

The Descent of the Spirit

(Acts 2)

I'll never forget a crucial gospel conversation I had with my father, a non-Christian at the time. He had collapsed at work, his heart stopped completely.

Thankfully, someone administered CPR for 5 minutes until the paramedics arrived, got out their defibrillator, yelled: "**CLEAR!**", and zapped his heart back into action. ...The blue faded from his lips, and his colour came back, along with his life!

With a second chance at life, and knowing he'd not lived the life he should of, he asked, "*Is there hope for **CHANGE...real** change?*"

Before answering, I asked what his thoughts were?

His answer sounded like what our culture is telling us:

Your problems come from your environment, the circumstances **outside** yourself, and the solution is in you, is you.

'Out there' is economic disparity, dysfunctional relationship, social prejudice. In here: "*Believe in yourself. You have the power to be whatever you want!*"

Athletes & pop-stars are constantly banging this drum. And it's become more & more prevalent in the world of psycho-therapy.

"*What Brand Is Your Therapist?*" is a recent *NYT Magazine* article by Lori Gottlieb.

Entering a new career in psychotherapy, Gottlieb realised the business side would be hard going, since visits to therapists have been in steady decline by 30%.

So, Gottlieb sought the advice of *experienced* psychotherapist, who after 2 decades of private practice, became a branding consultant.

Listen carefully to this therapist-turned-consultant:

Over those years, I saw a notable shift:

I'd see fewer & fewer people come in saying, "I want to change."

More & more people come because they want "someone else or something else to change."

From a 'branding' perspective, the fix was simple.

My pitch went from "I treat people with depression and anxiety"

*to "Are you having trouble with **DIFFICULT PEOPLE** in your life?"¹*

[not "fix me", but "Help me handle them!"]

Our culture says:

Your Problem's out there, your solution's in yourself.

But Christianity teaches the exact OPPOSITE:

*Our main **Problem is within** (our sin)*

*Our **Solution is out there . . . up there:** God's *saving, transforming* power*

- coming down to us in His Son crucified & risen for us,
- coming down to us in the washing of rebirth & renewal by the Holy Spirit² now poured out on **all peoples.**

¹ Lori Gottlieb, "What Brand Is Your Therapist", *New York Times Magazine*, 23 Nov 2012.

² Titus 3:5

My Dad realised "himself" was not his solution, and thankfully asked his question!

"Is there hope for real change?" . . . leaving his old ways behind

And those who "over-heard" what went on at Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 asked a question:

"What does this mean?"

The Holy Spirit – *out there* coming to *indwell* people – "What does this mean?"

It means hope for **Change!**...

- real change regarding our STANDING before God:
Change of **separation from God** to **peace with God!**
- and change in experiencing the POWER of God:
from **sin enslaving us** to **transforming joy in God + sharing His news.**

The **MAIN IDEA** of Pentecost's outpouring of God's spirit is this:

*God's GOSPEL powerfully goes out from us,
because His empowering Spirit dwells in us!*

The Spirit's coming is not about '*feeling*' an experience. It's about *fullness for the gospel.*

I have received *heaps* emails, texts, questions at Grace Group this week, good questions:

You're preaching on Pentecost!:

- *Are you going to explain this other passage over here & that passage over there?*
- *Are you going to cover all miraculous sign gifts, and whether they are for today?*
- *What about the various ministries of the Holy Spirit?*

Woah! It's only 1 sermon!

Not a semester long course on the Doctrine of the Holy (Pneumatology). So . . .

- We'll see the occurrence of miraculous Tongues resurface a couple more times in Acts, and we'll answer additional questions then!
- We'll see the gift of Healing in chapter 3, and discuss what was it? Is it here today?
- Same with Agabus in chapter 11 and the gift of Prophecy; what was it? Is it here today?

But Power to spread the Gospel/fulfil the Great Commission is the FOCUS of Acts 2.

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, & you will be my WITNESSES in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Way back in the beginning, in Genesis, God's *Spirit* was hovering over the world, God made Adam from dust and *breathed* into him, and so Adam became a living being.

God's breath is the beginning of all life – physical life & *spiritual* life:

to enter the Kingdom of God, we must be born again, born of the Spirit.

Without His Spirit, His mission cannot be accomplished.³

Now, with the Spirit's coming the first 'gospel ripple' *takes motion* in Jerusalem.

Pentecost ties in with the Grand Theme of the Book of Acts

The Unstoppable Good News of God's Kingdom!

³ Robert Mounce, "Acts", Expositor's Bible Commentary.

So far, we've seen **2** reasons the Gospel is Unstoppable. Last week we saw...
The Gospel is Unstoppable because Everything's Going "According to Plan"

Even the biggest speed bumps – like *Judas betraying Jesus* . . . prophesied
from the beginning & fulfilled, as planned!: God bringing the offer of
salvation to the world in Christ crucified. "He's got this!"

So trust God with your obstacles in life, especially *gospel/witnessing* obstacles.

The **1st** reason Luke gave for the Unstoppable Gospel was His 'introduction' to Acts,
King Jesus is enthroned in heaven! His Ascension emboldens to our Witness.

This links directly with our passage, Luke's 3rd reason the Gospel is Unstoppable:

*Because Jesus has Ascended,
The Spirit has Descended
to empower us to Witness!*

Remember what Jesus said to the Disciples at the last supper?:

*It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don't go away the Helper will not come to you.
But if I go, I will send Him to you. (John 16:7)*

Jesus has Ascended . . . so let's get the party started! Here's our Outline?

- **Say What?!** – Old Feast, New Sign . . . for all nations (2:1-13)
- **Here's What** – Old Prophecy, New Ministries . . . for all people (2:14-20)
- **Now What?** – Old Promise, New Name . . . for everyone (2:21ff; 4:12) [just a bit today]

SAY WHAT?! – OLD FEAST, NEW SIGN . . . FOR ALL NATIONS (2:1-13)

Let's start with the . . .

• **Old Feast: Pentecost**

"When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place." (v1)

In the Old Covenant under Moses,
Pentecost was 1 of 3 yearly festivals in Israel when the head of the family was required
to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship and offer a sacrifice at the Temple.

So every adult Jewish male in the Roman empire male was required to be in Jerusalem.
This is why verse 5 says,

"Now there were Jews staying in Jerusalem, devout people from every nation under heaven."

Every nation known at the time, of course. And not only *ethnic* Jews, but v. 10 adds,
*"both Jews & converts" [Gentile converts to Judaism; "proselytes" is an older word for
converts]*

"Pentecost" is the Greek word for "**fiftieth**".

In the OT, it was called the Festival of "Weeks" because, as it says in Leviticus 23,

*"You are to count seven complete weeks...**50 days** until the **day after the seventh Sabbath**"*

50 days after the Passover. (another feast, recalling God's deliverance from Egypt)
Influenced by the Greek Empire, eventual Israel started calling the festival *Pentecost*.

You'd think 2's plenty, but a 3rd name for this Feast is the Feast of Harvest

“You are to count seven complete weeks ... **50 days** until the **day after** the seventh Sabbath, and then **present an offering of new grain to the LORD**” (Leviticus 23:15-16)

THE SIGNIFICANCE: Pentecost is a **harvest** festival, thanking God for His PROVISION. And now, by of the PROVISION of the Holy Spirit, the harvest of SOULS is beginning: **3,000** will trust in Jesus by chapter’s end!

. . . This *Old Feast* is now accompanied by a *New Sign*

• **New Sign**:

Doing one better than the old retailers, “*Wow! Sight & Sound*”,

The Spirit’s coming has 3 supernatural signs — sight, sound, and strange speech

Look at verses 2-4,

*Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing **WIND** came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. They saw tongues like flames of **FIRE** that separated and rested on each one of them. Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different **TONGUES**, as the Spirit enabled them.*

What happened at Pentecost was

not a *subjective, psychological* experience,

but an *external, objective* experience that many in town heard, including non-Christians.

Likened to *natural* phenomena (wind, fire & speech); but the signs were **supernatural**

The noise was not wind, but sounded like it;

the sight was not fire but resembled it;

and the speech was in languages which were known, yet unknown!

