing natural coldness and melting hearts with a genial warmth that should beget flaming enthusiasm, fervent love, burning zeal and should work transformation into its own fiery substance."

❖ The light pictures the illumination that God brings to those in spiritual darkness.

Tozer: "Many believe an erroneous assumption that spiritual truths can be intellectually perceived.

1. We are in error to believe that Bible study can remove the veil that keeps us from spiritual perception."

2. If we believe we can know God with our mind and intellect, our Christian life will be very much like our natural life.

❖ You don't go to philosophy and higher learning to learn about God.

Apostle Paul: I Cor. 2:1, 4-5 "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

Consider: If you are reasoned into Christianity, some wise fellow can reason you right out of it. When the Holy Spirit testifies to you that you are a child of God, no one can reason you out of it. Listen to the Apostle Paul:

II Tim. 1:12b for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

3. Some believe Christianity because a great or famous person believes in Christ. We don't need anyone else to validate Jesus Christ.

❖ The Holy Spirit declares Him to be God's Eternal Son.

Tozer: "Until our study has the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit, an inward enlightenment, we will not have anything because Bible study does not, of itself, lift the veil or penetrate it. The Word of God does not say 'no man knoweth the things of God except the man who studies his Bible.' It does say, 'no man knows the things of God except by the Holy Spirit. Only by the Holy Spirit, can a man know God."

John 3:27 A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

❖ Christianity would not begin in the dark; it began under the glory and splendor of divine light.

❖ The true Christian message subscribes to the doctrine of Pentecost.

➤ "It is the enlightening and purifying power of the Holy Spirit."

➤ "There is no room around the Pentecostal fire for religious chameleons who change color with every passing teaching. Without that Holy Fire, there would never have been the mighty results." [Tozer]

Key Point #3: The fire on the Day of Pentecost appeared in the form of tongues to symbolize God's holy power through the proclamation of His Word, burning into people in a way that purifies them.

Rom. 1:16 - The Gospel is the Power Of God For Salvation to everyone who believes.

Key Truth: Tozer: "It is the Holy Spirit or darkness. The Holy Spirit is God's imperative of life.

If Christ is to be the Christ of God rather than the Christ of intellect, we must enter in beyond the veil until the Holy Spirit fills our heart and we are learning at the feet of Jesus."

Key Point #4 The tongues of fire symbolized the powerful witness of the church to the people.

G. Campbell Morgan: "Our tongues can be set on fire either by heaven or by hell. Combine wind and fire and you have...a blaze"

James 3:5-6 So too the tongue is a small part of the body, yet it has great pretensions. Think how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze. And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence - and is set on fire by hell.

The human tongue is a reflection of what is in our hearts:

Matt. 12:34b-36 for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Consider: "Is it not significant that apart from divine intervention the human tongue is a destructive fire, but once the heart is renewed and the Spirit empowers the tongue, it becomes an instrument of salvation?"

Conclusion: "Tongues of fire seem to symbolize the tongues of the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, which speak of the glory of God and leads to the conversion of thousands.

Wind + Cloven Tongues As of fire = They Were All Filled With The Holy Spirit. Acts 2:4a

Key Point #1: Luke always connects the "filling of the Holy Spirit" with the proclamation of the Gospel in Acts.

Acts 4:8, 10 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 9:17-20 And Ananias went his way and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that you might receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

<sup>18</sup> And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. <sup>19</sup> And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

<sup>20</sup> And Straightway He Preached Christ In The Synagogues, That He Is The Son Of God.

Key Point #2 Those who are 'full of the Holy Spirit' are *always* those who are faithfully fulfilling their anointed task as proclaimers.

Acts 6:3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

Acts 6:5 and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost

Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Consider: "The one who is full of and yielded to the Holy Spirit will see beyond the veil into the heavenlies."

Acts 11:24 For he [Barnabas] was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

Acts 13:51-52 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and came unto Iconium.<sup>52</sup> And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

Consider: Acts 1-13 - >40 references to the Holy Spirit.

The early Church was a Spirit-filled Church and precisely therein lay its power.

Three miraculous signs that marked the coming of the Spirit as a unique event.

3. Acts 2:4b And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance. [1<sup>st</sup> mention]

❖ Miraculously speaking a foreign language they had not previously learned

Key Point #1: "The natural result of being filled with God's Spirit is utterance of the great truths of Christ's Gospel. As surely as light radiates, as surely as any deep emotion demands expression, so certainly will a soul filled with the Spirit be forced to break into speech. If professing Christians have never known the impulse to tell of the Christ whom they have found, their religion must be very shallow and imperfect. If their spirits are full, they will overflow in speech."

Key Point #2: Purpose was to communicate God's Gospel message to Israel.

❖ Acts 2:5 Day of Pentecost there were "Jews out of every nation under heaven."

There was no need for the disciples to learn other languages before they could communicate the Gospel. God overcame the language barrier through the miracle-gift of tongues.

❖ Acts 2:4 When the disciples "began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance," the hearers responded:

❖ Acts 2:7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?

