

## “I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT”

Acts 2:1–21

Key Verse: 2:17

“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...”

Do you ever feel *inspired*? Sometimes, life can seem like just a lot of drudgery, with its many duties, chores and stress. Once in a while we get excited about something, but it soon wears off and life’s cold reality sets in again. In today’s passage we read about an exciting event: the Holy Spirit comes on the first believers. Yes it was great for them, but what’s it got to do with us? Actually, it’s something God wants to do for every believer and every community that believes in Jesus. And it’s not just to help us feel good for a while or get through life’s hardships. God says it’s to enable us to prophesy, see visions and dream dreams. Really? Does God really want that for us? What does it mean? What’s it for? And how can we have it? May God speak to us through his word today.

In chapter 1 the Risen Jesus spoke to his followers for forty days about the kingdom of God. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. He promised they would be his witnesses to the end of the earth. Then he ascended into heaven. They felt helpless, but they obeyed him, stayed in the city and devoted themselves to prayer with one accord. God led them to replace the empty spot left by Judas Iscariot. Now they’re ready for the coming of the Holy Spirit. They have no power in themselves, and the task ahead of them is daunting. But in this first part of chapter 2, we see how God keeps his promise and sends the Holy Spirit. In one sense, this event is normative for all believers, but in another, it’s unique, never to be repeated. Through it, God demonstrates for every time and place who the Holy Spirit is and what he wants to do.

Read verses 1–4. As Jesus said, the Holy Spirit came with power, seen in the “mighty rushing wind.” He comes like “fire,” as John said he would,<sup>1</sup> to purify. And he came as “tongues” to show how he wants us to speak and communicate. Verse 2 says the house was “filled” with the sound. Verse 4a says, “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” John the Baptist had been “filled with the Holy Spirit” even from his mother’s womb; so had his mother Elizabeth and father Zechariah.<sup>2</sup> Jesus had been “full of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Later, Peter is “filled with the Holy Spirit,” as are all the believers.<sup>4</sup> Acts describes Steven, Paul, Barnabas, and Paul’s disciples as

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 3:16.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:15,41,67.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 4:1.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 4:8,31.

“full of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>5</sup> The Bible urges us all to be “filled with the Spirit” (Eph.5:18). It doesn’t say just a little bit; it says “filled”—“full.”

Filled with the Spirit, they “speak in other tongues as the Spirit gives them utterance” (4b). This is not to be confused with the heavenly language that needs an interpreter (1 Cor.12–14); here it means foreign languages. Read verses 5–8. The sound in this house is so loud, it can be heard outside. It catches people’s attention, and they’re intrigued. When they draw near to investigate, they can hear and understand their own languages. It’s crazy! It says they’re bewildered, amazed and astonished. Somehow, they know these people are all Galileans. *They* don’t know how to speak foreign languages. So what’s going on?

Verse 5 told us that during this Feast of Pentecost people from every nation were in Jerusalem. Now, Luke mentions all the different kinds of people there. Read verses 9–11. It’s like “Around the World in 80 Days,” though it’s really around the Mediterranean world, from the east to the north, south and west. Though it’s a variety of languages, they’re all hearing the same thing: “...we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God” (11b). Later we find these mighty works are all about what God has done through his Son Jesus.

What’s the point of this “language miracle” of the Spirit? It’s showing that God wants the whole world to know what he’s done through his Son Jesus. People who study humanity say we’re naturally ethnocentric. It’s hard for us to think beyond our immediate family or ethnicity. But when we receive the Holy Spirit, God helps us begin to have his heart and vision for the people of the whole world. As our Creator he loves all people so dearly. He doesn’t want anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance (2 Pet.3:9). They all matter to God.

The coming of the Spirit is so mighty. It shows God’s heart for the world. But some are still negative. Read verse 13. They’re mocking. When it happens, we shouldn’t be surprised or discouraged. In verses 14–15 God inspires Peter to respond. He hears the mockers and doesn’t let it slide. He calls them out. Through the Spirit, God has changed him. He’s courageous. More than that, he’s got a keen spiritual understanding of what’s going on. Of course Peter is the leading apostle. But he is, in a sense, just a representative of all the believers there. Peter’s change here is showing us how the Holy Spirit can change anyone.

Read verse 16. Before Jesus called him, Peter had been a fisherman, not a Biblical scholar. We’re not sure how well he knew the Bible. But Jesus once told him, “...for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” (Luke 12:12). He also told him, “...I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict” (Luke 21:15). The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to remember the words of the prophet Joel. Joel prophesied after the Babylonian Exile, calling his people to repent. God gave Peter exactly the right Bible passage for that moment. He does the same for us.

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<sup>5</sup> Acts 6:5; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9; 11:22–24; 13:52.