2 places in particular in the OT share some of these signs:

1] God forming the Old Covenant with Israel, in Exodus 19

“There was **thunder** and a **loud sound like a trumpet**...and The LORD **came down** on Mt. Sinai with **fire**.” (Exodus 19:

Similar signs: violent noise, fire, God coming down to His people...then giving His Law

2] God’s promise of a New Covenant with His people in Ezekiel 36-37

“I will gather you from all the countries...I will place **My Spirit** within you and move you to follow My precepts and observe My law . . . I will put breath in you so that you come to life . . . As I [Ezekiel] prophesied, there was a noise in the valley of dry bones” (Ezek 36:24,27; 37:5,7)

Similarities to Acts 2:

gathered from other countries, fire, God coming down to His people...to follow His mission. Significant parallels about God dwelling with His people, and in the **new covenant**, a **new dwelling** by His Spirit in the Temple of His **people**, rather than bricks & mortar.

That’s the familiar. So what’s the NEW sign? . . .

• **New Sign: Speaking in UNLEARNED Languages/Tongues** (Grk: *glossa*, ‘glossary’!)

This is what amazed the people in town. What exactly is this ‘sign’ called tongues?

There is confusion about this today, as there was then . . .
 just look at the triple emphasis about the confusion & amazement (vv. 6, 7, 12)
 This "amazement" is a **good** thing in this case – because here it gathered people in,
 rather than scared them away.

Why? Because there was **UNDERSTANDING!**

When Paul writes the Corinthians, about tongues with **no** understanding/interpretation,
 it's a **bad** thing: it *scares people away*, rather than gathering them! An *abuse* of the gift

So let's get to the bottom of this gift of tongues (at least here is Acts).

Without a shadow of doubt, the tongues the disciples were speaking were
REAL HUMAN languages, as the triple emphasis makes clear (vv. 6, 7, 12)

Diverse languages & dialects known & used by travellers gathered in Jerusalem at the feast.
Not the common language (Aramaic) nor the trade language/lingua franca (Greek). *Native*.

Here's the MARVEL:

- the languages were *known* to those **Listening**
- but *unknown* to those **speaking**

This is what makes it miraculous, bewildering

The hearing was **naturally** understood.

The speaking was **supernatural** . . . *miraculous*

They were speaking languages they'd never learned.

Verses 7-8: "They were astounded and amazed, saying, "Look, aren't all these who are
 speaking **Galileans**? HOW IS IT that each of us can hear **them** in our own native language?"

Jesus' was raised in *Nazareth*, in the region of Galilee. So most of His Disciples were Galilean.

Hometown boys! And Galilean's had a distinct accent.

Recall in the Gospels . . . after the arrest of Jesus, during His trial, Matthew writes,

A servant girl approached Peter and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean."

But Peter denied it in front of everyone...So those standing there approached Peter, saying

*You really are one of them, since even your **ACCENT** gives you away."* (Matt 26:71-73)

I doubt they said '**Ja-E-sus**' like TV preachers! But it was notable, like most accents.

The Galileans were largely **fishing** folk by the Sea of Galilee – '**simple** folk', not learned.

The marvel is that unlearned fishermen are speaking **all** the languages of the known world!

Today, it be like . . . well, if "**dopey-Dave**" started suddenly . . .

. . . speaking Maori, Nato Heperi would understand me!

. . . speaking Mandarin, Fiona Lim would understand me.

If, "**unlearned Leanne**" started suddenly . . .

. . . speaking Polish, Joanna Krav-chick (Krawczyk) would understand her!

. . . speaking Finnish, Kyosti would understand every other word & Brett Spitz would pick up
 the rest! ☺

That's what was happening at Pentecost.

Pentecost was an historic festival where miraculously unlearned languages were spoken, but needed **no interpretation**, because the **INTERNATIONAL** listeners *already, naturally* understood what was being their native language, native tongue.

So from Acts 2, here's a good DEFINITION of the biblical "Gift of Tongues":

Praising God's gospel glory in human language(s) which the speaker has never learned.

