

# The Coming of the Spirit

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So will you turn with me this morning to our New Testament reading. We are on a Wednesday night at city groups and also on Sunday mornings we're going to be looking at the book of Acts working through that book and I'm going to read the first section of chapter 2, verse 13, verses which is the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and we're going to look at that for a few moments this morning before celebrating the Lord's Supper together. When the day of Pentecost arrived they were all together in one place and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the centre the entire house where they were sitting and divided tongues of fire appeared to them and rested on each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews devout men from every nation under heaven and at the sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished saying are not all these who are speaking Galileans and how is it that we hear each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Meads and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Frigia and

Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene and visitors from Rome both Jews and proselytes Cretans and Arabians we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God and they were amazed and perplexed saying to one another what does this mean? But others mocking said they are filled with new wine. I mean this is the word of God may his blessing and his favor rest on us as we read and consider this passage together and I want to spend a little bit of time looking at this chapter obviously it's a hugely significant and important chapter and we can only dip into it very briefly this morning but you will have heard of the law of unintended consequences and it's when we make a decision about something but we don't realize some of the following on consequences of the decision we've made we don't think about it politicians talk about it all the time well one of the great at the beginning of the year I know that you all think we know what we're doing as a congregation as leaders but really we don't we're just we're just drifting from day to day trying our best to be strategic and seeking God's blessing and grace on us but one of the unintended what we did at the beginning of the year was to take the book of acts and we were going to preach it in the mornings and we were also going to study it for a longer time right through the year on a Wednesday evening but one of the great things that we hadn't really well I certainly hadn't really thought about it was the unintended consequence of revisiting certain passages now on

Wednesday night you read this passage Wednesday past and the previous Wednesday we dipped into the passage and then on Sunday we preached similarly and then today we're looking at again so we're kind of coming at this chapter from all angles and in different ways and it's great it's really worth doing that and it was unintended just in case you think we had all planned out but it's good and significant and this is a hugely significant passage of scripture I just want to say one or two things about this passage today for us as it applies to our own understanding of the Christian faith and what it means for us to worship and to understand the mission of God the first thing I want to say is that things are not as they seem things are not as they seem that's a vital and repeated truth of scripture again and again and it's very important for us as we live our Christian lives with the spiritual realities of our faith to remind ourselves that things are not as they seem if you remember in this passage or the passage before it the disciples are kind of looking up to heaven because

Jesus is gone Jesus is gone he's no longer there and it was overwhelming for them to not have this person this friend this Messiah the Savior with them in the flesh and yet as they began to understand they recognized and came to know that he was enthroned he was enthroned and victory the right hand of the father ascended in that coronational way to the right hand of the father as the king of kings who had defeated the power of death and the grave and that utterly changed their perspective and changed their understanding and changed their life and changed what they were and they listened and expected from God because of this death was defeated things were not as they seemed for that small group of early believers and they now were to receive what he promised before he was ascended that if they waited on him that he would send the Holy Spirit and that the church would be baptized in this great gift that they said that he sends to them and so we need to remember as we deliver Christian lies as we think of who we are and what we're doing and it may seem for us sometimes in the experiences of life that Jesus is gone these know where to be seen that we can't touch him and feel him and respond to him and yet he is enthroned the spiritual reality in the spiritual truth as he is enthroned and he has delivered to us the greatest of all gifts he's given us his Holy Spirit the greatest of all gifts and they want to think about him and remember that for a few moments this morning looking at

Pentecost in the light of this giving of the greatest of all gifts not just to the church of the first century but to every believer and to every Christian and to every church and whose trust in Jesus that their trust is in Jesus that they have this remarkable gift the perfect gift of God for every believer and for every church this is the outworking of God's own continued eternal plan that he ascends to the Father in the flesh and pours out the gift of the third person of the Trinity the Holy Spirit to be with to dwell with to be in the hearts of every believer this is his mission we've spoken a lot about the mission of God haven't we over this last year this is his purpose this is plan this is plan for you as you sit here this morning as a believer this is the outworking of his plan he's always been his plan a for you it has always been what he has promised that he would deliver to every

