

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## The Coming of the Spirit was “The Promise of the Father”

by Dan Trygg

“...behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father *upon* you; but you are to stay in the city until you are *clothed with power from on high*.” Luke 24:49

“...that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that *we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*.” Galatians 3:14

“Brethren, what shall we do?” <sup>38</sup> Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will *receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’” Acts 2:37-39

The language used regarding the potential presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers can be somewhat confusing. Sometimes it sounds like something we are to wait and seek for. Sometimes it sounds like a sure thing, a promise that God *will* fulfill. Sometimes, it sounds like we *have* the Holy Spirit. **Then there are different word pictures used of our relationship to the Holy Spirit.** Sometimes He is described as *being alongside* of us (Jn. 14:17), or *coming upon* us (Acts 1:8), or coming to  *dwell within* us (Jn. 14:17). Sometimes He is described as something we are *immersed* or *washed in* (Acts 1:5), while in other places it describes someone as being “*anointed with*” Him (Acts 10:38), or being “*filled with*” Him (Eph. 5:18). Jesus said He would be *like a river flowing* out from our bellies (Jn. 7:38,39). At other places, He is described as being *like a gift to be received* (Acts 2:38).

**Some of this confusion has to do with a historical shift that took place in the Spirit’s operation among the people of God.** This shift was spoken of centuries *before*, but did not take place until *after* Jesus had paid the price for sin and cleared the way for the Spirit’s coming. Jesus had spoken of this coming shift to His disciples. He said that the Spirit was *with* them, and would be *in* them (Jn. 14:15-17). Earlier in the gospel, John parenthetically explained one of Jesus’ teachings, saying, “but this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him *were soon to receive*; for the Spirit was *not yet given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:39). **Historically, Jesus had to complete His salvation-work, before this new ministry of the Spirit would be possible.** In fact, in Peter’s attempt to explain the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, he made reference both to the OT prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and the resurrection and victorious ascension of Christ to glory as the basis to understand what was taking place: “**This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore *having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear***” (Acts 2:32,33).

**There are many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that describe the activity of the Holy Spirit.** He was present in the very beginning, hovering over the creation He made (Psa. 33:6; 104:30). He came upon individuals to give them special wisdom, skill (Ex. 31:3), or to equip them for leadership (Num. 27:17-20; Deut. 34:9; Jdg. 3:10), or even to give physical strength (Jdg. 14:6; 15:14). He came upon people to enable them to prophesy (I Sam. 10:10; II Chron. 15:1-7), to have visions (Ezk. 11:24), to motivate them to action (I Sam. 11:6), and empower them to preach (Mic. 3:8). The Spirit was in the midst of Israel (Isa. 63:11; Hag. 2:5), but not within each person. He would come upon someone to meet a need, but there was no guarantee of His ongoing presence. Because of the disobedience of King Saul, the Spirit of God left him (I Sam. 16:14). David witnessed this, so that after he repented of his sin with Bathsheba, he pleaded with God not to take the Holy Spirit from him (Psa. 51:11). Through sin and disobedience, God’s Spirit could not only be grieved, but He often begins to oppose those who do evil (Isa. 63:10). **None of these passages present these activities or functions of the Spirit in terms of a promise for others, however.** They are *instructive* to learn how the Spirit has operated in the past, *but they offer no hope or promise* that He would do such things *for you*.

**When Jesus talked about “the promise of the Father”, He was referring back to specific OT prophecies.**

For example, in Isaiah 32, the Lord prophesies that He is going to bring destruction and judgment upon the land, because of their sin and injustice to the poor. The land will be devastated, and lie barren, “Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field is considered as a forest. <sup>16</sup> Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness will abide in the fertile field.” (Isaiah 32:15-16). **The outpouring of the Spirit will usher in justice, righteousness, peace and prosperity.**

Isaiah 44:2-4 declares, “Thus says Yahweh who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you, ‘Do not fear, O Jacob My servant; and you Jeshurun whom I have chosen. <sup>3</sup> **For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring** and My blessing on your descendants; <sup>4</sup> **and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.**” The context is about

how God was going to deliver the disobedient and apostate nation of Israel to “revilement” (43:28), because of their sin. They had brought judgment and disaster upon themselves by their rejection of God’s commandments and their pursuit of other gods. Even though *they* were disloyal, and would experience terrible consequences, *God* was not finished with them. He would still redeem them and wipe out their transgressions (44:21,22).

