A resource by King's Community Church



Someone once said that the baptism in the Holy Spirit will do for you what the phone booth did for Clark Kent (Superman's alter ego). If that's true - wow! What a promise, but what exactly is it and how can we receive it?

Promised by Jesus

Jesus promised his disciples that they would be "baptised in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). When that happened a few days later (described variously as the "Spirit being poured out" (Acts 10:45), "coming upon them" (Acts 19:6), "filling them" (Acts 9:17) etc) they burst out of hiding onto the streets of Jerusalem boldly telling people about Jesus with supernatural power.

What's more, this good news contained with it the promise of the Holy Spirit for everyone: "Repent and be baptised, 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." Acts 2:38

The powerful presence of God

For the disciples, receiving the Spirit was hugely significant. Jesus called them to follow him and they walked, talked and lived with him for three whole years.

They had heard him teach and preach, seen him do amazing miracles and exercise awesome authority so imagine their dismay when he said he was going away! Quickly Jesus reassures them that he will send another, just like him, to be with them (John 14:16).

In a short while God would be back in the person of the Holy Spirit and the kingdom of God would continue to break out again.

Of course, the Holy Spirit had been involved in their lives and relationship with Jesus all along but with Jesus gone he would come

to, on and in them in a way and to a degree that they had not yet fully experienced.

After being baptised in the Spirit, this third person of the Trinity would come very much into the foreground of their lives and relationship with God. They would essentially be initiated/plunged/soaked into a fuller and deeper experience of the powerful presence and love of God.

We will look at two ways in which this works out in our lives:

The Power of God

In the Old Testament the Spirit came on special people at special times, to enable them do special things (1 Samuel 16:13, 1 Samuel 10:10-11, Numbers 24:2-5, Judges 13:25, Judges 14:6, 2 Kings 2:9-10). When the Spirit came on people like David, Sampson, Gideon, Elijah and others, they won battles, ripped lions apart, prophesied, performed healings and did all sorts of other amazing miracles.

If someone is offering the Holy Spirit to people who knew their Old Testaments, then they had better be aware of the massive expectations they are raising! Could it really be true? Was the Spirit to be poured out on everyone just like it was on these heroes of the faith? Yes! This was the time anticipated by the prophet Joel (Joel 2:29, Acts 2:17-21), when God would pour out his Spirit on all his people.

It turns out that now we are all special people with a special task: to boldly take the gospel where it has not gone before (please excuse the Star Trek analogy). That could be next door or half way round the globe (Acts 1:8).

When the Holy Spirit was poured out on the early disciples it was no anti-climax. Just as in the Old Testament, the people on whom the Spirit came wielded God's word with God's power. In the book of Acts we read that people spoke in human or heavenly languages (tongues) that they did not know (Acts 2:1-4, Acts 10:44-46, Acts 19:1-7). They prophesied, speaking out words that God had inspired them to say (Acts 19:1-7). There was worship, praise (Acts 10:44-46) and lots and lots of miracles (Acts 2:8, Acts 3:6) as the disciples were empowered to tell people the good news about who Jesus was and what he had done (Acts 1:8).

The Love of God

Though the coming of the Spirit upon a person is seen in outward manifestations of power, it starts with an inward experience of intimacy. As we read Paul's letters we discover that the Spirit brings a wonderful confidence in our Heavenly Father's love and provision. Having believed in Jesus we are sealed with the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), who cries with our spirit "Abba Father" (Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15).

It is this very real experience of knowing the love and presence of God in our lives that overflows in tongues, prophecy, worship and witness. These things are an outward overflow of our inward knowledge and delight in God. This inward knowledge and experience of God's love and grace is also very fertile ground for the fruit of the Spirit to grow. As we receive more of God's love, enjoying his patience, kindness and gentleness to us, these character traits are increasingly found in the way we relate to others.

Have I been baptised in the Spirit?

Some believe that we are automatically baptised in the Holy Spirit when we become a Christian, and that this can even happen without our being aware of it. We feel however, that the weight of biblical evidence indicates that this is not necessarily the case.

It is possible, like the disciples in the upper room (Acts 1) and converts in Samaria (Acts 8:15-16), to be a Christian but not have begun to

enjoy the presence and power of God in the way that is promised to us.

It seems that Jesus really wants to 'jump start' his disciples into their new Spirit-filled life through an initial immersing in His Holy Spirit. The Spirit was working in their lives before, and they will experience many more "fillings" in the future (Ephesians 5:18) but it seems God's desire is that we get off to a really good start!