[ 7 : 30 ] Christian there is no other plan there is no plan B there is nothing we can go back to God with his elixir going I think you were a bit wrong I don't think you should have done what you've done I'm sure there's a better way for you than to have ascended physically and to have sent your Holy Spirit and it behoves us as Christians to understand him and what he has done it behoves us to not ignore this gift but to receive this gift he has given us and to understand what it means to be people who have been given this most perfect of gifts not just perfect in the person of the Spirit but most perfect in the provision of the Spirit for us it is what we need don't we often go back to God and say God I don't think you understand what I need that's not why I need I don't need the Holy Spirit I don't even understand what that is what that concept is and who he is I need something else and we come to God wrestling with him and telling him that his purpose and his plan and his provision for us is wrong it's imperfect it's not what we need and so it's really important for us to consider this Pentecost gift and why it's so significant and why without that gift we we are not Christians and we are not the church and we have misunderstood and we are driving and walking and living and running down a path that is a dead end because this is his gift for us the Pentecost gift he gives us on at the early juncture of the New Testament church when the day of

Pentecost arrived the Pentecost feast was why everyone was gathered in Jerusalem Pentecost just means 50 50th day 50th day after the day of atonement and after the Passover after the Passover feast which we see transformed and Jesus Christ takes and uses as the basis for the Lord's Supper that we will celebrate today but 50 days after that was the feast of Passover or the feast of weeks or a feast of harvest and it was when the people of God came together to thank God for not just the planting of Harvest and not just for the seasons but for the harvest itself and they brought back to God the first fruits of their harvest so it's kind of promise fulfillment when they came with all the fruits it was the fact that the the promise of harvest that I'd cut was fulfilled and they brought these first fruits to God and this whole time this whole section of scripture this whole point in the chronology of the New Testament is is filled with first fruits is there's Jesus the first fruits of resurrection and then there's the Holy Spirit which is the first fruits of His ascension and then we have the the believers coming to faith that Corey will preach on next

Sunday morning God willing is the first fruits of that work and it's all to do with the fulfillment of promise and in chapter 1 and verse 5 we look to that didn't we Jesus said look wait because for John baptised with water but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now and there's this huge newness coming into the covenant of God and the covenant he has with his people where in his ascension power and victory he declares this Holy Spirit is to be sent out to the whole of the church and that marks it as a new time where Jesus physically returns but spiritually he doesn't just sit beside us he doesn't just walk on the water he doesn't just speak to us but he and dwells us in the presence of his soul it's better than ascension it's better than resurrection as we look at and think about these realities it is God in us and with us

Emmanuel coming into our lives and hearts so there's a great newness here and there's a great I think we ought to remember this because we were covenant theologians we're cut we believe in the covenant of God and we believe that it's the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant here that that we see and so we believe in continuity with the Old Testament that it's the unfolding and increasingly revealed will of God through his people to the coming of Christ but sometimes we allow that to we forget because of that the discontinuity that this marks a radical difference and a radical newness in our understanding of God and of grace and of covenant and of the victory that he is won for his on the cross and he pours out his spirit on the church in a new and in a radical and in a revolutionary way one baptism one baptism on to the church many fillings and that truth remains real for every Christian when we come to faith we are baptised in the Holy Spirit and then throughout our lives there are many fillings we need constantly to be refilled with the presence of God so it happens here symbolically and significantly at this feast and so we see and we don't have time today to look at that but all the feasts point forward to spiritual truths are fulfilled in the coming of Christ and of his glorious redemptive work but it is for us a gift beyond compare it's momentous so in recognizing and knowing the person of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and in the life of the individual is never and can never be for us a side show we can never sit under this truth and meet just shrug our shoulders in a okay I suppose so that happened a long time ago because it's utterly important to recognize what it means for us as Christians to be indwelt by the Holy

