

Holy Spirit: no one "gets" Jesus but by Him

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

Jesus said unto him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6)

No one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

In Acts chapter 2, a pivotal event known as "Pentecost" is described. (Pentecost means the "Fiftieth Day" after Passover.)

There were forty days between Jesus' crucifixion (at Passover) and His ascension into heaven (1:3). Then there were ten days between the ascension and Pentecost, during which time the apostles were directed by Jesus to wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit--"the Promise of My Father." (See Acts 1:4, 8; Luke 24:49).

"The Promise of My Father."

From the earliest chapters of the Bible, a Savior is promised. He is the Seed of the Woman, promised to Eve. He is the Son through whom all the earth will be blessed, as promised to Abraham. He is the direct descendant of David, who will rule forever from David's throne. The Promised Son is the great theme, the grand scheme of the Old Testament.

But when was the Spirit promised to us? Over the next few days, Stand in the Rain will take a whirlwind tour through scripture in search of the "Promise of My Father." We invite you to come along...

The Trinity is a tricky concept. People get it mixed up all the time. I once said, in a Bible class, that the Trinity is "three Gods in one person." Rest assured that my students nearly jumped out of their seats as they straightened out my misstatement:

"No! You mean 'one God in three persons!' " Which is exactly what I meant, despite the way it came out!

Well, the Holy Spirit makes sure that what God thinks is what comes out! As the Author of the Bible, He has conveyed God's counsel to us; *he takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us* (John 16:14-15). He makes the Word of God (the Bible) and the Word made flesh (Jesus) real to us. He makes them come alive.

The Three are so inextricably bound together that they are One. To explain this, we grope for metaphors and analogies, which always fall short:

To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare to Him? (Isaiah 40:18)

But when metaphor and analogy are all we've got, that's what we must use. So, here goes:

I sometimes think of the Trinity as the indispensable elements of a smile.

A mind, unseen, issues the directive to smile. This can be equated with God the Father, who remains unseen to this day:

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
(John 1:18)

What is seen is the incarnation of the eternal Son. He is the *express image* of God (Hebrews 1:3). He responds to his Father's direction. He smiles (or cries, or consoles, or rebukes, etc.) according to God's will.

(Though Jesus responds to God's directives, there is no "rank" in the Trinity. There is a "chain of command," but each Person's role is as indispensable as the others'. Better, then, to think of the Trinity as a Harmony, not a hierarchy. It must also be understood that *God's ways are not our ways* (Isaiah 55:8). In the Kingdom of heaven, our notions of "greater" and "lesser" are turned upside down: the last shall be first, the greatest is the one who serves, etc.)

As Jesus puts God's will into action, it is the Holy Spirit who conveys Jesus to us. He emanates from Jesus, getting him **through to us**. The Nicene Creed states that the Holy Spirit "*proceeds* from the Father and the Son."

Unless the Son obeys, God's smile is unseen. Unless the Spirit illuminates it, God's smile is uncomprehended.

All right, enough of my illustration. Let's find a picture of Trinity in the Bible. It won't take long to locate, because it's the first thing we ever glimpse in scripture:

(verse 1) *In the beginning, **God**...*

(verse 2) *And **the Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters...*

(verse 3) *And God said, "Let there be **Light**..."*

The Light of the World is, of course, Jesus. But does this mean Jesus was created in verse three by the Father?

No way! Jesus is the eternal Son, as eternal as the Father. God hadn't lived in darkness all this time! When God says, "Let there be Light," it's a directive to the Spirit to proceed--to shine, to illuminate, to reveal, to unveil Jesus!

(verse 4) *And there was light.* The Spirit's work is effective. The Light was made apparent--real--to us. So in the Bible's first three verses we have "The Revelation (the unveiling) of Jesus Christ." (And you thought you'd have to wait until the end.)

The Light is always shining, but he is uncomprehended...

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. (John 1:5)

Unless he is illuminated...