Now . . . the really important part is WHAT were they speaking about!

"RANDOM" is such a popular phrase amongst youth these days:

*"Wow . . . that was like, totally **random**".*

Well, the gift of tongues is totally NOT "random"!

And totally not the "babbling" you see from televangelists.

Biblical tongues are not only *intentional* and *meaningful*, they are **gospel**-centred.

Notice the phrase, "**God's gospel glory**" in my definition.

Where do I get that from?...verse 11:

"we hear them declaring the magnificent acts of God in our own tongues"

μεγαλεία

[mega!]

What are the "mighty/magnificent acts" of God – especially in the book of Acts?

Mostly, the resurrection of Jesus: Acts 4:33,

*"With (**μεγάλη**) **great power** the apostles were giving testimony to the **RESURRECTION** of the Lord Jesus, and (**μεγάλη**) **great grace** was on them all."*

to that end!

Our great commission is to witness not just about Jesus' *death*, but also His *resurrection*.

The book of Acts mentions resurrection MORE than any other event or doctrine.

Every extended gospel 'conversation'/sermon in Acts mentions Jesus raised/resurrected!⁴

So the gift of tongues – here and elsewhere – is declaring God's gospel glory.

Let's move on from their **Experience** of tongues to the **Explanation** of tongues,
From **Say What?!** to **Here's What!...** Here's what's going on.

⁴ In the *Gospels & Epistles*, the **Cross** of Christ is the emphatic mighty work, where our sins are paid in full.

In verse 20 of Acts 2, Peter says,

*"The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the (**μεγάλη**) **great** and glorious day of the Lord comes."*

In the Bible, prophecy often – even *usually* – has a now-&-later relevance.

Relevant to the context of the original readers/listeners

Relevant to everyone in a future day.

Has there already been an important gospel day in history when the sun turned dark?

The Crucifixion of Jesus!

More reason to see the 'magnificent works' being spoken as primarily gospel glory.

HERE'S WHAT? – OLD PROPHECY, NEW MINISTRIES . . . FOR ALL PEOPLE (2:14-20)

Peter begins his explanation by elimination: "it's NOT this" . . . verses 13-15

Some sneered and said, "They're drunk on new wine."

Peter stood up with the Eleven

Either the 11 stood silently, as a demonstration of unity, or . . .

chats began more informally in groups, until the 'sneering', & Peter called for order.

Back to verse 14,

Peter raised his voice, and proclaimed to them:

"Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let me explain this to you and pay attention to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only 9 in the morning."

We can safely gather from this argument, Peter's not in *Australia on a Saturday morn!!*

In v.16 Peter gets into the **Old Prophecy** that these Jews & converts to Judaism should be familiar with:

On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

And it will be in the last days, says God,

that I will pour out my Spirit on all people;

then your sons and your daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophesy.

A couple things deserve mention here.

1] Peter says Joel is being fulfilled in the first century:

Verse 17 – The "last days" are here.

The "last days" stopwatch began with Jesus coming, saving & sending His Spirit.

As the author of Hebrews put it,

"In these last days, God has spoken to us in His Son"

The "former days" preceded Jesus, who is the 'Final word'.

Until His return, there is no new phase, nothing more final

So the last days span from Jesus 1st coming and continue until His 2nd coming.

2] Later in Acts we will come to '*visions*', like Ananias in chapter 9, Peter in chapter 10, Paul in chapter 16. So hold your horses 'til then. ☺

3] You may not have noticed what we must address here & now . . . drum roll . . .

Joel never once mentions TONGUES!

Is Peter trying to *pull the wool over their eyes*, doing a *shifty spin* on Scripture by claiming this "new sign" – tongues at Pentecost – *fulfils Joel's prophecy?*

Not at all. Notice . . .

Joel twice mentions in that day when God pours out His spirit, people will **PROPHECY**

I belaboured the point earlier that the *tongues* were **understood** by the listeners.

This is *super* important – here’s why.

When Paul discusses tongues & prophecy in 1 Corinthians, he says, to build up the church, The gift of prophecy is **GREATER** than the gift of tongues:

One who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues . . .

Why?

Without ‘Understanding’, a church is not ‘Built Up/Growing’ in maturity or numerically.

This is the **MAIN** point of 1 Corinthians 14.

But then Paul adds this crucial qualifier at the end of verse 5,

*“UNLESS he **INTERPRETS** so that the church may be built up.”*

A **foreign** tongue is not understood – try parachuting off a plane into somewhere **Farsi** is spoken, or maybe where **Xhosa** is spoken, with its “click” consonants.

If you haven’t learned the foreign language . . . you’re clueless & vulnerable!

But when a foreign tongue is interpreted, this brings understanding , and so, people in church can be built up – *just as* prophecy builds up *because* it’s **naturally understood**.

I’ll illustrate the “comparative **value**” of tongues & prophecy this with a **COIN** analogy.

- Let’s declare the “value” of *prophecy* to be \$2.
- Paul said prophecy is greater than tongues, so let’s say the “value” of *prophecy* is \$1
When paired with the \$1 gift of interpretation (understanding) the value = prophecy, \$2

Prophecy is no greater than tongues which are interpreted/understood.

But if foreign tongues are not interpreted/understood,
they have **\$0 value** to build the church.

Let’s now carry this analogy over to the historically unique case of Pentecost in Acts 2.

At Pentecost, the foreign tongues were unlearned so ***supernaturally spoken***,
But given the foreign visitors, the foreign tongues were ***naturally understood***.

No interpretation needed, it’s the understanding that brings the full **PROPHETIC value**.

THIS is why Peter says Pentecost fulfils what Joel wrote:

*In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people;
then your sons and your daughters will **PROPHESY***

Foreign Tongues, understood naturally or by the gift of interpretation = prophecy.

I hope that’s clear!

Now onto the “**New**” part . . . Old Prophecy,

• **NEW Ministries . . . for ALL people**

Luke is clear in verses 3 + 4,

*Tongues like flames of fire that **SEPARATED** and rested on **EACH ONE** of them.
They were **ALL** filled with the Holy Spirit.*

What’s going on?

In the Old Covenant, only a SELECT FEW received the gifting and empowerment of the Holy Spirit: *Judges, Kings, Priests, Prophets, Elders.*

One example of a 'select few' is seen in **Numbers 11** . . . similar language to Pentecost. Moses was over-burdened leading Israel in the wilderness,

*So Moses gathered together 70 elders, and the Lord came down and took some of the **Spirit** that was on Moses and placed the Spirit on seventy elders . . . two elders, however, stayed back at camp – but the Spirit also rested on them and started prophesying in the camp.*

*Joshua ran over to Moses, "Moses, my lord, **stop** them!"*

But Moses asked him, "Are you jealous on my account?"

If only ALL the LORD's people were prophets and the LORD would place his Spirit on them!"

But NOW in Acts 2, in these days of the New Covenant, Joel's prophecy is clear:

*God will pour out His Spirit on **ALL** people;*

then your sons & daughters will prophesy,

*your **young** men & **old**... I will even pour out my Spirit on my **servants!***

Any Christian – *slave or free, male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile* – ALL **types** of people receive the Spirit.

This means not only can all types of peoples can be **saved**,

ALL believers are spiritually empowered/gifted to **serve**.

New Ministries! once reserved for a chosen few; now all the church is a minister!

A natural question arises:

In the Spirit's power, how will **you serve** and how will **you witness** to Jesus?

But a note of clarity here: after this unique 'starting point' with the *existing* disciples, Acts teaches it's at **conversion/salvation** when Christians are indwelt with the Spirit.

So **ALL** Christians are *indwelt* by the Spirit,

But **NOT** ALL Christian have the *same spiritual gifting*.

1 Corinthians 12 says the Spirit distributes gifting to each believer as He wills, and the chapter ends saying NOT all are prophets, NOT all speak in tongues, etc.

