

# Lesson 13 | May 28, 2023

## Baptism in the Holy Spirit

**Study Text:** Acts 1:1–8; 2:1–39

**Central Truth:** God gave the Holy Spirit so every believer in Christ may be filled with the Spirit.

**Key Verse: Acts 2:39**

The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call (KJV).

“This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God (NLT).

### Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to explain Scripture’s teachings about the prophesied coming of the Holy Spirit, fulfilled in Acts 2.
- Students will acknowledge that the promises of Joel, repeated by Peter, were not only for the people of Peter’s day but are for Christians today as well.
- Students will be encouraged to seek the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

## Introducing the Study

**Say:** Today, on Pentecost Sunday, we commemorate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as described in Acts 2:1–4. John the Baptist first mentioned this event in Matthew 3:11, describing Jesus as One who would “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (NLT). In John 14:26, Jesus further elaborated on this promise, telling the disciples that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, would be sent to them by the Father. *v* (**Play the video available at [RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult](https://www.RadiantLifeCurriculum.com/Adult).**)

### Opening Activity—Waiting for Promises

*Ask. What are some things that have been promised to you that you have had to wait for—either from God or from other people? How long did you have to wait, or are you still waiting?*

**Say:** When people make promises to each other, they sometimes break them, even if they had the best intentions. But when God makes a promise, He always keeps it, even though we may need to wait for its fulfillment. Jesus had promised the Father would send the Holy Spirit and told His disciples to wait. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Luke wrote the Book of Acts to a man named Theophilus, likely his friend and possibly a high-ranking Gentile believer (Acts 1:1). It continues Luke’s Gospel, which concludes

with Jesus' ascension and His disciples gathering in Jerusalem, seeking God and waiting for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (see Luke 24:49). Today's lesson begins there and explores the biblical teaching of Holy Spirit baptism—a unique, empowering experience subsequent to salvation. It was foretold and received in the Early Church, and remains available to all believers.

## **Part 1—Baptism in the Spirit Foretold Commanded to Wait**

Acts 1:4–5

**Say:** Waiting is difficult, whether you are waiting for a highly anticipated event or an appointment you really want to put behind you. After Jesus' resurrection, perhaps His disciples were eager to get on with the task of telling others the good news that He was alive. But Jesus told them to wait. There was something else they would need before they could accomplish His will on earth. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After Jesus' death and resurrection, He appeared in His resurrected body multiple times over a period of forty days (Acts 1:3). During one such occasion, Jesus sat and ate with His disciples, taking the opportunity to instruct them. Rather than immediately releasing them into ministry, He called them first to engage in a period of waiting: "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:4–5, NLT). The promise of the coming of the Spirit is found among the Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 32:15; Joel 2:28–32), and Jesus himself assured His disciples they would receive this promise after He ascended into heaven (see John 14:15–31).

Waiting may have been a difficult command for them to follow. No doubt they experienced immense joy in fellowshiping with their risen Savior. In such moments, it is easy to react by immediately going out into ministry. But they were not to go into Jerusalem to proclaim the good news right away. First they were told to wait to receive the gift that Jesus had spoken of—the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **Discuss**

? What specific instructions did Jesus give His disciples to follow?

? Why can it be difficult for us to wait upon the Lord when we have something important we want to do for Him? What blessings can be found during times of waiting?

## **Empowerment Promised**

Acts 1:6–8

**Say:** The disciples had questions. All their lives, they had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah who was the subject of so many Old Testament prophecies. Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire, and their expectation was that when the Messiah came, He would deliver them from foreign rule and set up His kingdom on earth. While

we may find that difficult to understand, we must remember they were missing part of the picture. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

As we read the Gospels, we might notice that the disciples sometimes struggled to accept or even grasp the truths Jesus shared. After He rose from the dead, we see them encountering the same kinds of struggles.

After Jesus told them to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit, the disciples posed a question He had already addressed: “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6, KJV). These Jewish men had expected Jesus would embark on a movement to overthrow the political powers of the day, and after His death and resurrection, this concern was still in their minds. Even when Jesus showed himself as the resurrected Lamb who had been slain, they still had thoughts of Him as a conquering King.

Jesus refocused His disciples upon the task at hand, reminding them of two things. First, while the Father still had plans to restore the kingdom to Israel, they could not know the specific timing of that plan. Such a plan was not going to be enacted at that time (verse 7).

Second, instead of focusing on what they could not know, the disciples needed a new perspective. In a short time, they would be tasked with a particular, urgent purpose—sharing the gospel—and as a result receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses for Christ (verse 8). This witness would not only occur in their immediate area, but throughout the region and indeed the entire world. This power would mobilize evangelism in the Church Age.