In your light we see light. (Psalm 36:9)

We will return tomorrow to chase the Holy Spirit, "the Promise of My Father," all the way through scripture.

But until then, remember two scriptures which must go hand in hand:

1. *Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one gets to the Father but by Him.* (John 14:6)
2. *No one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.* (1 Corinthians 12:3)

The Holy Spirit reveals the Way (1 Cor. 2:10-13; Eph. 1:16-17; Isaiah 40:13-14). **No one gets to the Father but by Jesus, and no one "gets" Jesus but by the Holy Spirit.**

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## **The Promise of My Father**

*"And behold, I am sending the Promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."* (Luke 24:49)

*When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...* (Acts 2:1-4)

We are well aware of the hundreds of Old Testament promises of a Savior, the "Messiah." (Translated as "Christ" in the New Testament, "Messiah" means "Anointed.")

But we may not be aware of the Old Testament promises concerning the "Anoint-ment!"

Jesus repeatedly reminded the disciples to wait until the Holy Spirit--"the Promise of My Father"--would arrive to anoint them with *power from on high*, the very same power that had filled and guided Jesus.

Over the next couple days, we'll range from one end of the Bible to the other as we watch this promise unfold.

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The Holy Spirit is involved in creation--

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* (Genesis 1:1-2)

(The entire Trinity was involved; God the Father created through Jesus, by the Spirit.)

**When the Spirit comes, he brings newness.** Out of the chaos, he brings the cosmos. Out of disorder, he brings order; out of confusion, harmony; out of deformity, beauty; out of the old, the new.

**The Spirit brings life:**

*Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)*

The Hebrew word for "Spirit" in Genesis 1:2 is *ruach*; the word means both "breath" and "spirit." Just as God breathed physical life into the human being, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22)

**In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came upon particular people at particular times for particular tasks.** An example is when the Spirit came upon Bezalel:

*The LORD said to Moses, "See, I have called by name Bezalel and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. (Exodus 31:1-5)*

The Spirit came upon **Gideon** for leadership, transforming weakness into strength. (Judges 6:14-15, 34)

The Spirit of the LORD came upon **Samson**, conferring power (Judges 15:14). So often we find that what is described in the Old Testament in a physical way is true in the New Testament in a spiritual way. Samson, who had been bound, was able to break free. Just so, many of us find ourselves bound by habits, addictions, patterns of thought. When the Spirit of God comes upon us, he enables us to break free.

The Spirit came upon **Isaiah**, bestowing prophecy. See Isaiah 61:1-3:

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...*

The experience of the Spirit is not just a nice warm feeling in our hearts. **The Spirit is the Difference Maker; he transforms** individuals and the society at large.

Whenever the Spirit enters the picture, things happen. As the Old Testament proceeds, there is a rising expectation that God is going to do things even more transformational. **This expectation is referred to as "The Promise of the Father."**

*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jeremiah 31:33-34)*

Under the old covenant, the people of God were given the law, written on tablets of stone. But they found they could not keep the law. Thus the law, instead of becoming a blessing, became their failure instead. So God promised something new: he would write the law inside them--so that they want to keep it, so that their obedience comes from the heart.

**By the Spirit, we will keep the rules not because we have to but because we love to!--**

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)*

**To whom does the Promise of the Father apply? It's for everyone!--**

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. (Joel 2:28-29)*

The people waited for the Promise. They waited for hundreds of years. And then, with the birth of Jesus, it was as if a trumpet sounds and **everybody connected with his birth was filled with the Holy Spirit...**

**John the Baptist:** *He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from birth. (Luke 1:15)*

**Mary:** *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)*

**Elizabeth** (mother of John the Baptist):

*And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:41)*

**Zechariah** (father of John the Baptist):

*His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. (Luke 1:67)*

**Simeon:** *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. (Luke 2:25-26)*

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Though many are filled, it is still particular people at particular times. Then John the Baptist pronounces the link between the Promise and Jesus:

*John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Luke 3:16)*

"Baptize" means to immerse, fill drench, overwhelm. Jesus is the Spirit baptizer.

