

Christ Church Clifton Sermon Notes & Questions



Series: Spring 2021 Preparing for the Holy Spirit

Passage: Acts 1v1-11 Part 3

Preacher: Janet Lee **Date of Sermon:** May 16th 2021

Acts 1, Jesus left this earth physically, was raised up or ascended to heaven, he had been around 40 days from Easter, teaching and explaining about kingdom of God, Ascension –hinge point between end of Jesus life on earth and start of Acts of the Apostles, or of the Holy Spirit so Luke 24v49 Luke takes up story in Acts 1.

² *until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.* ³ *After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God*

Jesus taught through the Spirit about kingdom of God. He proved he was alive, he explained things in 40 days from resurrection till now. He gathered his disciples around him final time on Mount of Olives, near Bethany, gave a final instruction, wait here, you will receive power then v 9 he was taken up. ⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'*

V8 you will receive power, Greek word dynamis, the Holy Spirit is powerful like dynamite, yet his power is different from earthly power. The results of this power is that you will be witnesses, in broader place than their national kingdom of Judea, widen out to ends of the earth. The Holy Spirit always points to Jesus, people full of the Holy Spirit point to Jesus they cannot help telling others about Jesus. ⁹ *After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

As disciples looked up in amazement as cloud hid him –cloud the sign of God's glory and presence, 2 men in white, angels stood and said stop looking up he has gone but will come back again one day. (painting by John Copley)

¹⁰ *They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.* Jesus ascended, publically visibly, and will come back again one day.

What has this story of Ascension to do with prepare for Holy Spirit? Our sermon series, Ascension occurred 10 days before Pentecost and Acts 2.

3 things in story which can hinder preparing for Holy Spirit, same things can hinder us today.

1. Need to wait, impatience
2. Misunderstanding and fear
3. Forget nostalgia, look to new things

Need to wait v4⁴ *On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about*

Jesus gave them a command wait here, here was Jerusalem, the same place where they saw his suffering and death, he has promised them a special gift but they have to wait, it is hard to wait. Wait for the gift. What is gift? Holy Spirit. He has already told them about gift of Holy Spirit, John 16 . The Holy Spirit is a gift, not something you can buy but a free gift.

Birthday present gifts, open it, -e.g Christmas present, got in April due to Covid. The gift is coming, but when I receive it –you open it, no point in staying in room unwrapped. Waiting is hard, we want it now, immediately, small e.g, age

16 desperate to speak in tongues, want it now! wrong motives had to wait. What happens while we wait?
Sanctification. Song Sovereign over us

You are working in our waiting

You're sanctifying us

When beyond our understanding

You're teaching us to trust

The Holy Spirit is already working in our waiting, already transforming us, teaching us to trust him, in times of waiting, we can learn. Sometimes unanswered prayers, I am still waiting for prayer from 2 years ago.

We wait for Holy Spirit a reminder, no quick fix, rushed response, no instant feel good, wait prepares ourselves to receive and to unwrap the gift.

Misunderstanding and fear

V⁵ For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit. The phrase baptism with or in or of the Holy Spirit comes 7 times in NT, Matt 3v11, Mark 1v8, Luke 3v16, John 1v33, Acts 1v5 and Acts 11v16, 6 times as a contrast to water baptism of John the Baptist, also 1 Cor 12v13, ¹³ *For we were all baptized by/in/with one Spirit so as to form one body* unity of Spirit baptised into one body,

Does the phrase baptism of the Spirit make you fearful? To do with Christian initiation, becoming a Christian, every true believer already baptised by Holy Spirit. How come about? Pentecostal movement emphasis on a second experience a Baptism of the Spirit, something subsequent to conversion and associated (nearly always with tongues) the danger of talking of second experiences may make you feel second class, not there already, or of labelling people extra special. Also danger of not seeking a continuous infilling, day by day filling of the Holy Spirit. In 1970s and 80s, damage done to many by sections of church "you must speak in tongues" or not a proper Christian if... apology, acknowledge the hurt, tell your small group, in response time bring that hurt to God, ask for healing of words which made you feel an inferior Christian. When we are baptised the Holy Spirit is there, regenerating us, justifying us assuring us, the gift is already given, but need to use and unwrap the gift. God can take away our fear it is a good gift not something to fear. Besides fear also misunderstanding,

v⁶ Then they gathered round him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