❖ Acts 2:8 How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Consider: We would have expected the apostles to speak either in the Aramaic of the Galileans, or in the common language of the Jews. However, they were able to speak in tongues or languages which the listeners were able to understand in their own language.

Each group of Jews from different areas and dialects heard the Gospel in his own tongue.

Contrast God's Work In Jerusalem With His Work In Babylonia.

- Jerusalem: God brought interpretation and understanding.
- Tower Of Babel: God brought confusion and division.
- Jerusalem: Humanity is waiting and expecting the Lord to send the Promise
- Tower Of Babel: Man is filled with pride and arrogance to challenge God's Lordship
- Jerusalem: The Holy Spirit was the driving force.
- Tower of Babel: The human spirit was the driving force of their actions.

- Jerusalem Pentecost brought redemption, clarity, understanding & purpose
- Tower of Babel Brought God's judgment; scattered mankind

Gen. 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

- ❖ God's judgment brought many, many languages on the earth.
- ❖ The outpouring of God's Holy Spirit in Acts 2 demonstrated that God was reversing the judgment at Babel.
- ❖ God was bringing them back into one community, by a spiritual Temple, the ekklesia under Jesus Christ, under which all nations would finally come to believe in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ What happened at Pentecost was the earnest, or down payment of an event in the future when God gathers all nations of the world and brings them back to the true Jerusalem, the ekklesia, to the Temple that God has built, not man.

### *2nd Mention Of Speaking In Tongues:*

Acts 10:44-46 While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>46</sup> For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

- The occasion was to communicate the Gospel for the purpose of bringing about the conversion of Cornelius and his house.
- This event cannot be totally disassociated from Pentecost because Peter, when relating this experience said...

Acts 11:15-17 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. <sup>17</sup> Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

- At the house of Cornelius tongues-speaking was a sign to Jews at a time when the Gospel was being communicated to the Gentiles.

### *3rd Mention Of Speaking In Tongues:*

Acts 19:2- 6 He said unto them [Disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus], Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

<sup>4</sup> Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

## The Holy Spirit's Role In My Life

### A. Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- Joins the believer to the Body of Christ
- Places the believer in Christ's body positionally

### B. To be Filled With The Spirit is to be Spirit-controlled

In the Greek, there are 2 different words for the process of filling.

1. The word for filled is pleroo which conveys the idea of growth to maturity or being molded by the Word of God. It is in the present tense and indicates a continual experience or process

Eph. 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled [pleroo] with the Spirit;

Consider: A drunk driver could be charged with "driving under the influence."

- If the Holy Spirit is in me, there should be evidence of "living under the influence."

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> time the NT mentions this parallel.

Luke 1:15 For he [John the Baptist] shall be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Acts 2:13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Peter said, they are not drunk. This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel

Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh:

Key Truth: When I am living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, I am controlled and empowered by Jesus Christ. He has full access and influence in every corner and quadrant of my life. Being Spirit-filled is being Christ centered. It has an exuberance that could almost be compared with being under the influence of alcohol.

Rene Pache: "As we live in yielded obedience and faith, we're filled with The Holy Spirit, living under His influence."

Compare Col. 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly [plousios] in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Eph. 5:18-20 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled [pleroo] with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; <sup>20</sup> Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Note: The evidence of being filled and the word of Christ dwelling in you richly is the same: Praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Evidence of being filled:

- ❖ Joyful Heart      Thankful Heart      Submissive Heart

Truth: Christlikeness is the manifestation of being filled with the Spirit.

On the other hand, Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,...

- ❖ Filled = pimplemi = indicates a single event or happening
- ❖ Context: It implies an empowering for a work of service
- ❖ Since the Spirit indwells us, we can be empowered by the Holy Spirit in our respective ministries.

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit does 2 major things for us: He empowers us & He matures us.

Tozer: "The true spirit-filled Christian is a perpetual miracle."

Excerpt from a sermon given to 50,000 college students

Two elderly women had given their "retirement" years to go to Cameroon for the sake of the Gospel. They were killed when their brakes gave out and their car plunged over a cliff.

"Was that a tragedy? No, that wasn't a tragedy."

Here is a tragedy: An article from a *Reader's Digest*: Many Americans are retiring early so they can pursue their own pleasure and entertainment. One couple bought a yacht and spent their time sailing off the coast of Florida, collecting seashells. "That is a tragedy!"

Can you imagine this couple standing before God at the judgment and saying, "Here's our seashell collection, Lord?"

God's purpose at Pentecost when He sent His Holy Spirit was to equip His Church with the mighty power of the Holy Spirit so we would be His witnesses to All the nations, resulting in His eternal glory.

1. Is my focus on God's glory in all things?
2. Is my passion that the nations would glorify God through the Gospel?  
If my heart is not on world missions, it is not in tune with God's heart.
3. Is my daily life consciously dependent on the Holy Spirit?  
Would I have missed Him if He had withdrawn from me this past week?
4. Is my daily desire to bear witness of Christ to those who are lost and perishing?

Consider: The power of the Holy Spirit isn't given just to make me happy. He is given to me to make me holy so that my life and my words bring glory to God as I bear witness to His saving grace.