The point is that in the New Covenant,

- because every true believer is **INDWELT** by the Holy Spirit at salvation.
- every believer is a "**MINSTER**,"
 - *equipped/gifted* to **SERVE** God and others in advancing His kingdom,
 - *empowered* to **LIVE** in personal holiness, putting the old self/old ways behind in real transformation . . . the change my Dad was asking about.

As far as advancing God's kingdom goes, let me connect a big Bible 'thread' here, all the way back to **Babylon** and the tower of **Babel**.

The book of Acts is all about gospel spreading, overcoming every obstacle . . . including **language!**

What happened at the Tower of Babel?

Well, what is God's creation mandate to humanity?:

"Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth & subdue it." (Genesis 1:28)

As God's unique image bearers, humans to spread out/fill the world with God's image – not only that, but to subdue it/rule it in his just & righteous ways, a people of His name.

What did we do instead at Babylon? We said

“Let us build ourselves a city and tower, and make a name for ourselves; lest we be scattered throughout the earth.” (Genesis 11:4b)

Babel is about people disobedient to God's mandate to spread out for His name, So to stop their rebellion, God confused the language of humanity, and they were divided.

I want you to see the link with Acts 2 by seeing the structure of Babel in Genesis 11:

Chi is the Greek letter shaped like X, and a **chiasm** is literary 'device' in literature, including biblical literature, where by ordering thoughts in mirror-like reflection or reversal, the **centre is central** and the **edges are emphatic**:

The whole world had the same language (11:1)
 The people said, “Come, let us make bricks (11:3)
 Let us build ourselves a city and a tower
 that reaches the heavens.” (11:4a)
Then the LORD came down (11:5a)
 To see the city and tower man is building (11:5b)
 The Lord said, “Come, let us mix up their languages” (11:7)
 The LORD confused the language of the whole world” (11:9)

See the centrality of *the Lord coming down!* (Acts 2, The Holy Spirit Descends).

And the emphatic edges: at the start, the WORLD had one language.

After God's came down, the world had many languages.

We need to understand the epic event of Pentecost and what God is doing: not quite a "reverse the curse" of Babel, since there are still many languages – and will be in Heaven, by God's design. *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing* (my Great Redeemer's praise!)

Pentecost is a **Redeeming of Babel**.

Instead of Disobedience, Diversity & Division,

[Disobeying → Diverse language → Divisions because of confused language]

We see Diversity → Obedience → Unity

Filled w/the Holy Spirit, the disciples deploy diverse language and God brings understanding (of Jesus/gospel glory), leading to repentance & obedience of 3,000, unified in Jesus' name!

By the end of this gathering, many head back to their nations, spreading into the empire [“the whole world”, Acts 2:10 – link to 'emphatic edges' of Babel], making much of the God's name!!⁵

Christianity is NOT a religion of one language, it's religion for ALL cultures, all tongues. [unlike Islam which says God's word is only found in Arabic].

This brings us to our final point, only briefly touched on this morning . . .

⁵ Link Genesis 12 – God chooses a nation, to bless the World through it – follows immediately after Genesis 11/Babel.

NOW WHAT? – OLD PROMISE, NEW NAME (2:21FF.; 4:12)

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!” (2:21)

A glorious promise from 830 BC. At this **OLD Promise** from Joel...

“Everyone who calls on the NAME of the Lord will be saved!”

...Peter stops his quotation.

In the next verse, verse 22 and following (our passage next week), Peter gets straight into that **NEW Name**: **“JESUS”** for everyone!

This will echo through Acts, like in 4:12

“there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)

The echo carries through all the NT:

*At the **NAME OF JESUS**, every knee will bow – in heaven & on earth & under the earth – and every **TONGUE** will confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord!**” (Philippians 2:10-11)*

APPLICATION

1] **Pentecost: a “Pattern” to Repeat?**

The first big question of application:

• *Is the event of Pentecost a MODEL/PATTERN for us to “repeat”, individually or corporately?*

A few initial questions help us answer that:

- Is the Church called to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Pentecost today? No. Instead, Jesus commanded us to keep the Passover Feast, but with a few twists:
 - regularly (not annually) at the Lord’s Supper
 - Jesus is the real Passover Lamb who takes away our sins

So while we are to see a new twist on Pentecost in Acts 2 as a “harvest” of **souls**, it is not an “event” we are called to ceremonially commemorate together.

