

## **THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Your Young People Will See Visions)

Acts 2:1-21

Key Verse: 2:17

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

On May 5, 2023, the WHO declared that the pandemic is no longer a global health emergency. It was good news to a weary world after so much suffering. During the last three years Covid-19 claimed over seven million lives, over a million were Americans. There have also been wars and natural disasters. Yet these were not random. They are precisely God’s call to repentance. They humbled people. As a result, many are now coming to God with sincere hearts. And God is pouring out his Spirit on those who come. A time of spiritual revival is here. We may wonder how it originates, where it is going, and how we can participate. This passage tells us. Especially, Acts 2:17 reveals God’s vision and hope for young people. May this word inspire us to pray and to serve our God in the power of the Holy Spirit in our times.

First, the Holy Spirit filled the apostles (1-4)

*“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place” (1).* It had been ten days since Christ’s ascension. The believers were waiting in Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed, and praying together. Then it happened. *“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (2).* The coming of the Holy Spirit was a sensory experience shared by all, not just personal and inward. The Holy Spirit is compared to a rushing wind—invisible, but powerful and pervasive. *“And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them” (3).* The tongue is an instrument of speech. God was going to speak through them. Fire represents the holiness of God. His fire cleansed and purified them so they could speak the truth about God with a clear conscience. Divided tongues indicate a unity of power

and purpose, yet are endowed to each one individually. As a body and as individuals, the Holy Spirit equipped them for God's service. They had been mundane men. Now, they became God's band of holy messengers.

*"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (4).* The Holy Spirit filled them all and began to dwell in them. It was an epoch-making event. In the Old Testament, the dwelling place of God was the temple. Access to the Most Holy Place in the temple, where God dwelt, was limited to a high priest, once a year, through a sacrifice. Ordinary people dared not enter God's holy presence. But Jesus had made this system obsolete. Through his suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the role of the temple, the high priest and the sacrifice. When Jesus breathed his last, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Lk 23:45). It meant the way to God was opened. Jesus reconciled us to God. From that time, God the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in those who have faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is God's gift (Ac 1:4; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17). He cannot be earned through hard work or merited by self-punishment. He cannot be purchased with money or attained through education. He is given freely by God as a gift to all who believe in Jesus. Indeed, he is the best gift from God. The Holy Spirit drives out the power of sin and death. He warms our hearts with the love of God (Ro 5:8). Many people are cold-hearted. Though they are loved dearly, they do not feel loved. They exist in a dearth of humanity and feel dead inside. The Holy Spirit melts our cold hearts and fills us with the love of God. He gives us true joy and peace, courage and strength to live in this world as victors. He empowers us to preach the gospel boldly in ways people understand, even those of other cultures. Do you want to be an instrument God uses to impart life to others? Let's ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit. And let's ask God to fill our ISBC messengers with his Holy Spirit!

Second, the gospel begins to spread to the world (5-13)

*"Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven" (5).* These people had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. As they heard Galilean hillbillies speaking in the native language of each country, they were utterly amazed. Look at verses 9-11 and note how the places are listed. Jerusalem is at the center. Beginning in the northeast, the author draws a circle counterclockwise from Parthia, Media and Elam to Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, and Pontus in the north, to Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Rome, Crete and Cyrene to the west, and finally to Egypt and Arabia to the south. The message is clear. Beginning

in Jerusalem, the gospel—like an explosion—would go out in every direction, spreading all over the world.

The Holy Spirit's coming brought a new era in human history. Our gracious God was reaching people of all nations, crossing language and cultural barriers. It was a great reversal of the event at tower of Babel, in which languages were confused and humankind scattered (Ge 11:7). Pentecost revealed God's great purpose to gather people of every tribe, language and nation to worship and serve Jesus. It expressed God's love for the whole world. Out of this great love for the world, he helped his servants speak to each people-group in their own native language.

Since the apostolic time, our human capacity to reach out to the world has improved greatly. Now we can travel anywhere within a day. We can communicate with people around the globe almost at will. So we should be reaching the whole world with the gospel. Are we? So often we fall into complacency. While acknowledging that God has given his church the world mission command, we expect others to do it. We assume God will do it as we observe. Once when William Carey was sharing his vision to preach the gospel abroad, an elder said to him, "Sit down young man. If God wants to save the heathen, he will do it himself." People, and even entire churches, fall asleep spiritually. At such times we need the Holy Spirit to awaken us with a new sense of urgency. The Student Volunteer Movement had a motto: "To evangelize the world in this generation." With that sense of urgency they went as missionaries all over the world, Sarah Barry among them. In fact, her sense of urgency was so great that she did not even have time to marry. Many Korean missionaries left their homeland after college graduation to obey the world mission command, giving their youth to Christ. We, here, have been blessed through them. May we have a sense of urgency to reach every campus and nation for Christ in our generation!