**Jesus himself was filled--completely, without measure--with the Holy Spirit:**

*The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove. (Luke 3:22; see John 3:34)*

*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. (Luke 4:1)*

*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee. (Luke 4:14)*

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1)*

**Jesus predicts the coming of the Spirit:**

*On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*

*Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive. (John 7:37-39)*

(This implies that as our spiritual thirst is satisfied, we become a source of blessing which overflows to others.)

Some of Jesus' last words to his disciples were these:

*"And behold, I am sending the Promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)*

And then Jesus ascended. But still the promise had not been fulfilled. And they waited. On another occasion, he reiterated these directions:

*And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)*

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*

With rising anticipation, they waited. Then, in Acts 2, they found out what they were waiting for!--

*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. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... (Acts 2:2-4)*

**All of them--not just particular people at particular times for particular tasks--were filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Something amazing--supernatural--was happening. Bystanders could not explain what they were seeing, so Peter got up and gave the true explanation:

*This is what was promised through the prophet Joel: 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.' (Acts 2:16-17, quoting Joel 2:28-32)*

Then he told them the Promise was available to all:

*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.**" (Acts 2:37-39)*

This marked a radical departure from the past. The Holy Spirit was no longer given particularly, but universally--to everyone who has turned in faith to Jesus.

The brooding Spirit of Genesis, the dove who had descended upon Jesus, had found a place to "light."

## men who had seen a miracle

*And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were **teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead...***

*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, **let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for **there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**"*** (Acts 4:1-2, 8-12)

If the evidence is examined objectively--without bias or prejudice--it is irrational not to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is, in many ways, the most well attested fact of history.

A person who examines the evidence, and does not believe, either

1. does not want to believe; or
2. has been hopelessly blinded by cultural forces that have actively suppressed the truth, rendering him unable to see straight. (See Romans 1:18.)

The proofs of the resurrection are *infallible* (Acts 1:3). It was attested to beforehand by prophecy. It was attested to afterwards by eyewitness account. Two thousand years of subsequent history have been unable to dissuade billions of believers, many of whom were/are the brightest minds of their respective centuries.

### **But the best proof that Jesus is alive is the transformation of the disciples.**

When Jesus first appeared after his death, the disciples went through a phase of confusion, rife with rumor and speculation. Some thought, at first, that they'd seen a ghost! Thomas, who had been absent when Jesus first appeared to the others, stayed skeptical until Jesus appeared again and summoned Thomas to touch him. But Thomas shouldn't be singled out. None of them believed in Jesus' resurrection until they saw him for themselves.

But in 40 days Jesus made enough undeniable appearances to convince each of the disciples that he had overthrown death. Seeing was believing for all the disciples (but Jesus commended those who believed without such firsthand evidence.)

**Their acts** provide infallible proof that they'd seen infallible proof of Jesus' resurrection. (That's what the book of Acts is all about!) They acted like people who had just witnessed the most astounding event in all history--because they had! And they couldn't wait to tell the world.

Excitement, energy, and expectation replaced their fears and doubts. On the streets, in homes and synagogues, they told any who would listen that what they'd thought was impossible had come true: "Jesus is alive; he's the Messiah we've been waiting for!"

The reality of the resurrection had brought astonishing transformation. Peter, for example, had cowered in the shadows at the trial, denying he even knew Jesus. Could this be the same man, standing before the religious leaders and fearlessly rebuking their complicity in the death of Jesus?

Whereas Jesus had preached the kingdom, sometimes even warning his followers not to mention he was the Messiah, his disciples preached the resurrected King! Resurrection resounds through the pages of Acts.

These transformed men transformed the world. Five thousand believed (4:4). Then many priests believed (6:7), then thousands of Jews (21:20).

Acts is a remarkable drama that unfolds as the faith of unschooled men impels a movement that reshaped history. A revolution was underway, powered by men who had seen a miracle.

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