A related question:

- *Should we have Christian “tarrying meetings”, prayerfully awaiting the Spirit to come? (Is the Spirit “coming” upon an individual Christian AFTER a normative occurrence?)*

Let’s begin to answer that with an analogy...

After a *rare global event* – like the Olympics – let’s say the Matildas, the Aussie Women’s Soccer/Football team win gold at Tokyo in 2020.

On their return to Oz, the Matildas receive a celebratory ticker-tape parade on a street downtown.

Now let’s say Billy, a boy in junior footy, sees that parade on TV, and thinks because his local junior team won a weekly Saturday game, that his own street should give him – as an INDIVIDUAL – a ticker tape parade when he arrives home.

We’d agree: that’s **not** a sound deduction!

A rare global event for a team is not a 'pattern' for a common local event for an individual.

So we need to ask what we're being presented with in the Book of Acts, and what we should deduce from it . . . as well as what we should we not deduce from it.

The Disciples were told NOT to leave Jerusalem until they received the Holy Spirit.

Are you not to leave your town until you receive the Holy Spirit? No.

The context & purpose are different.

It is NOT a "pattern" in Acts for the Holy Spirit to come well after conversion.

The "pattern" in the book of Acts (and the Epistles), is that **when people believe** in Jesus – when they repent and are converted, – it is then that they receive the Holy Spirit.

There are a few standout exceptions:

1. **Acts 8**: When the FIRST Samaritans (Jewish half-breeds) believe in Jesus – and no apostles were there to **verify** this – Peter & John were dispatched to verify their conversion and lay hands on the Samaritans, who *then* received the Spirit. ("Tongues" are not mentioned here, but might be implied).
2. **Acts 10**: When the FIRST Gentiles (fully non-Jews) believed in Jesus at the apostle Peter's preaching, they received the Spirit and also spoke in tongues at this time (an apostle was present). So this is not an "exception" but the pattern: the Holy Spirit *accompanying conversion* to Christ. I mention this passage because it is the next mention of "tongues" in Acts, and it happens when the first Gentiles believe – an event so **epic**, all chapter 11 is a leadership meeting to debrief that, yes, Jesus *actually* came to save Gentiles, too!
3. Acts 19: In Ephesus, the 3rd and FINAL mentioned occurrence of "tongues" occurs with a unique group in an unrepeatably circumstance (too complex to unpack now).

Notice how the Spirit's coming unpacks the geographical outline of Acts 1:8,

- *Be my witnesses in Jerusalem (Acts 2) in Judea & Samaria (Acts 8), and the ends of the earth (Acts 10⁶ + 19)*

Three "people groups" – **Jews, half-Jews, Gentiles** – progressively received the Gospel, and an accompanying 'sign' of the Holy Spirit attends their conversion. And every time tongues are mentioned, a GROUP is receiving the Holy Spirit (not an individual). Tongues are never mentioned again in Acts

So the doctrine *some* hold too called the "second blessing" (of the Spirit coming after conversion) is NOT a pattern for individuals. The Holy Spirit accompanies conversion.

*God's love has been poured out into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*⁷

Then – and only then – will the love of God *overflow* outward from us, **into the world!**

2] **Speaking about Jesus!**

What IS a clear pattern to apply? ***The Spirit in us testifies to Jesus through us!***

⁶ Caesarea is on the border of Judea/Samaria and Gentile territory, and Cornelius was a Gentile.

⁷ Romans 5:5.

When we are “born again”, we are also “*born of the Spirit*”, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught this (John 3:3,6,8).
And it is the pattern throughout the New Testament, including Acts.

And while the Holy Spirit has many ministries, in the book of Acts the ‘emphasised’ ministry of the Holy Spirit is *empowering Christians **to witness about Jesus!***

In every case, when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit, verbal testimony about Christ follows immediately.

