

The Gift of the Spirit (part 2)

I. Christ must be exalted before he gives the Spirit

- John 7:39 “Now this [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, *because Jesus was not yet glorified.*”
- “Trading places” theme in John 14–16:
 - Jesus is going away; but he will not leave them as orphans (14:18); he will come to his people in the Spirit.
 - John 16:7 “I tell you the truth: *it is to your advantage that I go away*, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.”
 - The Spirit is the helper (14:16).
 - The Spirit will be “in us” (14:17). By the Spirit being in us, the Father and Son make their dwelling in us (14:23).
 - The helper will call things to mind (14:26); he will bear witness about Christ (15:26); he “will guide us into all the truth” (16:13).
 - He will give us Christ’s peace (14:27). Indeed, he will take all that the Father has given the Son and give it to us (16:14–15).
 - The Spirit is how we experience the riches of Christ in all his resurrected glory. He gives a richer experience of Christ than what the disciples enjoyed during his earthly ministry.
- As the head of the church, Jesus was the first man to receive the Spirit in all his fullness when he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven.
- Having received the Spirit, Jesus then turned and gave the Spirit to us. Jesus gives what he himself has received first from the Father.
 - Acts 2:33: “[Jesus,] being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”
 - John 1:33 [John the Baptist speaking] “... he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”
 - In his resurrection, Jesus became “life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45): unified with the Spirit to the uttermost, and the giver of the Spirit to us.

II. The timeline of Pentecost

- Pentecost is the high-point of Luke-Acts: it’s what all of Jesus’ life and death was driving towards.
- The church’s reception of the Spirit comes in four stages:
 - 1. On the day of resurrection (John 20:19–23): Jesus breathes on them as a foretaste of the gift of the Spirit.
 - 2. At Pentecost (Acts 2): the church in Jerusalem.
 - 3. At Samaria (Acts 8): the Samaritans.
 - 4. At Cornelius’ house (Acts 10): the Gentiles.
 - These last three stages map onto the theme verse of Acts: Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - These four stages are four episodes in a single, unified event: the once-for-all outpouring of the Spirit.

- Pentecostal Christians understand Pentecost to be a repeatable event. They say Christians should expect the “second blessing” of an outpouring of the Spirit, where they will speak in tongues, etc.
 - But we have shown that Pentecost is non-repeatable: it’s directly connected to Christ’s own receiving the Spirit. Pentecost is as unrepeatable as Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension.

III. The meaning of Pentecost

- The Spirit of Pentecost is the resurrection life of the exalted Christ. The Spirit brings all the blessings of the kingdom.
 - Luke 24:49 [Jesus speaking] “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.” (cf. how Luke 12:32 says the *kingdom* is what he promises, and how Acts 1:4–5 says the promise of the Father is the Spirit).
 - The Father gives both Spirit and Kingdom; they are correlative ways of expressing the highest blessing that God the Father gives, the blessing that encompasses all the others (Gaffin).
- Pentecost constitutes the church (i.e., the *people*) as God’s permanent dwelling place, his temple.
 - Tongues of fire parallel fire coming down on the tabernacle and temple.
 - 1 Cor 3:16 “Do you (pl.) not know that you (pl.) are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you (pl.)?” (see also Eph 2:22; 1 Pet 2:4–6)
- Pentecost is when the church is equipped for her great task in this age.
 - Acts 1:8: the Spirit makes the church to be witnesses to Christ.
 - Paul’s work is by the Spirit: he does signs and wonders by the Spirit (Rom 15:18–19); his speech was “in demonstration of the Spirit and power” (1 Cor 2:4); the Spirit commends Paul’s ministry (2 Cor 6:6).
- Pentecost is the sign of Christ’s permanent presence with his church. The Holy Spirit will never leave us (Matt 28:20; Heb 13:5).
 - Bavinck: “Christ’s stay on earth was temporary, but the Spirit whom He will send will never leave them, but will remain with them into eternity. Indeed, Christ Himself will come to them again in that Spirit.”
- Pentecost is the firstfruits of a greater filling of the Spirit which is yet to come.
 - The 50th day after Passover is the feast of firstfruits (Lev 23:15–21; Num 28:26; Acts 2:1).
 - Once-for-all does not mean God gives the Spirit in all His fullness. Rather, Pentecost is the firstfruits and downpayment of a greater harvest/inheritance which we are about to receive.
- Pentecost is the first half of the final judgment, the sending of God’s end-times fire. Luke 3:16–17: John the Baptist says, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”
 - Gaffin: “The Holy Spirit and fire” probably refer to one baptism, with two outcomes, depending on whether the person belongs to Christ or not.
 - Just like the Noah’s flood (1 Pet 3:21) and the Red Sea “baptism” (1 Cor 1:2): one element (water), two outcomes: life or death.
 - Pentecost is God sending the fire of the Spirit in a saving way, to purify and save. When the fire of the Spirit comes again, he will come to destroy and to judge (2 Pet 3:12).