

Catch the revival 4: But you shall receive power from on high

(aka Holy Spirit)

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In around 609 BC, the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet Joel, son of Pethuel to speak these words:

*And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on My menservants and maidservants,
I will pour out My Spirit in those days. Joel 2: 28-29 (BSB)*

First, I suppose the prophet never imagined that this prophesy would take more than 600 years to be fulfilledⁱ. Long after he was dead and the Old Testament had come to an end, is when it was finally fulfilled on the day of Pentecost - when the Holy Spirit first came upon 120 disciples gathered in an upper room as narrated in Acts 2. This day of Pentecost being 50 days after Jesus, the Passover lamb was sacrificed and then resurrected by the Power of the same Spiritⁱⁱ. Since then, he, the Holy Spirit has rested on millions since.

Second, the prophet must have wondered how God's Spirit would actually fall on all people. He must have been stunned because previously the Spirit had never fallen on all people, he usually only came on select individuals like Prophets - to Speak God's oracles, on Kings to lead with wisdom and others for selected purposes – like giving Hur knowledge to build the tabernacle or Gideon for courage to go to war. The greatest number of people on whom the Spirit fell previously at the same time was perhaps the incident in the book of numbers when some the Spirit resting on Moses was transferred to 70 elders, causing them to all prophesyⁱⁱⁱ.

Moses himself however expressed a prayer about this event when Joshua his aide tried to stop some of the 70 from prophesying. He said: "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" Number 11: 29.

Old Testament revivals – a fore taste

From the time of Moses to the fulfilment of Joel's prophesy, there were several "fore tastes" of what happens when revival comes and throughout the Old Testament there are many examples which must have prepared the 120 at Pentecost for when revival came. For example:

- Before Israel was revived under the Prophet Elijah- fire came from heaven. *1 Kings 18: 16-46*
- When Israel was revived under Hezekiah but later threatened by Assyrians laying siege of the Holy City – 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were killed in one night by an angel, King Sennacherib the blasphemer was assassinated by his sons and 15 years added to the

King Hezekiah's life even when God has sent Prophet Isaiah to tell this righteous King his time to die had come. *2 Kings 18 – 20.*

- When Israel was revived under Ezra the priest - they let go of foreign wives (Ezra 9-10) and tradition holds that it's during this time that the Old Testament canon was completed. ^{iv}
- When Israel was revived under John the baptiser - crowds got baptised but the biggest transformation was that the water simply prepared their hearts for the Jesus, the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3: 11).

These Old Testament revivals were as a foretaste nothing to be compared with the latter glory which the Spirit started on the day of Pentecost as we shall see.

These Old Testament accounts great as they were are simply a shadow of what this mighty Spirit of God can do, as we will now see.

Jesus prepares the disciples for the first revival at Pentecost

It is against such a back drop of the Old Testament that we can see that the words of the Lord (who is the Spirit) through the prophet Joel were indeed phenomenal when you consider the history of the Old Testament.

As I have narrated, previously when the Spirit came, he only came on select people, rather than all people – and usually to fulfil a task, rather than to permanently dwell with them, for in the Old Testament, God dwelt in a temple, not in human bodies.

The Lord in this latter-day move was signifying a partial break from the Old Testament pattern, the Spirit would come, but the reason for his coming would be much more than in the Old Covenant. There were two main differences in this latter day move which I will shortly share:

1. The work of preaching.
2. The signs and wonders which would follow this preaching.

When the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, his role as Jesus explained to the disciples, was to give them the ability to fulfil a key task. This task required power and there was only one main task for all believers: **preach**. This work was necessary – in advance of the terrifying DAY OF THE LORD as prophesied by many prophets including Joel.

This latter day move of the Spirit is therefore a work to give men courage to go ahead of the Lord of the harvest and bring in his harvest of men and women, so that no one will perish when Jesus returns a second time.

It is for this mighty work that the Lord Jesus told the disciples in advance before Pentecost this:

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift the Father promised, which you have heard Me discuss. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1: 4-5 (BSB)

And this:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (BSB).

Revival, obvious as it might seem is not possible without the Holy Spirit – for he is the Power of God. We should therefore, like the first disciples in that first revival of the Church age, pray for the gift and then when we have received this power, do what we are supposed to do with this power, preach! We should go and tell all people about Jesus:

- In Jerusalem (our neighbourhood);
- In Judea (our country);
- In Samaria (our region); and
- To the ends of the world (all nations).

Pentecost and the work of preaching.

The bible indeed shows proof of this power from on high because after the Spirit came on those first disciples, as Jesus had promised, Peter their leader preached powerfully and 3,000 got saved in one day. Here is how the bible describes this miraculous event, this first revival:

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!” They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other. But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”

Acts 2:1 – 8, 11-13 (NLT).

What we see here is that:

- There was unity – all were meeting together in one place.
- The fall of the Spirit was unexpected, humanly speaking – Suddenly there was a sound from heaven.
- The supernatural abilities came from the Spirit – they began speaking in other languages.
- People responded differently – while everyone came running to see, some were bewildered and amazed to hear the praise of God and others thought it was drunkenness.

