

The Rest of the Story

Studies in the Book of Acts

“We will move the world not by criticism of it, nor conformity to it – but by combustion within it of lives ignited by the Spirit of God”

Vance Havner

Text
Acts 2:1-13

Topic
The Church is ‘born’ as Jesus sends the promised Baptism with the Holy Spirit upon the one-hundred twenty disciples

Title
Birth, Wind & Fire

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?

Acts 2:8 And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

Acts 2:9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Acts 2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 Cretans and Arabs - we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Acts 2:12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Acts 2:13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

Introduction

The headline read, *Wind-whipped fire erupts in Malibu*. It described the wildfire two weeks ago fanned by Santa Ana winds that destroyed four seaside mansions and damaged two others. Because of the wind it spread quickly, but was contained by firefighters after about two hours.

Two-thousand years ago a wind-whipped fire erupted in Jerusalem. It spread from one-hundred twenty believers into a large crowd that had gathered because of it. It then spread through the crowd, affecting three-thousand of them. It continued to spread throughout the events of *The Book of Acts*. It continues to spread today. **It cannot be contained.**

It was what Jesus called the **promise of the Father** and the **baptism with the Holy Spirit** (Acts 1:4&5). It was and is the **power to be witnesses** of Jesus throughout the whole earth (Acts 1:8).

We want to take a fresh look at this baptism with the Holy Spirit and with the Baptizer. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 You Receive The Promised Baptism, and #2 You Reveal The Precious Baptizer.

#1 You Receive The Promised Baptism (v1-4)

A great deal of confusion and contention surrounds the subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It may be an oversimplification, but Christians generally choose one of two camps when discussing it:

1. There are those conservative folks who say the baptism with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was a unique event never to be repeated. Afterwards, it simply means that when you receive Jesus as your Savior and are born-again, you are automatically 'baptized' by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

2. Choosing the other camp are those charismatic folks who say the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a definite, further, experience with the Holy Spirit that you must strive to initially receive. You know you've received it, they say, when you start speaking in tongues.

Which is it? ***It is neither!*** There *is* a baptism with the Holy Spirit for every Christian to experience; but you *never* strive to receive it, and speaking in tongues is not the evidence of it.

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Pentecost means *fifty*. **The Day of Pentecost** was fifty days after the Jewish Passover. It was in June, in the early spring of the Jewish year. It was a celebration of the winter harvest in which the firstfruits of your crops were brought before the Lord. Their offering signified you trusted the Lord for a further, greater harvest.

It was the perfect birth-day for the Church! The one-hundred twenty believers were the firstfruits of a much greater harvest – all those who would be saved between the ascension of Jesus into Heaven and the Rapture of the Church.

The one-hundred twenty believers **were all with one accord**. They were in total unity and agreement about their assignment. They were to wait in Jerusalem for **the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Spirit**. They did not know what it was; only that it would empower them to **be witnesses** throughout the entire world.

They were in **one place** means they were all present – every one of them.

The promised baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs in verses two and three:

Acts 2:2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Acts 2:3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them.

House can refer to either the upper room of the house; or to the house of God, the Temple. (Luke, in his Gospel, mentions they split time between both locations). They were **sitting**, which was not the usual posture for prayer among the Jews. They usually stood or knelt to pray. They may have been praying, but we can't say for sure. I only mention it because so often folks are taught that you must fervently pray for the baptism with the Holy Spirit; that He only comes upon you after tarrying long in earnest prayer. That wasn't and still isn't the case.

Suddenly means they weren't really expecting the **sound**. It sounded like a rushing mighty wind. There was no wind; only the sound of it. All of a sudden, without any build-up, they were in the midst of a windless spiritual hurricane!

Then there was the sight of **fire**. The description seems to indicate that **fire** appeared over them, which **divided** and spread until a single flame-tongue of fire was over each one of them. It was in the form of a **tongue** perhaps because it would be through their Spirit-empowered speech that the Gospel would be spread.

The **wind** preceded the **fire**. The Church Age is an age of hearing. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God.

The **sound** of the **wind** and the sight of the **fire** were a one-time phenomena at the birth of the Church. They are not repeated. They were given as symbols to teach us what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is for.

Wind is a divinely chosen symbol of God the Holy Spirit. He comes from Heaven; He's in the world; He moves at will.

There are many things **fire** symbolizes in Scripture. In this case, let's not miss the obvious. **Wind** affects **fire**. The **wind** spread the **fire** until it **sat upon** each of the one-hundred twenty believers in equal measure.

The Holy Spirit was sent from Heaven upon the disciples. He spread a **fire** over each of them. Baptized by Him, as these men and women

spread throughout the world preaching the Gospel, that initial **fire** would also spread. *That is what wind-whipped fire always does!*

Jesus said they would receive **the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Spirit**, in order to **be witnesses** who spread the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. So we can say that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is the **wind**-whipping power that comes upon us as in order to spread the Gospel like a **fire**.

What happened next was *not* the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They are said to be **filled with the Holy Spirit**.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We're going to talk about the **tongues** in a moment. First I want to emphasize what I just said: Being **filled with the Holy Spirit** is something different than the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

These disciples were baptized with the Spirit only once, in verses two and three on the Day of Pentecost. They were also filled with the Spirit that day. They would *never* be baptized with the Holy Spirit again; but they would go on being filled with the Holy Spirit again and again:

1. In Acts 4:31, they were filled again; we're told that the room shook.
2. Paul the apostle is described as being filled with the Spirit on at least two separate occasions in *Acts* (Acts 9:17; 13:9). Later, in Ephesians 5:18, Paul would command all believers to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit as a repeatable experience.

Jesus said you would **receive** the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It's an unconditional promise. Paul commands you to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit. If it can be commanded, it must be conditional. It is thus a different experience, or relationship, with the Holy Spirit than the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Here is what I believe is being taught in Scripture. There is a one-time baptism with the Holy Spirit that is available to every believer.

All believers are also commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to go on being filled, as they yield to His influence and cooperate with His work in their lives.

You are baptized with the Holy Spirit when, sometime in your Christian walk, you realize and then receive, by faith, that God the Holy Spirit has empowered you to **be witnesses.**

Let me give you a biblical example. In Acts chapter 19, the apostle Paul will encounter a group of believers who had been disciples of John the Baptist. John had taught them that Jesus would come and baptize with the Holy Spirit. Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They said, “No,” because they hadn’t heard that the Holy Spirit was given. Paul explained that the Holy Spirit had been given – which seems to be a reference to the baptism with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Paul baptized them in water; then the Holy Spirit came upon them and they were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

The disciples of John were believers. Before they were baptized in water, they must have been born-again. But even after being water-baptized, they had not received **the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Spirit**. They received it by faith. The Holy Spirit is said to come upon them. They were also filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was with them. He came in them; then He came upon them; then He filled them.

It’s not just splitting hairs. For one thing, it is what *The Book of Acts* seems to be teaching in chapters two and nineteen. For another, it keeps you from making the errors that most people make in their walk with the Lord when it comes to the power to **be witnesses**:

1. The conservative teaching that there is no individual baptism with the Holy Spirit for you to realize leads many into a life of self-dependence, almost legalism. It leads Churches into programs, rather than to depend upon God’s power.
2. The charismatic teaching that correlates the baptism with the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues leads you to believe that it is something that must be *earned* or *learned*. If you don’t receive it, you must not be holy or sincere enough to have

earned it. But that's OK, because you can learn how to speak in tongues (they say) and then claim you've received the promise of the Holy Spirit.

So, yes, it does make a difference what you've been taught, and what you believe:

1. If you have been taught that there is no experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit to receive... ***Then you are not going to receive it!***
2. If you have been taught that the baptism with the Spirit always involves speaking with tongues, ***then you are not going to receive it*** – because that is not what it is for.

At this point in my life, I have come to think of the baptism with the Spirit as this one-time realization, light going on in my head understanding, that the power to **be witnesses** to Jesus is a promise to realize and receive one-time by faith. This matches the experiences believers had in the Bible. And it matches many testimonies I've heard from believers who, after they had been saved, came into an understanding of the Holy Spirit's empowering them to **be witnesses**.

I go on being filled with the Holy Spirit on a daily, moment-by-moment basis, as I cooperate with His work in my life.