This is true in both Luke & Acts: Luke 1:67ff.; Acts 2:4ff.; 4:8, 31; 9:17-20; 13:9f. Being ‘filled with the Spirit’/‘Living in the Fulness of the Spirit’ is typical in the ongoing cycle of the Christian life when believers are freshly reconsecrated to the Lord – repenting of *quenching* the Spirit then living in the *fulness* of the Spirit.

James Boice rightly summaries that the only consistent NT response to being filled with the Spirit was neither speaking in tongues nor performing miracles. Rather...

“In Acts, in every case where someone is filled with the spirit, they testify effectively to Jesus Christ Someone might say, ‘Yes, but at Pentecost they did it in tongues.’ True enough.

But that is not the emphasis, nor is it part of the other examples of ‘filling.’

In Acts 2 the emphasis is upon the fact that everyone heard about Jesus.

So if you ask whether a person is ‘Spirit-filled,’ the only way to answer the question is by determining whether or not he or she speaks often and effectively about Jesus.”⁸

So how about you? ...

Are you a believer in Jesus, born again?

If so, you are born of His Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit?

*God’s love has been poured out into your heart, through the Holy Spirit who was given to you!*⁹

Your joy in Christ should be overflowing, spilling over, with testimony to Jesus!

You don’t need to be an ‘extrovert’.

You don’t need a “spiritual gift” of a preacher/teacher.

Just share what God has done for you in Jesus, talk about your joy in Christ...God’s love poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit.

Get the conversation started, and see where God takes it from there from there!

His Spirit is at work in You!

His Spirit is also at work in the World – not indwelling but convicting...

Jesus put it this way to the 12 at the Last Supper:

It is for your benefit that I go away, because if I don’t go away the Helper will not come to you.

If I go, I will send Him to you.

*When He comes, He will **CONVICT** the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment” (Jn 16:7-8)*

We see in this Spirit-wrought “conviction” at the end of our Peter’s sermon, in Acts 2:37

*When they heard [the gospel], they were **PIERCED to the heart***

and said to Peter & the rest of the apostles: “Brothers, what should we do?”

⁸ James M. Boice, *Acts: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), p. 42.

⁹ Romans 5:5.

So we have a DOUBLE-COURAGE to speak about Jesus:

- The Holy Spirit indwelling, empowering us with inner gospel joy & words of witness
- The Holy Spirit convicting the world of sin & the need for righteousness in Christ.

This is why my original big idea, my longer "Puritan-length" idea for the sermon was:
Empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit,
Christians can *confidently* proclaim the good news of Jesus
knowing some will believe because of the *conviction* of the Holy Spirit.

The book of Acts is all about gospel spreading, overcoming every obstacle . . . including LANGUAGE!

So with your tongue, your language, testify to Jesus in this double-courage!

And speaking of overcoming obstacles of language & culture...

I heard it reported this week that Logan THE most diverse city in world, ethnically speaking!

The mission field has come to us! We can have a Harvest Festival right here!

Don't let foreign tongues – people with English as a second language (ESL) – be an obstacle. Some of the most friendly – and most lonely – people are ESL migrants.

They are hanging out for someone/some family to befriend them.
And most are from less atheistic cultures.

By every count, ESL migrants are FAR MORE open to gospel conversations than established Aussies.

Walk down your street and say hello to some.

Go to a Library to meet some.

Invite them over for a meal...and start sharing your joy in Christ!

And can I encourage you to be praying for a few non-Christians BY NAME?

Pray as families, in Grace Groups, individually by name for a few non-Christians.

I've invited the guys in my Grace Group to hold me accountable to talking about Jesus with someone I'm seeing this week. I said,
"Ask me Thursday my conversation went with [this guy named so-&-so]"

Let's be praying for non-Christians in a fervent, ongoing way.
And invite accountability to speak for Jesus when we need it.

If you are not yet a believer in Jesus...

Every extended gospel 'conversation'/sermon in Acts mentions Jesus raised/resurrected!

Most also reference our resurrection on judgment day, to face King Jesus as judge.

On the Cross, Jesus took our judgment on Himself – for all who trust in Him!

Will you repent/turn to trust in this gracious God and receive His gift of salvation?