### **Resource Packet Item 1: The Bigger Picture**

Distribute the worksheet, summarize the events described in the Scriptures, then discuss the application questions.

#### ***Discuss***

? What was Jesus’ message to His disciples in Acts 1:6–7, and how did they respond to it?

? How do we balance our tendency to focus on proclaiming godly answers to political or secular problems with our call to proclaim the kingdom of God?

## **Part 2—Baptism in the Spirit Received Filled with the Spirit**

Acts 2:1–4

**Say:** God always keeps His promises. Ten days earlier, the disciples had watched as a cloud took Jesus up from them. During the intervening time, they had “met together and were constantly united in prayer” (Acts 1:14, NLT). They had a “business meeting” of

sorts, selecting a replacement for Judas. But there is no record that anyone thought they were wasting their time as they followed Jesus' instructions and waited. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Acts 2 opens by describing the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had told His followers to wait for the Spirit, and we find in verse 1 that they obeyed Jesus' words. They were together, waiting and praying. The promised outpouring of the Spirit happened suddenly, as Luke described (verse 2). Note that this supernatural event impacted the natural world, including people's hearing, sight, and speech. It began with a sound like a rushing wind filling the place where they had gathered. (Note that it was a sound, not an actual wind.) Then, they began seeing what looked like tongues or flames of fire that rested on each one of them (verse 3). (Scriptures like Exodus 3:2 and 14:21–22 remind us how fire and light are common symbols of God's presence.)

These signs were not in themselves the Pentecostal baptism—the gift of the Spirit. They preceded it and were not repeated in later accounts. After these powerful signs, the people began to speak “in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability” (Acts 2:4, NLT). They did not speak mindlessly. They used their tongues and minds, but the words came from the Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost, believers received empowerment for ministry that would invigorate the preaching of the gospel to fulfill the Great Commission. That same Holy Spirit empowerment is available and necessary to believers today. Pentecost Sunday reminds us of the importance of seeking and receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other languages, just like on the Day of Pentecost.

### **Resource Packet Item 2: When Pentecost Came**

Distribute the worksheet and discuss it as a class so you can ensure that everyone understands these important passages correctly.

#### ***Discuss***

? What signs of God's activity were present at the Day of Pentecost?

? What miraculous signs and wonders have you seen, felt, or heard in your own moments with God?

## **The Crowd's Amazement**

Acts 2:5–13

**Say:** We often think of Pentecost as beginning on the day the Holy Spirit was given; however, Pentecost was a festival already established in the Jewish calendar. It is interesting that God used existing frameworks, enhancing them as He fulfilled His plan of redemption. Jesus' death and resurrection occurred during Passover, fulfilling the promise of a Lamb who would take away the sin of the world. Seven weeks later, God used the occasion of Pentecost—when many people would be gathered in Jerusalem—

to send the Holy Spirit to baptize believers. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

This outpouring occurred on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. Pentecost served as a celebration of the grain harvest for the Jewish people. How amazing that God chose a harvest festival to send the gift of the Holy Spirit and usher in a new season of spiritual harvest as the gospel spread. Many Jews would travel to Jerusalem for Passover and stay until the Feast of Pentecost, so the streets were filled with Jewish believers during this time.

The crowd included Jews from other nations, so many different languages were being spoken in Jerusalem that day. These foreigners heard about the wonderful works of God in their own languages, and the ones speaking caught their attention (Acts 2:5–6).

The visitors were amazed as they recognized (probably by their clothing) that Galileans were praising God in their languages, and perhaps without a Galilean accent (verses 7–8). Verses 9–11 go on to list the specific origins of these visitors. They were from places both inside and outside the Roman Empire, including Persia (Parthian Empire) and Mesopotamia. We can imagine how amazing it was to hear people voicing praise to God in this way. It was a miraculous moment, leaving many in the crowd puzzled. Some attributed their behavior to drunkenness (verses 12–13), but those making this charge likely did not understand what was happening and decided they were hearing incoherent speech.

### ***Discuss***

? In what ways did the events of the Day of Pentecost offer a sign to those gathering in Jerusalem?

? Why is it important to recognize that the events on the Day of Pentecost were miraculous rather than subject to natural explanation?