When we started our studies in *Acts*, I said it was all about Jesus. It is. **The baptism with the Holy Spirit points to the Baptizer.**

#2 You Reveal The Precious Baptizer (v5-13)

I said we'd get back to tongues. Let's do so now:

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

Acts 2:8 And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?

Acts 2:9 Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Acts 2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

Acts 2:11 Cretans and Arabs - we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

Every male Jew within twenty miles of Jerusalem was required to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost. Many others made the annual pilgrimage. Estimates range from one-hundred thousand to nearly one-million Jews being in the city.

The crowd was diverse, made up of Jews whose homes were in all the regions listed. There are two very, very important points to make about what is actually said in these verses.

First, the **tongues** spoken by the one-hundred and twenty were **known foreign languages**. If this were to happen today, they would be speaking English and Spanish and French and German and Portuguese and Dutch and (especially) Italian. They were *not* ecstatic utterances; they were *not* a private prayer language.

This is important because I suggest to you that what happened here in *Acts*, on the Day of Pentecost, is **different entirely** from what is later described in the New Testament as the *gift* of tongues. The gift of tongues is described as an unknown prayer language that requires a supernatural interpretation to understand. When you speak with the gift of tongues, Paul says in First Corinthians fourteen, **no one understands you because you are speaking mysteries**.

They were baptized with the Holy Spirit to give them the power to **be witnesses**. They were filled with the Holy Spirit to give them the ability they needed *right then* to witness – which, in their case, was a miraculous gift of speaking in known foreign languages they had never learned.

The second thing to point out is a little more subtle. All of the Jews in this multitude spoke the common languages of the day – Aramaic and Hebrew; possibly common Greek. It was therefore not

necessary for them to hear God being praised in their own native languages.

Why the miracle? Imagine hearing God being praised by Galilean Jews, in Jerusalem, in your own native tongue. There is an intimacy to it. God was revealing Himself to them in a very personal way. When you are in a group, and you can start talking to one or several people in a native language, it sets you apart; it connects you together; it is something precious. This was God's method to break-open their hearts in order to hear the words Peter would shortly speak. Three thousand in that crowd would be saved that day.

The baptism with the Spirit, and the subsequent filling of the Holy Spirit, was all about revealing Jesus. He said that the disciples would **be witnesses**; and in that moment, they all were, as they were speaking about the **wonderful works of God** in the native tongues of all those in the crowd. I can think of no more fantastic way for Jesus to say to those unbelieving Jews, "I have risen; I am Lord; I know you; I am revealing Myself personally to you." To use a modern expression, it's Jesus saying, "I'm speaking your language!"

Acts 2:12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Acts 2:13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

Why the comparison to drunkenness? **Because there was a sense of great joy!** Whenever you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you exude the joy of the Lord.

There were *seekers*, and there were *scoffers*. It is always that way when Jesus is revealed through His followers. Peter's sermon would give both seekers and scoffers the opportunity to become *saints*.

There is only a baptism with the Holy Spirit because there is a Baptizer with the Holy Spirit. We too often talk about the subject as if Jesus were not the most important part of it. It is to reveal Him, to **be witnesses**, that the baptism was and still is given and received.

We haven't resolved every question about this subject. But to the extent we have put our focus back on the Baptizer, and not just the baptism, we have accomplished something important.

Applying the Word...

Have you been taught, or do you believe, that there is no such one-time experience as the baptism with the Holy Spirit? I say you are in danger of self-dependence, and of promoting programs instead of Jesus.

Have you been taught, or do you believe, that the evidence you have been baptized with the Holy Spirit is the gift of tongues? That is **not** what the Bible teaches. I say you are putting the emphasis on self rather than the Savior.

All of us need, at some point in our Christian walk, to realize that **the promise of the Father, the baptism with the Holy Spirit**, has come and is a gift to be received by faith. The light needs to go on. ***It only needs to go on once!***

Then you are commanded to go on being filled with the Holy Spirit. You are commanded to cooperate with the indwelling Holy Spirit Who is always available to you. The way to cooperate with Him is to fill yourself with God's Word so that He can use it to lead and guide you.

- being changed to bring change -
The baptism is to be realized; the filling is to be repeated.

