



## ACTS 2

# THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT

New Testament scholar Darrell Bock tells his students that Luke 3:16 should be as well known to us as John 3:16. Luke 3:16 says, “John answered them all, ‘I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’” Why would Dr. Bock compare Jesus bringing the Holy Spirit to Jesus bringing eternal life? This question takes us to the heart of the salvation story and the significance of Pentecost in Acts 2.

The Hebrew prophets promised that the Spirit of God would accomplish this salvation. God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel in describing Israel's return from exile, saying, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:26-28). Notice that the presence of God's Spirit will enable the people to finally obey God and dwell with Him. And again in Ezekiel 37:14a, “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live...”

The prophet Joel wrote, “And 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” (Joel 2:28-29). It is from this passage that Peter quotes to explain what was happening at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21). The event was promised by the Old Testament prophets, by John the Baptist, and finally by Jesus Himself

in Luke 24:49, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Theologian J. I. Packer said that the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives centers on the word “presence.” The Holy Spirit makes God present with each of us. He fulfills Jesus’ promise to “be with us always, to the very end of the age.” In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote that the Spirit is “...a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory” (1:14). The Holy Spirit brings a glimpse today of what our eternity with God will be like.

Life with God is not just a future reality. For those with faith in Christ, life with God begins now. A life of encouragement, transformation, empowerment for ministry, new understanding, and love is available to believers today because the Holy Spirit is among us. This is the hope Israel clung to. The coming of the Spirit means that God dwells among His people as He will one day dwell in the New Jerusalem.

### **The Birth of the Church**

The second chapter of Acts introduces us to the birth of the church. This birth is marked by four events. First, those who gathered were filled with the promised Holy Spirit. Second, the Holy Spirit miraculously enabled some to speak in “other tongues” (languages). As a result, this diverse group of believers, gathered from the Graeco Roman world, understood what was spoken in their own language. Third, Peter addressed the crowd providing clarity and context to the experience and issued a call for repentance. Fourth was the amazing response of 3,000 people being added to their number that day.

What the Old Testament prophets longed for—the indwelling of God’s Spirit—was realized with the believers gathered at Pentecost. Luke, a careful historian, records this moment not only as the continuation of God’s redemptive plan but also as the inauguration of a new reality: the Church empowered by the Spirit. This same Holy Spirit continues His work in believers today—convicting, guiding, equipping, and assuring us of the hope we have in Jesus. Just as the early church was born through the power of the Holy Spirit, so too are we invited to live Spirit-empowered lives that point others to Christ and to participate in the unfolding story of God’s redemption.