Your homework is to read Peter’s sermon in Act 2: 14-36 but now we turn to what happened after Peter preached:

Peter’s words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter replied, “Each of you must 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. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God.” Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation!” Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. Acts 2: 37 – 41 (NLT).

What we can conclude, including lessons for us today is this:

- Peter’s sermon was powerful and its effect, no doubt led by the Spirit was to cause the word to pierce people’s hearts, to cause people to want to change their lives, hence they asked: “Brothers what should we do”. We should likewise our preaching to convict people of sin.
- In response to the preaching and people feeling conviction, Peter offered a solution and in response, 3,000 got baptised that first day. We should likewise extend an invitation to those who feel the conviction of sin so they can believe and get baptised.
- Each of these also received the Spirit, as Peter declared – thus the beginning of God’s promise being fulfilled for in one day, 3,120 received the Spirit, where previously it had been only 70. For those of you who like maths, this New Testament outpouring following Jesus’ new covenant was a 4,457% increase in the outpouring of the Spirit from the Old Testament Covenant of Moses!

Signs and wonders and other effects of the revival at Pentecost

This same Holy Spirit in addition to the main task of preaching, also brings other “signs and wonders” or evidence so to speak - things that accompany those who preach the gospel, as if to confirm the message. Jesus said this about these signs:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. Mark 16: 17- 18 (KJV).

And these things came true because in the book of Acts which documents the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers who received the Spirit, we see examples of what happened after this revival:

1. There was devotion to the Lord.

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. Acts 2: 42-34 (NIV).

We see here that the disciples remained disciplined and followed what Jesus had taught them – for example in his teaching, in being united (fellowship), in holy communion (breaking bread) and in prayer. Doing these things kept them moving in the Power of the Spirit and many signs and wonders followed them.

2. There was increased generosity.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them

all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. Acts 4: 32-35 (NIV).

3. There were unbelievable signs and wonders...

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. Acts 5: 12-16 (NIV)

4. ...Which caused jealousy among other religious– resulting in persecution.

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life." At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. Acts 5: 17 – 21 (NIV).

5. The gospel spread far and wide (missions).

The book of Acts narrates the work of Paul in detail and shows the effect of these missionary journeys by apostles like Paul including:

- Travel to places like Cyprus, Antioch, Corinth, Athens and Ephesus to preach (Acts 13-19)
- Miraculous healings such as a lame man in Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14), a man raised from the dead in Troas (Acts 20) and Paul surviving a snake bite in Malta (Acts 28).

Lessons for our generation –to catch the revival

Before we conclude, you may be wondering, why is Pentecost classed as a revival? Well for the simple reason that before the disciples received the Power from on high, they had been scattered at Jesus' arrest such that for example thereafter, Peter had even denied Jesus 3 times, Thomas had doubted the story of the first witnesses that Jesus had been resurrected and the disciples continually asked the resurrected Jesus about when the restoration of the kingdom of Israel would take place (see Acts 1: 6).

By comparison, after their revival, they became courageous and started completing the work Jesus had begun to do.

And now that we have seen the stories and the pattern from that revival at Pentecost, what can we expect would happen if we ourselves were clothed with power from on high:

1. **Unity would come upon us**, the church for we know that when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were in one accord.

2. **Those who get saved will multiply and be added.** There is both multiplication and addition. No subtraction and no division.
3. **Fear falls upon people and they highly esteem the name of Jesus** - people won't mock our God, for even those who start by mocking us to be drunk by the end will ask in fear "brothers what shall we do?"
4. **Conviction of sin will increase** for the Spirit when he comes brings conviction for he proves that the world is wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). We shall no longer need to tell others with much shouting that this sin is wrong or that action is condemned by God, no, even the weakest of them will be as strong as David, as if led by the angel of the Lord himself (see Zechariah 12: 8). No one will need to teach them, for God himself will teach them (see Hebrews 8: 11).
5. **Generosity will increase** - people will give their money to God's work and to help others, people will break down their gates and fences and share with their neighbours.
6. **Persecution will increase but so will miraculous rescues.** Those in jail will have doors open, will be delivered by the angel of the Lord and through earth quakes (Acts 16: 26). The dead will be resurrected by believers, like Peter did with Tabitha/Dorcas (Acts 9: 36-43).
7. **Truth will increase.** Revelation of knowledge will come. When this power from on high comes, our Lord who is the Spirit - he will explain all things to us, even those we previously couldn't handle (John 14: 26).

What are you waiting for to be clothed with power from on high?

What are you waiting for to cry out to him who has the Spirit without measure (John 3: 34) and will gladly give him to those who ask him? He is no trickster to give you a snake instead of a fish or a scorpion instead of an egg - no he wants to give at good gift to you and what better gift than his Spirit (See Luke 11: 11-13)?

This is the Spirit about who we say is:

- Wonderful counsellor
- Advocate
- Helper
- Regenerator
- Sanctifier
- Redeemer
- The Spirit of Wisdom and of Understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of Might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2).

Revival prayer

Lord Jesus, Maranatha! Come! Lord Jesus come pour your Spirit on us like you did at Pentecost. Amen!

Notes

ⁱ <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-joel>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gotquestions.org/day-Pentecost.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ See Numbers 11: 25

^{iv} <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/creating-the-canon/>