## **Part 3— Spirit Baptism for All Believers**

### **Peter Proclaims the Gospel**

Acts 2:14–18

**Say:** The Holy Spirit makes a difference. In this passage, we see that difference in Simon Peter, who had confronted Jesus on numerous occasions and denied Him during His trial. Now Peter was emboldened, not by his own headstrong personality, but by the power of the Spirit. He began to preach the gospel with authority, drawing on the words of the prophet Joel to explain to the crowds what they were witnessing. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

After the events on the Day of Pentecost, the crowd was left wondering what it all meant. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, Peter offered an explanation (Acts 2:14). He first dispelled any notion that what they were hearing was a result of drunkenness

(verse 15). Wine in Bible times was weak by modern standards, and it was unlikely that one would have consumed enough to become drunk, especially publicly, at that early hour.

Then Peter cited the prophet Joel (verses 16–18; see Joel 2:28–32). Joel had prophesied that in the last days, at the time the Messiah came, God would pour His Spirit out on all people. This referred to men and women, young and old, rich and poor. In addressing the crowd, Peter made it clear that this event was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Furthermore, the gift would continue to be poured out through the generations until the return of Christ (verses 18–21).

There is a great significance to this outpouring. Before Jesus came, the Spirit came upon relatively few people to help them accomplish specific tasks. But now, in the last days, the Spirit is poured out on God’s people regardless of status or prominence. All who follow Jesus can experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit. This outpouring is closely linked to evangelism, empowering believers to preach the good news more effectively.

### ***Discuss***

? Who can receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit?

? What are some boundaries that separate Christians today, and how will our view of fellow Christians be impacted by knowing all can receive Holy Spirit baptism?

## **People Respond**

Acts 2:37–39

**Say:** As Peter clearly and powerfully presented the gospel, his message began the fulfillment of the Great Commission Jesus had given to the disciples days earlier to “go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19, NLT). On this eventful day, representatives from many of those nations had gathered in Jerusalem, and they were able to immediately take the message of salvation back to their own people. God’s plan was moving forward. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Having explained to the crowd the miracle they had just seen, Peter then turned to another critical truth: Jesus is Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36). Peter reminded them of Jesus’ resurrection. Yes, He rightfully occupies the throne of David, but He is without equal in that He rose again and ascended into heaven (verses 34–35). This was a powerful, world-altering message to the Jews gathered in Jerusalem. Scripture says Peter’s message “pierced their hearts” (Acts 2:37, NLT). As the message of Christ was preached in the power of the Spirit, people were moved. In response to Peter, they passionately asked, “What shall we do?” (verse 37, KJV).

Peter’s reply is the essence of the gospel call to “repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38, NLT). Note the emphasis on repentance.

By repenting, they would demonstrate their change of heart. Through repentance, God would graciously forgive their sins and restore them into right relationship with Him. Then, also as a gracious gift of God, they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter reminded the crowd again of the words of Joel: “The promise is unto you, and to your children” (Acts 2:39, KJV; see Joel 2:32). “To those far away” (verse 39, NLT) pointed to many more than the thousands visiting Jerusalem that day and even far beyond their descendants. This expression ultimately pointed to Gentiles (compare Isaiah 57:19 with Ephesians 2:17). The promise of the Holy Spirit is available today. All who call upon the name of Jesus Christ for salvation can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Discuss***

? What does Acts 2 teach about who can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?

? Why is it important to remember that repentance is a critical part of the message of the gospel?

### **Resource Packet Item 3: The Holy Spirit Difference**

Distribute the worksheet and divide your class into small groups to read the passages and answer the questions. Then discuss their responses.

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** On the Day of Pentecost, the power of the Spirit fell on 120 followers of Christ. Those around them saw this empowerment and recognized that God was being glorified. God continues today to empower His people with the baptism in the Holy Spirit, including the gift of speaking in other languages, which is the initial physical evidence of this gift. Often, Christians pray to be effective witnesses for Christ. This is an important purpose of Holy Spirit baptism: empowerment for service. We can all receive this life-changing gift of empowerment. If you have not received Spirit baptism, seek God for this gift today.

## **Living It Out**

### **Ministry in Action**

- Pray for those in your group who have not yet received the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- Renew your commitment to use the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to someone this week.
- Talk with your children or grandchildren about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and encourage the next generation to embrace Pentecost.

## **Daily Bible Readings**

Monday:

Spirit-Filled Elders.  
Numbers 11:24–29

Tuesday:

Anointed by the Spirit.

Isaiah 61:1–11

Wednesday:

The Holy Spirit Promised.

Joel 2:28–32

Thursday:

John Prepared the Way.

Matthew 3:1–9

Friday:

Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

John 1:29–34

Saturday:

Baptism into Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12–18