⁷ He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'

Besides fear holding us back or hurts from the past can also be misunderstanding. The disciples got wrong end of stick about kingdom of God, thought it meant an earthly kingdom, kicking out Romans being in charge themselves, the earthly kingdom being restored. God's kingdom is when Christ rules our hearts, he is king, over everything, our spiritual giving over to God as king as ruler as sovereign.

We can misunderstand what the Holy Spirit and his gifts means think just for our own benefit, my territorial kingdom, for my edification –no gifts are given to build up others the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit unites us to Jesus and to his whole body, any experiences of Spirit are not for my selfish indulgence but for good and growth of the church, for glory of Christ, as we prepare for Holy Spirit ask for gifts to build up the church like interpretation of tongues, or discerning spirits 1 Cor12 v10 or practical gifts of helping, 1Cor 12v28

Nostalgia

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

Once Jesus had gone they stayed looking up gazing at sky and 2 angels say stop looking up he has gone, get moving get on with being my witnesses. Like those disciples we can look up fondly remember our old life with Jesus nostalgia for what happened last year, once a long time ago, but the Holy Spirit reminds us, you are here to be a witness, so get moving. Rest of chapter 1 they gather for prayer, choose Matthias as the 12th apostle then wait, 10 days pass till Acts 2, Pentecost next week. Beware nostalgia for a past experience of the Holy Spirit look forward, fill me again.

So things that can hinder us from opening that gift of his Holy Spirit promised in Acts 1, Ascension story, impatience, need to wait and prepare, fear, because of past misuse of language about Spirit, misunderstanding about who Spirit is what he does and nostalgia for past, the glory days when Jesus was here in the past.

We are called to prepare ourselves for a filling a fresh outpouring of his Spirit, why? So we can be witnesses, tell the world about Jesus. Jesus final command Acts 1v8 ⁸ *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*'

When the power of Holy Spirit falls afresh on them will witness to Jesus, start close to home Jerusalem then move to rest of Judaea, then Samaria, neighbouring region and finally to ends of the earth.

Jesus Christ will come again, we will see him but meanwhile we have work to do in power of Spirit, tell others about Jesus for the Spirit points to Jesus.

Wait for presence and power of Spirit, ask help to overcome our fears, correct any misunderstandings, don't look to past experiences but forward to the Holy Spirit, be continually filled with the Spirit.

Questions for study:

Optional starter Have you ever had to wait for a promised present?

1. Read Acts 1v1-11, what did Jesus do during the 40 days from his resurrection? Read v8 again what was his promise exactly and what results would there be? What does the cloud in v9 signify?
2. (v4) Recall the 3 things which can hinder us in preparing for the Holy Spirit. Why is waiting so hard?
3. Share experiences where you have had to wait for God, to answer a prayer or give a gift promised. What does God do in us whilst we wait? Why does He not give us an instant response every time?
4. (v5-6) Fear or apprehension of the Spirit can be an obstacle, what things are people afraid of? Have you had any past teaching or experiences which put you off things of the spirit?
5. Baptism in or of the Spirit occurs 7 times in NT, what does the phrase mean?
6. In v6,7 how did the disciples misunderstand what the coming kingdom meant? Are there things of the Spirit we misunderstand? How can we help each other?
7. Read v9-11, how was it nostalgic to look up into cloud after Jesus had departed? Do we long for the old times when Jesus was with us, past experiences? What is the danger in always looking back?

Pray for one another, for healing of past hurts and fears. How can we prepare for a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit?