

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT? - WHY DID HE COME?

Bible Reading - Acts Chapter 2 (NLT)

On the day of Pentecost, all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other tongues, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.

⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.

¹³ But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days,’ God says,

‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

- Your young men will see visions,
and your old men will dream dreams.
- ¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit
even on my servants—men and women alike—
and they will prophesy.
- ¹⁹ And I will cause wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below—
blood and fire and clouds of smoke.
- ²⁰ The sun will become dark,
and the moon will turn blood red
before that great and glorious day of the LORD arrives.
- ²¹ But everyone who calls on the name of the LORD
will be saved.'

SERMON

On 6th February we studied the New Testament letter of Jude. He said there will be scoffers who come into the Church and ***'they will create divisions among you. They follow their natural instincts.'*** Why? Because Jude said ***'They do not have God's Spirit in them.'***

Today I believe God wants me to talk to you about His Holy Spirit.

Who or what **is** the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity.

What does that mean? Let's go back a bit.

The person we usually refer to as God is God the Father. What is His name?

When asked by Moses, God told Him in Exodus 3 verse 14 His Name was ***'I am'*** or ***'I am who I am.'***

In Hebrew, God's Name is rendered YHWH. That is the written form of the verb meaning 'to be' or 'I am'. The written Hebrew at that time had no vowels in it, but if it was spoken the word would have sounded like 'Yahweh' or 'Yarway' if spoken with an English accent. However, it was never spoken by Jews because they felt it too sacred a name for it to be spoken.

When the Scriptures were read out loud they would substitute the word 'Adonai' where 'Yahweh' was written – 'Adonai' meaning 'Ruler, Master and

Lord'. In the tenth century AD, Jewish scholars started to write out their language with vowels inserted, and when it came to God's Name the vowels they inserted were 'o' and 'a' and so YHWH was pronounced Jehovah, following the 'Adonar' pronunciation.

So, like you and me, God is a person with a name.

In the beginning of all time when He created the earth, God described Himself as plural. He said in Genesis 1 verse 26 'Let **us** make human beings in **our** image to be like **us**'.

So what did He mean - us?

The God we worship is the creator of the universe – 'of all things seen and unseen' as it says in the Nicene Creed. He created you and me.

Yes, our mother and father are the people God used in order to create the fleshly body we live in, **but** the whole process of the creation of a human being is a mind-blowing miracle of God.

Listen to this amazing reflection by King David in Psalm 139:

***'You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body
and knit me together in my mother's womb.***

¹⁴ Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!

Your workmanship is marvellous—how well I know it.

¹⁵ You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion,

as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

¹⁶ You saw me before I was born.

Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

Every moment was laid out'

You and me, as human beings, are created (as it says in Genesis chapter 1) in God's likeness. You and I are **spirits**; we have a **soul**; and we **live** in a body. God made us '3 in 1.'

And in a similar way God is '3 in 1.'

God is **Father, Son** and **Holy Spirit**. If you struggle with the concept of the Holy Trinity (or the Triune God as some people call him), then don't worry because a number of people struggle with this concept and hopefully today, you will

better understand. Once we understand we are '3 in 1', it becomes easier to understand that God is '3 in 1'.

God is our Spiritual Father, He came down to Earth in the form of a man with a human body, God the Son. But He is Spirit too as John tells us in John chapter 4 verse 24. Here the Bible says:

'For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.'

Oh, and don't be fooled by liberal theology or heretical teaching - the Holy Spirit is a He, not an 'it'. How do we know that? Because Jesus told us so. In John chapter 14 verse 26 Jesus said:

'But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—HE will teach you everything, and will remind you of everything I have told you. '

So it is we say that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

OK, now what does God want us to know about the Holy Spirit?

Well firstly God sent His Holy Spirit (50 days after Jesus died), because without Him we simply cannot live the life He wants for us. He could have left us to our own devices but such is His love for us that if we will humbly recognise that without Him we can only fail in our daily attempt to live a righteous life, and ask Him to fill us, then He delights to do just that!

God the Father and the Son – wants to make His home inside each one of His created children, you and me, by His Spirit. Isn't that awesome??!!

Sadly in the case of so many people, He cannot make His home in them. Why, because He will not force Himself, He has to be invited. His taking up residence inside you is conditional. You have to want Him and ask Him to come.

That may sound scary for those who haven't done so, or for those who don't know that it's what God wants. Many early believers did not know this was what God wanted to do.

In Acts 19 verse 2, when asked by Paul if they had received the Holy Spirit, some believers in Ephesus said they had been baptised by John the Baptist but went on to say ***"We haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."***

So Paul said to them, *“John’s baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus.” As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”. (Now listen) “Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.’*

Wow!