Spirit of God which is the truth and the reality of this passage the truth of this scripture the truth of the mission of God for the church and for us as Chris you can't leave this passage of scripture on the shelf it has huge implications for our day-to-day ordinary living and you're coming today and I'm coming today with all kinds of different needs and all different kind of burdens and joys and struggles and battles and doubts and faith and we need to take and caress and apply this truth to our own lives it's a gift beyond compare now it's very rude isn't it to take a gift and to leave it unwrapped in the corner very rude not to consider what Jesus Christ has done in the pouring out of this gift for us and to recognize it's great significance in our Christian living there's two things I want to say about this gift of the Holy Spirit you could say much more I know the first is presence and the second is power so if we look at ex Ezekiel chapter 36 for example and at verse 27 one of these great Old Testament promises that are looking forward God says through the prophet I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules you shall dwell in the land I gave you your fathers shall be my people and I will be your God I will remove the heart of stone from you and I will give you a heart of flesh I will put my spirit within you this great prophecy of God's presence God's presence with every believer with every Christian with everyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ in a unique way that was unknown to the vast majority of people in the Old

[ 16 : 24 ] Testament and that's that powerful presence is symbolized in the strong wind that comes together suddenly there's a sound like a mighty sounded like it it wasn't but it sounded like it a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting when often associated with the presence of the living God and that's what he's saying he's saying to us every believer will know the presence of the living God in their light lives and hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit and that's why the biblical language for becoming a Christian says you're born again I guess maybe in modern society the whole idea of being born again is taken on the degree of ridicule in the secular world in which we live but it's a very biblical phrase very biblical term because it's speaking about a rebirth it's speaking about the significance of the Holy Spirit coming into the lives of every Christian that we have we are spiritually dead we come to Christ and accept him we are he breathes life into us and we come to recognize and accept him as Lord and Savior and that's a hugely significant reality now that birth for us some of us as covenant children some of us who have never consciously not believed have come through Christian family that birth may be very gentle may not even be tremendously dramatic in any sense but nonetheless is real because as we have come to faith we are infused with the breath of God we become children of God we're adopted into his family and he gives us his presence within us God with us not just God in church not just God when we open the Bible not just God every so often when we listen to a podcast but God infuses his spirit into our life so wherever we walk whatever we do in the most mundane realities of our lives God sees he's present with us in our conscience in our intellect in our personality in all that we are in all that we do he is infused his life into all that we are we are made clean and you know we know these words we hear these words we've moved from death to life we have moved into a whole different spiritual dimension because we have come to know God and that for us is a great gift and a great privilege but can I say it's also a great responsibility it's a great responsibility for us that we are endowed by the Spirit of God we we need to understand that as something more than a philosophical truth theological truth we're children we're children by adoption and by the indwelling of the spirit of the living God God is not some kind of distant benefactor to us he's not our patron he's not the person that we look up to we are a bunch of Christians and God's our patron and we we serve him he's not our genie in a lamp that we call on in simply in times of need to give us something miraculous and amazing in our lives he is not a dancer who dances to our tune this is the living God who comes to dwell in us in the person of his spirit and therefore the core of everything that we believe is relational is that we are in a friendship with him we have that language used biblically a marriage with him he is our king and we are his citizens and we are to recognize and work at and develop that relationship with

his Holy Spirit and we are empowered to do so we're empowered to know God and to love him and to enjoy him through the work of the Holy Spirit so we use all the means of grace I spoke about singing I spoke about church the Bible prayer these are all means of grace that enable us to develop this relationship with the Holy Spirit who lives in us it's a relational reality for his presence and God wherever we are whatever we do however distant we feel from God however we long for his his felt presence and that's a good thing to long for the reality is he says I am with you I have given you my spirit you know me and I will never leave you or forsake you but also doesn't only speak of presence it speaks of power and power transforming power in Jeremiah chapter 31 and at verse 33 we have these words for this is the covenant and again a prophetic promise looking forward this is the covenant that I will make with a house of Israel after those days declares the Lord I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people all of my people will know me from the least to the greatest and there's this great sense in which the law of God the law of love which is what the law of God is the law of loving God and loving our neighbor is just is in engraved on our hearts through the person and through the power of the Holy Spirit and that tongues of fire speaks of the power of God that comes into our lives and the power of his is law the power of his purity the power of his person the power of transforming us towards holiness is given to us by the Holy Spirit so the

Holy Spirit empowers us to desire God and to desire his law and to desire his words and to desire his kingdom to obey him now I know probably the the greatest challenge I have passed early from day to day and week to week when I meet with people is when they say listen I can't I can't live this life I can't live it anymore I can't do it it's impossible and so people walk away people turn their backs people think Christ is harsh and the way is difficult and the way of the world is much easier these things humanly speaking at all true but he has empowered us so that when we say I can't he gently whispers and says you can so I've given you what you need to see your heart transformed and heart moved towards that place of loving service and obedience and empowerment to be different now again can I say that that power then needs in our lives to be harnessed and developed this gift that is given to the church here symbolically seen in the wind and in the tongues of fire for the whole of church needs for us to be harnessed and developed so that's that's where things maybe are different for us where we say we can't we say well actually I know we can't but we go to God with that say may your spirit take and transform my life and heart it's that's the gift we need to keep us from saying I can't see God doesn't take his gift of the Holy Spirit and ram it down our throats he just simply doesn't do that he doesn't force us into that place where take this Holy Spirit this is the last thing I do he doesn't do that because he's he's brought us to life he's brought us into relationship and he's given us this gift and he says don't neglect this gift take this gift and develop it wait on me as they as an early church waited on the Lord and seek this gift and seek the reality of this gift and protect this gift you know you're in relationships all of you all of you are in relationships whether it's parental or siblings or with husbands or wives or lovers or colleagues or friends we're all in relationships and you know and I know that all of these relationships needs protected and developed and matured we don't simply say hello one day and then never develop that relationship ever again we know that friendship is something that we need to work on and when we offend one another we deal with that and we break through it and we ask for forgiveness and we grow and we mature because that's what friendship is and what God is giving us is relationship with himself and our responsibility is to recognize that we have a responsibility to develop that relationship the New

Testament speaks a lot about resisting the spirit of God quenching the spirit of God grieving the spirit of God look up these references go home go on to the internet go up Google just put on grieving the spirit resisting the spirit look at the look at the context of these verses and we'll find that we have responsibility to live in a way that enables the relationship that God is giving us the gift he's given us with the Holy Spirit to be developed and encouraged and strengthened we're not to ignore him we're not to be prayerless we're not to have a closed Bible we're not to give up on the fellowship of worship and of praise together we're to encourage one another we're to be those who daily need to put sin to death because sin in our hearts when we enthrone it when we love it when we are jealous or grievous in our thinking or whatever sin it might be if we cherish and nurture that then we grieve and resist and quench the spirit and therefore we struggle and we say I can't but he's given us this power to put to death this the remaining sin in our lives by his and he loves he loves for us to know that and he simply wants us to rely on him to recognize our need to understand that he has given us what we need in his spirit relationally and in power and in presence to live our

Christian lives we are not on our own isn't that the greatest struggle we have Lord why why isn't it different why can't it be easier why can't I know heaven now why do suicides happen what is it about we don't understand we don't know we can't do it in our own strength but he has provided the power and the presence to enable us to grow and to develop and to know victory over death and over the grave so very briefly very briefly what else very briefly can we learn from this passage and we can only skim through we learn it's for all we recognize and know that they were all filled verse 4 with the Holy Spirit they were all in one place it's very significant the whole of the New Testament church at that point was all together as they waited for God to pour out his spirit and so every believer is given his gift every believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit from Pentecost onwards that's the case there's there's no other kind of Christian there's not a spirit filled baptized