As you read the accounts in Acts you almost have to put your fingers over your ears, it was so noisy! With all the praise, worship and prophecy going on, being filled with the Spirit would have been very noticeable.

While English reserve may sometimes dampen the working of the Spirit (just as a more extrovert character runs the risk of going beyond it), Spirit baptism is usually visible and audible. Think of a cartoon character who swallows a bomb. When it goes off inside them the ground shakes but for some reason they try to hold it in and keep their cool. Invariably, however a small understated puff of smoke escapes from their mouths. If you are filled with the Spirit you simply won't be able to keep it all in!

It can be helpful to look back to an initial experience of being filled with the Spirit, but what is more important, is that you go on being filled (Ephesians 5:18) and enjoying the wonderful dynamic of the Holy Spirit in your life.

How can I be baptised in the Spirit?

Jesus encourages us to ask for the Holy Spirit. In fact the climactic application of Jesus' teaching on asking, seeking and knocking was: "how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13). Now of course God can pour out his Spirit on us even if we don't ask, as seems to have been the case

in Cornelius' household (Acts 10:44), but usually people expected to receive (Acts 1:8) and had hands laid on them (Acts 8:17) to bring that about.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

If you are seeking to be baptised in the Spirit then it's helpful to look carefully at Jesus' words in John 7:37-39. Let's look at them a phrase at a time:

"If anyone..."

It's really important that we know this gift is for us. After promising the Holy Spirit Peter makes sure that the hearers know it really is for them. "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 2:39)

If you have trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Saviour then the promise is for you. You don't have to be good enough or have been a Christian for long enough. It's a free gift.

"...is thirsty..."

Being thirsty for God really helps in receiving. If you are happy with the way things are and think you can get by in your own strength then you are probably not going to be that bothered about asking and seeking God for this. However, if like David your "soul thirsts for [God] in a dry and weary land" (Psalm 63:1) then you can be assured that God will give you the desires of your heart.

"...come to me..."

It's important we come to Jesus to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. We do that through faith, believing that he is who he said he is and will baptise us in his Spirit. A great time to do that is as we fix our eyes on him in worship. Jesus also loves to work through others to bless us so it may be that the Spirit will come on you as someone else lays hands on you to receive (Acts 8:17).

"...and drink"

Although the Spirit can take us wonderfully by surprise (Acts 10:44), Jesus tells us to do something active in receiving him. As we ask for the Spirit we often need to take the handbrake off our tongues or body in some way. Instead of losing control, we will begin to partner and move with the Holy Spirit.

It's often as we step out in faith to speak or act that we experience the Holy Spirit working in and through us. Taking the brakes off can also mean letting go of our scepticism and receiving with faith whatever God is beginning to do in us. Of course we need to hold the plumb-line of scripture up against our experience, but we can also be assured that if we ask God for something good he will not give us something bad (Luke 11:11-13).

Batteries included!

Do you remember how disappointing it is on Christmas day when you unwrap a present only to read those dreaded words 'batteries not included?'The gift looks good, it was kindly given, but it just isn't going to be much fun until it can do all the things it was designed to do. Well, the gospel is a present that comes with 'batteries included' (Acts 2:38).

Jesus told his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit. It wasn't enough that they had known him, that they believed in him, or that they had seen him rise from the dead. If they were to take the gospel out to the ends of the earth they would need to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.

It's the same with us but now we don't have to wait. The disciples told the crowd that what had just been given to them could be theirs as well. The Holy Spirit is available to all God's people everywhere. We repent, we get forgiven, we put our trust in Jesus and then we get his powerful presence with us and in us. Don't truncate the gospel, but ask and receive all that God has for you, both to know him and to make him known.

Some relevant bits of the Bible

Joel 2:28; Luke 3:22; Luke 11:13; John 14:18; John 16:7; Acts 1:4; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:14-17; Acts 9:17; Acts 10:44-46; Acts 19:1-7; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 5:18

Some helpful books to read

The Normal Christian Birth David Pawson
From the Inside Out Mike Betts
Joy Unspeakable Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones
The Spirit-Filled Church Terry Virgo
Recieving the Holy Spirit and His Gifts Terry Virgo and Phil Rogers
Christ's Radiant Church John Hosier



Making disciples of Jesus who

Cather in friendship and family

Grow in character and gifting

Go in mission and service

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