

## The Promise of the Spirit

Acts 1 v 1-5 ( Jn 14 v 15-18, 25,26; 15 v 26, 27)

**Intro.** When I look at this passage in Acts 1: 1-5, the words of Jesus stand out to me, and in particular: WAIT BAPTISED HOLY SPIRIT

And I ask:

What did *baptism* mean to these Jewish disciples?

What did they know of the *Holy Spirit*?

Why did Jesus command them to *wait* for the promise of the Father?

But let's start by quickly looking at some of the other key words:

Verse 1 *all* Luke was careful to record *all* Jesus taught and did. Let's be careful to observe *all* His teachings, not just the ones we find comfortable.

Verse 2 *through the Holy Spirit* Jesus only did what the Father showed Him. He worked and taught through the Holy Spirit. The Godhead in operation. [Lk.4: 17-10; Isa.61:1]

Verse 3 *alive* Jesus gave them many convincing proofs that He was *alive*. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the bedrock of our faith. Do we take it for granted? Do we speak of it enough? Do we preach the cross, but forget the resurrection except at Easter? How might we proclaim this amazing event and its implications to our post-modern, materialistic society, which, it sometimes seems, will believe in anything, but the Truth? A challenge for us to discuss perhaps in our Small Groups and ask God how we can get this over to people we know.

### 1. What did baptism mean to those Jewish disciples of Jesus?

They were familiar with baptism, i.e. total immersion in water, as a sign of a radical change of heart and life.

Jesus reminds them in v5 of how John baptised with water *for repentance* and how at that time John had prophesied that One was coming Who was so much greater than he that he wasn't even worthy to do up that One's shoes.

This One, who was of course Jesus, would *baptise*, i.e. immerse, with the *Holy Spirit* and with *fire*. That sounds pretty life-changing, doesn't it?

### 2. What did the disciples know of the Holy Spirit?

From the Scriptures (our Old Testament) they knew that He is creative, good, sent by God to man. That He instructed, guided, protected, gathered.

That He spoke to and through the prophets.

That he 'came upon', 'rested on' and was sometimes 'in' individuals i.e. prophets and some national leaders.

They knew Joel's prophecy that there would come an era when the Holy Spirit was poured out on all sorts of people, not just Jewish prophets and leaders.

They knew the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, came upon Jesus at His baptism.

From Jesus' teaching they knew that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to remind them of Jesus' words and instruct them and lead them into all truth.

That He gives the spiritual new birth, which is the start of eternal life.

That He cannot be understood by those who haven't accepted Jesus.

That He was *with* them and would be *in* them.

That He testifies of Jesus and brings glory to Him.

All this they knew, but what experience did they have of Him?

- I. As well as teaching about the Kingdom of God, Jesus demonstrated it by reversing the some of the effects of the curse of Genesis 3. He gave health to the sick, forgave sinners and gave life to the dead; He demonstrated authority over the natural world and evicted demons.

When Jesus sent out the 12 and then the larger group of disciples [Luke 9 and 10], He gave *them* power and authority to cast out demons, to heal the sick and tell people that the Kingdom of God was near them. In other words, they were to do what Jesus was doing – in the same power and authority as Jesus. Whose power and authority? The Holy Spirit's [Lk.4: 1, 14, 18, 19, 20]

- II. On the evening of the day of His resurrection, Jesus said to His gathered disciples: 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' Then He breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' [John 20v 21- 23]

Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit into them. In the original Kingdom of God – the Garden of Eden – God breathed life into Adam. Now, on His Resurrection Day, Jesus breathes His Spirit into His disciples and gives them a new commission.

I don't want to get into controversial ground here about who can forgive sins, but what I want us to note is that in this new commission, He adds the forgiveness of sins.

*Before* Jesus died and rose again, *He* forgave sins, but didn't tell the disciples to; *now*, after those cosmically mind-blowing events, forgiveness is available to all who repent, because Jesus has died for our sins. He has paid the price. Now the disciples can preach that message and bring people into forgiveness.

- III. There is now to be a third experience of the Holy Spirit for the disciples.  
Before Jesus' death and resurrection, they were given power and authority to do the Kingdom works of Jesus and speak of the Kingdom.  
After His resurrection, He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit to vitalise them to take the good news of the Kingdom and the forgiveness of sins.  
After His return to heaven, they will receive the power, gifts and enabling of the Holy Spirit in a total immersion experience that will radically change their lives.

### **3. Why did Jesus command them to *wait* for the promise of the Father? Why not give it right away?**

Of course I don't really know why, except that the Day of Pentecost was significant, being the celebration of First Fruits. However, there were some things that they, and we, could learn through that time of waiting.

I. They needed to know that they couldn't go out into the entire world with the Good News, heal the sick, cast out demons and make disciples *by their own ability*. Nor can we. It's 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit', says the Lord.

II. They needed to know that *God is in charge*, not them. It was *they* who had to wait for *His* timing. Sometimes, to hear some people talk, you would think that the Holy Spirit was at our beck and call. That He fits in with our plans and turns up at our pleasure. **No**, we do not control, command or manipulate the Holy Spirit of God; we need to submit to His control, His direction, His enabling, His timing.

If we harbour and nurture habitual ungodly thought-patterns or behaviour, we grieve Him [Eph.4 v 29 – 32]. He is *Holy* Spirit. We mustn't let our words or actions dishonour Him.

III. They needed to know that they must make a space in their lives for the Holy Spirit to come. Jesus took time out to be alone with His Father, to hear what He wanted. Elijah had to wait to hear the voice of God – so quiet it was barely audible.

It is never easy to set time aside to come into God's presence. The world, the flesh and the Devil all work against it. Satan, in particular, doesn't want us spending time waiting on God.

There are times when circumstances are such that we only have time to fire off 'arrow prayers'. But how often do we just rush into God's presence, deliver our requests, demands or complaints and dash off again?

It is for *our* benefit that God calls us to wait on Him, to be *still* in His presence.

### ***How did the disciples wait?***

They were together; they were united; they prayed.

Here, at St Andrews, we are very aware that we need a radical move of the Holy Spirit, if we are to fulfil our calling in this city. Every Sunday morning, promptly at 10 a.m., we have set aside 15 minutes to wait on the Lord – together, united, we pray. Although this is a short time, it is costly for those who have things to set up before the service, as they come even earlier than before, but it is a time we give all our attention to the Lord. If you don't already come along to pray then, may I encourage you to do so; to leave home just fifteen minutes earlier and dedicate that 10 - 10:15 slot to waiting on the Lord.

The disciples waited *together* and were baptised in the Holy Spirit *together*. Lord, let Your glory fall!

But it was also an individual experience for each of them.

If you have a need and a desire for the Lord to baptise you in the Holy Spirit, or for a fresh inundation, to radically change your life or to rekindle the embers of your faith, there will be an opportunity to come for prayer after Holy Communion.

Finally, it is true that the Holy Spirit is our Guide, Strengtheners, and Comforter, but today, to misquote J.F.K:

Ask not what the Holy Spirit can do for you, but how much of you you are prepared to surrender to Him.