[ 28 : 59 ] Christian and a kind of second-class Christian all Christians are baptized in the spirit and coming to Christ and all Christians continue to need the Holy Spirit of God as for all the danger for us sometimes is that we forget that reality and we try and live our Christian lives without that relation without that miracle without that spiritual reality without that grace filled experience in our lives so the danger for you and for me sometimes is if we allow Christ to be a stranger if we have no desire for his worship and his people and his holiness no desire to change no desire to pray no need for him no witness to the resurrection in our lives then we do need to consider if we understand what the gospel is we can't live on our own as Christians of course we can it's one baptism many fillings we keep going back asking God to be with us in his presence in his spirit to help us love his word to understand it to give us an appetite for it to love his people with all our failings and faults and to love the means of grace is given us so it's for all and it's also a new society isn't it that he gives us here we have people here who all come together and they all speak in the work they all are baptized in the Holy Spirit and they all speak in different tongues tongues of all the different Jewish people that have gathered in Jerusalem and yet there's an incredible unity in the diversity of that and there's all kinds of things that we don't have time to speak about here about culture and the reality of culture and the importance of culture but also the fact that God works over and above culture and isn't bound by it and transcends it he reimagines culture for us and that's important he breaks or he unites despite culture and through culture he brings us together and he gives us his gifts the gifts of the spirit and the fruit of the spirit to work together so an interesting quote this week about Scotland which I'm gonna apply spiritually is that we like building bridges not walls and that's what the Holy Spirit does for us he reminds us that we are in culturally speaking and generally we're not building walls we're building bridges to one another and a God because God has built a bridge to us and we remind ourselves that the God we worship here in the middle of Edinburgh 21st century God is not a Scottish God God is not a free church God God is the sovereign God of the universe and we rejoice in the diverse cultural expression of understanding God and grace but recognize that he can't be bound by culture but works in and through culture it's a new society united by the spirit and a society that's that we're all part of that speaks the language of worship these people with all the variety of like miraculous variety of languages they were given on this occasion declared the praises of God together that's what they did the wonders and the marvels of God and it was remarkable for those who were listening that's our politics it's the politics of worship that we profess and that we believe and that we speak as believers and we declare the wonders of God that's what we do together do you know what often happens in churches we slag one another and we're divided and we find fault and we criticize and we judge and we condemn but our calling under the power and grace of the Holy Spirit is to declare the wonders of God that's what we are asked to do and it's amazing we are to testify as to why he's worthy we're to say he's transformed our lives and he has given us hope and it's amazing what we're able to do it's very interesting the Galileans were known to be quite a kind of rough people and they spoke quite roughly they were kind of working class or a guttural way they spoke and it wasn't very glamorous a very sophisticated and yet here these Galileans were told they're speaking in all the languages of the known world and miraculously declare declaring the wonders of God it's a language and then very briefly sorry I didn't mean to go on very briefly the last six for all it's a new society and we need to expect a reaction as God's people who believe in God's gift who've received the Holy

Spirit and who seek the blessing and grace of that we need to recognize and know that as new people and as those who declare the wonders of God in our lives and our workplaces and our homes and our societies that that will be noted and do you see all the different responses here amazement perplexity bewilderment questions ridicule the whole gambit is comes across here we we see there's great amazement in people as they see the Holy Spirit poured out on the church I long for that here as a community that people who look in our friends that the ones you've been praying for the three three friends you're praying for all the time but many of them came at the cattle service some of them see and know your Christian life that they are amazed sometimes perplexed sometimes bewildered by the fact of our Christian community and our Christian lives and the difference that we are we try so hard to assimilate maybe it's time that we simply declared the wonders of God in our lives by obedience by the power of God and by his presence and when we do so they will ask questions they will ask questions what does it mean what must we do progressive questions and our task our privilege is to simply tell them you don't need to be experts we just tell them what we know declare the wonders of God as we can in our own culture in our own family in our own way just tell them let God do his work we don't we're not asked to convert or change bring someone to life that's God's privilege and God's work he will send his spirit but it will also possibly and occasionally react and ridicule they'll think we're just crazy mad drunken people one way or another we persecuted we can't avoid that we just keep loving them and we keep seeking to be counter cultural and recognizing that what God asks us to do is beyond our ability without his power and without his spirit so as we come to the Lord's table may we just spend a few minutes just in silence as we celebrate the Lord's supper and think of his mission think of his work think of his love for us and think of his outstanding gift and remind ourselves of simplicity simplicity of the Christian faith which is to ask and to receive and to cooperate with all that he has done on our behalf and for us let's pray briefly Lord God we ask and pray that you would remember us today blesses around your table and may we know your grace and your favor upon us help us to love you and serve you more and more each day for we ask it in Jesus name they're gonna sing briefly in a moment and I'm gonna ask that if you're intending and hoping to sit with us at the large table and participate in the bread and the wine that we're gonna sing a Sam shortly we sometimes sing our