Read verses 17–21. This passage is from Joel 2:28–32. It centers on the coming of “the day of the LORD.” One of the signs of that day is that God promised to pour out his Spirit. This phrase is repeated twice. Not just the prophet Joel, but several Old Testament prophets predicted when God would pour out his Spirit.<sup>6</sup> The prophet John the Baptist also predicted that the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16). Jesus himself predicted it in 1:5. Joel’s prophecy tells us it would happen in Jerusalem.

Peter says it’s “the last days.” These days began not after the Spirit’s coming, but with the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, who both were full of the Spirit, and with the Spirit’s power, proclaimed the coming kingdom. Now, the last days continue as God fills the apostles in Jerusalem with his Spirit and sends them into the world with the message of his kingdom. The last days culminate on the great and magnificent day when Jesus comes again as the Judge. These “last days,” and the coming of the Spirit, are telling us, “Repent!”

God says here, “I will pour out my Spirit.” What does it mean? “My Spirit” is not an inanimate tool, as many people mistakenly think. “My Spirit” refers to the presence of God himself. The Bible calls God “Spirit,” and, “a consuming fire.”<sup>7</sup> Through Jesus, who died and rose again, God the Spirit now comes to change and transform people. When the Spirit comes, we’re born again and can see the kingdom of God (John 3). When the Spirit comes, we understand the depths and thoughts of God, and spiritual things; we become a spiritual person.<sup>8</sup> Peter soon says that it’s the Lord Jesus himself who pours out the Spirit (verse 33).

And in verses 17–18 the prophecy emphasizes “all flesh,” meaning all kinds of people—sons, daughters, young men, old men, even male servants and female servants. In the Old Testament, God poured out his Spirit on special people—those called to lead and serve his people. Moses could only hope that all the Lord’s people would become prophets (Num.11:29). But now, since Jesus died and rose again, God pours out his Spirit on all kinds of people. The Book of Acts shows how the Spirit comes on both men and women, an Ethiopian eunuch, a Roman centurion and his entire household, a team of leaders in Antioch, and several disciples of John in Ephesus. Peter says later the Holy Spirit comes upon all who repent and believe in Jesus (2:38)—any race, gender or social status. God is still doing this today, for anyone who repents and believes the good news of Jesus. God makes each and every Spirit-filled believer a witness of Jesus.

Let’s ask God to rid us of all our human thinking and calculations. Let’s have faith in God to see what God can do through the gospel of Jesus and the mighty work of his Spirit. His promise to pour out his Spirit gives hope to anyone: college students, young parents, children, leaders, even old men and women. God’s promise “I will pour out my Spirit” tells us God wants all of us engaged, inspired, and part of his program. We can’t do it, but the Spirit of God can.

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<sup>6</sup> Isa.32:15; 44:3; Eze.39:29; Zech.12:10.

<sup>7</sup> John 4:24; Deut.4:24; 9:3.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor.2:10–15.

Let's also think about the word "prophesy." Peter repeats it (17,18). Does it mean every believer can predict the future? Not really—only in the sense that we know Jesus is coming again. But "prophesy" has a broader meaning. In the context of Acts, it also means helping people know what is hidden, the deep meaning of the gospel of Jesus, the spiritual realities of who he is and what he's done, and applying it to their lives—to explain what it really means to believe in him, and what it really means to repent. Every Spirit-filled believer can do that.<sup>9</sup>

Verse 19 also says that "wonders and signs" characterize the last days. God did them through Jesus himself (2:22). God also performed signs and wonders during Christ's crucifixion, resurrection and ascension into heaven, and at the coming of the Spirit. In Acts, God does signs and wonders in Christ's name through his apostles, as well as through Stephen, Paul and Barnabas.<sup>10</sup> These signs and wonders help people believe. Through gospel preaching, the Spirit still works signs and wonders of changed lives that bring glory to Jesus.

Finally, let's think about "seeing visions" (17). They're not personal dreams, ideas, or ambition. Visions refers to supernatural revelations. In Acts, Peter, Paul, Ananias and Cornelius all experience visions; sometimes it's even called a "trance."<sup>11</sup> It may sound scary, but a vision is something the Holy Spirit does for us. He helps us see how and where God is leading, and what God wants. Our ultimate vision is to see our Lord Jesus reigning, and the hope of his eternal kingdom. There is no better vision. His vision is to bring people from all tribes and languages and people and nations there, through faith in Jesus (Rev.5:9).

Today, many suffer from a lack of vision. Without vision we see only injustice and darkness. Without vision we cast off restraint (Prov.29:18) and seek only pleasure and personal benefit. Read verse 17 again. Through faith in Jesus, may God pour out his Spirit on us and fill us with his vision for the world.

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<sup>9</sup> cf. John 16:13–14; 1 John 2:27.

<sup>10</sup> 2:43; 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 14:3; 15:12.

<sup>11</sup> 10:10; 11:5; 22:17.