Many Christians believe in God, worship God, and try to be like Him by loving others and doing good things. Most also believe Jesus died for their sins - and realise that by His death salvation is available to them. But few realise or are even told there is more.

Michele and I were like this for many years in our Christian walk.

One day, Michele and I were shown by Godly Christians that there was more than belief in God, there was the possibility of actually receiving God’s Holy Spirit into, not just our life, but literally into your body. Michele and I didn’t know each other at the time but separately we both became born again and Spirit filled over 20 years ago.

We thank God for those who studied the scriptures and showed us the truth. I thank God for those who have received the Holy Spirit into their lives, seen massive changes in their life and as a result want to pass on God’s gift of His Spirit to others.

Next Sunday the Church celebrates the day of Pentecost.

For those who will attend the Pentecost service or have done so countless times in the past, how many even understand what happened on that day recorded in chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, shortly after Jesus died. We just read it – did it make any sense to you?

‘The sound of a roaring mighty thunderstorm’ - God’s **awesome omnipotent presence** filling the house where 11 men – the disciples - were sitting.

‘Flames or tongues of fire’ settling on each of them!

Each of them suddenly speaking fluently in unknown languages!

How must they have felt? Probably it all happened so quick they barely had time to consider running away or falling prostrate out of fear. How might we have felt?

Then they are insulted by crowds who tried to make sense of it. They blurted out ***'They're just drunk that's all.'*** That sounds to me like the kind of thing we might say if we had just experienced something totally inexplicable. Which of course this was. Totally inexplicable, but not to God. And not to those disciples. Because in truth they had just been filled with God. And because of this spiritual infilling of the Holy Spirit, Peter was then empowered to boldly proclaim:

"Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

'In the last days,' God says,

'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions,

and your old men will dream dreams.

In those days I will pour out my Spirit

even on my servants—men and women alike—

and they will prophesy.

And I will cause wonders in the heavens above

and signs on the earth below'"

He went on to say later in chapter 2 that everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved. God's promise of pouring out His Holy Spirit is for **ALL people** - that includes you and me!

We have heard God's Word this afternoon talking about an event that will be on the agenda for many churches next Sunday. God willing, some brave vicars, ministers, pastors and preachers will shed some Godly insight concerning Pentecost and what it means for people today. Others may avoid this difficult teaching altogether.

But I want to help those of you who are open to receiving from God today – my prayer is that God will unlock any misunderstandings or difficulties you might have about the Holy Spirit.

And that brings me to what I believe is the key question concerning him.

WHY, did God make His Holy Spirit available to all people on that day almost 2,000 years ago, and to any who would turn to him thereafter, including you and me?

Really to find the answer and to understand it, I believe it is necessary to read the whole of The Bible and I don't know how many months that would take us. But I do know we haven't got time to do that today!

So I will do my best to condense into a couple of paragraphs what I believe Scripture teaches us about the answer to this question.

When God created man in His own image, one of the most precious gifts He gave us all, despite knowing all the risks that would go with it, was the unconditional gift of freedom of choice.

In the Garden of Eden some time after the creation of the first man and woman from whom we have all descended, Adam and Eve chose to do what **they thought** would be better than following the commands of their Creator. Yes they were influenced by the enemy of God – Satan - who entered the garden and whispered a lie into their ears.

And yes, satan and his demons have been misleading people with lies and deception ever since, and you and me are enticed too, yet most of the time we don't know it is satan, but even when we do realise it is him, we still follow his lies. But at the end of the day we blame our actions on the devil or on anyone we like, because that is our fallen, sinful nature; to blame someone else – 'anyone but me'. But we have a choice and we can say 'No' to what is wrong and 'Yes' to what is right.

The trouble is we are slaves to our sinful nature - to our flesh. That was the consequence of The Fall – the preference if you like, of Adam and Eve to do their own thing. And that is inherent in all of us today. We see it in children – we don't have to teach them to do wrong, that is their natural disposition, we have to teach them to do what is right! Prisons are full with people who struggle with the flesh, with doing what is wrong.

The Old Testament is full - Book after Book, Chapter after Chapter - of examples of God's people turning away from God, deliberately sinning and doing evil. At one point God destroyed His creation totally when He sent the flood. The only human survivors were Noah and his family. Later in Exodus 32, God told Moses he was so angry with the people choosing sin and evil, that He

would wipe them out again, but He relented in answer to Moses pleading with Him. After centuries of patience, God later He sent His one and only Son. But even then after Jesus had spent 33 years on the earth, man and boy, still the human race didn't change. In fact we even turned on Him and crucified our Saviour! Still most of us preferred sin to holiness.