Sam's unaccompanied and we'll do that this morning invite you if you're if you're upstairs and you intend to participate in the Lord's supper if you may be during the singing of that Sam if you want to come downstairs just so you're in the body of the church and it makes it a little bit easier to serve so if you are upstairs and want to participate during the singing please come down and sit on the there's plenty of chairs for everyone and also when we celebrate Lord supper not every time but four times a year we welcome new members to the congregation and it's our privilege today to welcome five new members to the congregation we ask new members to write a testimony of their faith and also just to answer one or two questions from the front and I'll just introduce the five people who are worshiping with us today and who are joining the congregation first is Dan Cooper Dan moved up from England to Edinburgh last year for work and he settled among us Dan didn't grow up in a Christian home but came to faith in Christ as a saviour at university and like many of us he says over the past few years although I've stumbled and fallen short many times I've grown in knowledge of God and love of his son and



I know that his grace is sufficient for me Nathan is with us today Nathan Kate is from Australia he worships with us came from a missionary family moved over to Scotland to see how the other half lives and we're hoping that he'll stay here long term he professed faith in Christ and his childhood and then went through a rocky period when he left school but found that Christian friends and a commitment to the church helped him tremendously and he now says while things have continued to be up and down with some very specific challenges moving to the UK we can appreciate anything by God's grace I can agree with a songwriter who wrote whatever my lot I was taught me to say it as well as well with my soul and in Alstair and Kathy McLeod are also joining us both Alstair and Kathy became Christians in their teens in their homes in the Highlands and they have both been involved in Christian ministry throughout their lives together Alstair served as a minister in rural and urban settings he's been a church planter he's been a professor in the college and together they have always served Jesus Christ as a team that had turned to Lewis last year to look after a couple years ago to look after Alstair's mum and now they've relocated to Edinburgh this summer and they say we have listened to this is good we have known your minister for far too long but are working hard to give him some respect knowing that the great that God can give us the grace to do that seriously they say it's great to be here enjoying being minister to and looking forward to what the Lord has in store for us all in St. C's we all have our battles to face and then Fraser Patterson Fraser is a freelance tour guide in Edinburgh he's been part of St. Columbus along with his wife Jane for the last 18 months Fraser it wasn't a Christian when he first came along but through the preaching the fellowship and particularly doing one-to-one Bible studies with Paul James Griffiths on the book of John he has come to understand the gospel and put in his trust in Jesus as his saviour these he says are some aspects in which my experience of St. Columbus has made me open my heart to actively participating in the Christian faith and to start becoming a better person with Christ's help and by his grace and I'm sure I will continue to do so and that's our prayer for each and every one of us and I would just ask them to stand up for a moment and I'm gonna ask them the questions we ask of people coming into membership and then pray for them very simple questions and just reflect our understanding of what it means to be a member so these five members Alistair and Kathy and Dan and Fraser stand up sorry to embarrass you in such a way do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God the only saviour of sinners in whom you put your personal hope and trust as a sinner needing forgiveness grace and spiritual life do you resolve by prayerful reliance on the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to live as this continue living as disciples of Christ do you promise to support this church family and its worship and work with your gifts and graces to the best of your ability and do you submit yourself to the pastoral care teaching and discipline of the spiritual leaders of the church and seek its peace and prosperity as we promise to love and care for you I'm going to pray Lord God we ask and pray that you would bless our friends today watch over them take care of them love them we thank you for Dan and for Nathan for Alistair and Kathy and for Fraser we thank you for the experience they've already known I know and understand that they would all be able to give their amen to the great gift of the Holy Spirit who has been with them and in their lives and who has transformed their hearts to know and love and serve Jesus Christ we thank you Lord for them and we pray that

[ 43 : 17 ] you would bless us all as we seek to minister to one another encourage one another serve Jesus Christ through the local church which is your great model and great pattern for us so bless us now for the moments that we sit together at the Lord's table may it be refreshing and renewing and exciting for us so to do for we ask it in Jesus precious name