Again, in chapter 59, God declares how their sin had made a separation between them and Him. Their society was corrupt and unjust, people were depressed and listless, without hope. God was amazed that there was not even one person to intercede! Even though they were not faithful, *God took it upon Himself to save them and to bring wrath on those opposed to Him*. He will repay them according to their deeds. “So they will fear the name of Yahweh from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun, **for He will come like a rushing stream which the wind (Spirit) of Yahweh drives.**”<sup>20</sup> ‘A Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ declares Yahweh.<sup>21</sup> ‘As for Me, this is My covenant with them,’ says Yahweh: ‘**My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,**’ says Yahweh, ‘**from now and forever**’”(Isaiah 59:19-21).

In **Ezekiel 11:19,20**, even though God was judging Israel, and scattering them in distant places, He promised to bring them back to their land. He also says, “**And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them.** And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they *may* walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. *Then* they will be My people, and I shall be their God.” The *possibility of obedience* will come from this new heart and this new spirit He will put within them. This promise is repeated, and expanded, in **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”<sup>27</sup> **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**” Now we learn it is not just a new spirit, like a new attitude within them. No. It is the Spirit of God Himself, the “Breath” of God that will change them, and will cause them to walk in His ways.

Later, the prophet was brought by the Spirit to a valley strewn with the skeletons of human beings, dried and scattered about. God commanded him to prophesy over the bones, and there was a great rattling noise as they came together and the flesh was restored over their bodies. God told Ezekiel, “Prophesy to the breath/Spirit, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath/Spirit, ‘Thus says the Lord Yahweh, “Come from the four winds, O breath/Spirit, and breathe on these slain, *that they come to life.*”’”<sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath/Spirit came into them, and *they came to life* and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.<sup>11</sup> Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel...’<sup>14</sup> **I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life,** and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, Yahweh, have spoken and done it” (Ezek. 37:9-11,14).

Again in Ezekiel 39:25-29, God declares that He will bring Israel back from the land where they had been scattered, and will restore their fortunes. They will forget their disgrace and their past treachery, and He will be sanctified through them in the sight of many nations. “Then they will know that I am Yahweh their God, because I made them go into exile among the nations, and *then* gathered them *again* to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer.”<sup>29</sup> **I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,’ declares the Lord Yahweh”** (Ezekiel 39:28-29).

And, of course, we have the famous passage that Peter would quote, to explain the phenomenon of Pentecost, Joel 2. In the context, they are being ravaged by a plague of locusts, which God promises to remove. He will make up for them what the locusts have eaten. “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am Yahweh your God, and there is no other; and My people will never be put to shame.”<sup>28</sup> It will come about after this that **I will pour out My Spirit on all people; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.**<sup>29</sup> Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:27-29). The next chapter is again about the restoration of Israel to her land, and judgment on her enemies.

**All of these prophecies appear to be addressed to the entire people of God,** not just to individuals. They speak of ushering in a new age, a time when **the Spirit will be poured out on God’s people,** make them *alive*, dwell *within* them, *transform* them, and *empower* them to live a life of obedience to God. **This relationship to the Spirit will never end;** He will not depart from them, but will dwell within them forever. God will no longer be distant, but will reveal Himself to them. They will know Him, have new revelations from Him and be empowered to speak out for Him. **God Himself will be sanctified through them before the nations,** and *they* will never be put to shame.

Note that most of these prophecies are directed toward Israel. **God began His redemptive work through the children of Abraham, and He is not finished with them,** even though many are walking outside of Christ. **By faith, we are grafted into God’s family, and we experience the promise of the Spirit by faith** (Rom. 11:17-33; Gal. 3:14). Paul says that when we believe in the gospel, and align ourselves with Jesus, **we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise** (Eph. 1:13,14). He is not only the *fulfillment* of OT hopes, but also the *pledge* of our *future* inheritance.