God knew all this in advance and so His final plan was to send His Holy Spirit. At last we would be given a chance of turning from sin and being saved from its eternal consequences.

Why did He do this? Because as natural human beings it is impossible to be free from sin. But when we accept Christ as our Saviour and receive the Holy Spirit and allow Him to purify us and change us within, then and only then, we **can** be free from sin.

Not sinless, as we still sometimes respond to things in sinful ways, but free from the stranglehold, the power of sin to control our lives, free to enjoy the life God originally intended us to lead.

Paul discovered this truth after His conversion. Prior to that he was zealous for God – so zealous in fact, that He missed totally what God was doing. He had no idea the Jews' Messiah, the Saviour of the World, Jesus Christ had arrived. He went around persecuting and imprisoning Jesus' followers because he thought they were a religious sect, enemies of the one true God. But then he encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he became filled with the Holy Spirit, and God opened his eyes to the truth. And in His letter to the Romans, chapter 7 and verses 18 to 25 Paul said this powerful summary of what all people know in their hearts when they discover Christ:

'I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature, I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.

I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord.'

And he goes on a few verses later in Romans 8 verse 6 to say:

'Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.'

The truth is we can only be Christ-like and do what is right if we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Without Him we are doomed to fail.

Finally then, if we need the Holy Spirit, how do we receive him?

After His death, the Lord appeared to His disciples and it says in John 20 verse 22 ***'He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.'***

In the reading today, the Holy Spirit descended onto the disciples like flames or tongues of fire.

Later in the same chapter of Acts 2 verse 38 it says ***'Repent, turn to God, be baptised for forgiveness of sins then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'*** So prior to receiving the Holy Spirit we need to repent, turn to God and be baptised and forgiven by God.

Acts 5 verse 32 tells us that ***'the Holy Spirit will be given to those who obey Him'***. So obedience to God is an important pre-requisite too.

And in Acts 8 verse 17, it ***says 'Peter and John laid their hands upon these believers, and they received the Holy Spirit.'***

So there are a number of ways people received the Holy Spirit in Bible times, but today the traditional way people receive the Holy Spirit in the Church (when they realise that they need to be filled with Him) is to have a Spirit filled believer lay there hands on them and pray over them.

Michele and I would be very happy to pray for anyone at the end of the service or in the privacy of your own home if they would like to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Do not be embarrassed if you have never been filled - don't let the opportunity go by. God's Holy Word makes many promises for those filled with His Holy Spirit.

Here are some examples of what we can expect according to Scripture if we receive the Holy Spirit into our lives:

1 Corinthians 2 verse 13 and 14: ***'He helps us to understand the Bible (spiritual truths)'***.

1 Corinthians 3 and Romans 7 ***'We will no longer be controlled by the sinful nature'***.

2 Corinthians 3 verse 17 ***'He brings us freedom'***.

Colossians 1 verse 8 ***'He will give us a love for others'***

2 Thessalonians 2 verse 13 ***'He makes us holy'***.

Titus 3 verse 5 ***'He gives us a new birth and new life.'***

1 John 2 verse 27 ***'He teaches us everything we need to know, and what he teaches is true'***.

Acts 4 verse 31 ***'We will preach with boldness'***.

Acts 19 verse 6: ***'We will speak in tongues.'***

Romans 8 verse 26 ***'He helps us to pray correctly.'***

Ephesians 1 verse 14 ***'He is God's guarantee of our salvation'***.

Aren't those good reasons to invite the Holy Spirit into your life if you haven't already?

Furthermore, we read in Galatians 5:22 that the Holy Spirit produces wonderful fruit in our lives: ***'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'***

And if that weren't enough, Paul tell us in 1 Corinthians 12 that in the Church-setting, where a meeting is taking place, God gives a number of Spiritual gifts to us in order that we can help each other. Different people are given different gifts by the Holy Spirit.

He lists them as follows:

The ability to give wise advice;

A message of special knowledge.

Great faith.

The gift of healing.

The power to perform miracles.

The ability to prophesy.

The ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit (by which he means a demonic one).

The ability to speak in unknown languages.

The ability to interpret what is being said in those unknown languages.

So the Bible is full of examples of the good and the miraculous that we can enjoy if we will invite the Holy Spirit into our lives, so let me ask you once again. If you've never been told that the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit is available to any believer who asks for it; if you haven't received the Holy Spirit into your life and want to, please let me and Michele know and we will gladly pray for you and lay hands on you before we leave here today, or in your home..

He is freely available, He wants to change your life for the better. He wants to set you free from striving and has free gifts He wants to give you. He is just waiting for you to ask. This is our awesome loving God.

May He bless you!

Amen