When the mighty work of the Holy Spirit happened, there were two responses. God-fearing people wanted to know the spiritual meaning of the event. But scoffers said, "They are filled with new wine." Even at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit's work was discredited by enemies of God. Attributing the Holy Spirit's work to merely human agency is a great sin of unbelief. This still happens today. How should we respond? We should proclaim the Holy Spirit's work all the more.

Third, your young people will see visions (14-21).

When Apostle Peter heard the scoffers, he was not daunted. He stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: *“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.”* Then he quoted Joel exactly.

Let’s read Acts 2:17: *“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams....”* The “last days” began when Jesus died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. They will end when Jesus comes again in power and great glory as King and Judge. We are in the last days. During these last days, what is God doing? God is pouring out his Holy Spirit on all people who believe in Jesus. When the Holy Spirit comes, he transforms people’s lives. Paramount in this transformation is the revelation of God’s vision to them.

The prophecy especially mentions young people. Why do young people need God’s vision? They have great potential, lots of energy, and many talents. They can do truly great things. But without God’s vision, they see only present realities. Some become selfish like Levi the tax collector. They pursue their own success and pleasure. It is fashionable these days to seek financial independence and early retirement. It sounds good. But it is an illusion. The Bible calls such people fools. They will suddenly confront God and have to give an account for their lives. They will lose their very souls. Other young people see the realities of the world and lose hope. They are overwhelmed by social injustice, economic uncertainty and student loan debt, climate change, digital addictions, and unprecedented mental health concerns. They try to escape reality by living in a virtual world, using substances to medicate themselves. They don’t see any hope. *Proverbs 29:18a* says, *“Where there is no vision, the people perish...”* (KJV).

People need God’s vision when they are young. God’s vision enables them to see beyond present realities to what God will do. God is good. God loves the world. God is saving souls and advancing his kingdom. God calls, blesses and uses people for his great salvation purpose. He invites us to invest our youth in his work, which yields eternal rewards. When we do so, we can live the best life in this world and inherit the kingdom of God. The future’s so bright when we have God’s vision. Do you see God’s great vision for your life? God’s vision is always related to his salvation work. But it is also very personal. Some see the vision of a loving Christian community, and they work humbly to resolve conflicts and bring reconciliation.

Others see the vision of a transformed campus, city or nation, and they labor joyfully to evangelize the lost and raise Jesus' disciples. Still others see the vision to be missionaries in foreign lands. When we see God's vision, our lives are totally changed. Selfish people become sacrificial. Bitter people become thankful. Sorrowful people become joyful. Angry people become peaceful. They all become servants of God who transform societies and change the *course of history*.

Since Pentecost, God has been pouring out his Holy Spirit to transform people and advance his kingdom. For example, there were the Moravians. They were Protestant Christians from different denominations gathered in Herrnhut, Saxony in 1727.<sup>1</sup> At first, they fought over differences in opinion about leadership structures, liturgical practices, the role of women in the church, mission strategies and the like. Count Zinzendorf led them in Bible studies about loving one another. It helped, but they did not fervently love one another. Some among them began to pray earnestly, even all night. One evening, as they gathered to worship, Zinzendorf preached on the cross of Jesus. As they were taking communion, the Holy Spirit came upon them in power. A witness said this: "*The Holy Ghost came upon us and great signs and wonders took place. Self love, self will and disobedience disappeared and an overwhelming flood of grace swept us all out into the great ocean of Divine Love.*" Zinzendorf said, "*I have but one passion—it is He, it is He alone. The...field is the world.*"<sup>2</sup> His heart burned for world missions. This event became known as the "Moravian Pentecost." They had a great passion to study God's word. A 24 hour prayer movement started which lasted 100 years. More than 3,000 missionaries were sent out who spread the gospel to many nations.<sup>3</sup>

In the histories of Korea and North America, the Holy Spirit has brought great revivals, such as the Pyongyang Revival, and the Great Awakenings. In our UBF history, there have been powerful movements of the Holy Spirit to carry out God's vision for world salvation. In 1970, on a warm and sleepy afternoon, Dr. Samuel Lee gave a prayer topic to young Korean students: "Let's have a summer Bible conference at Niagara Falls with over 200 attendants in 10 years." This vision moved people's hearts and they began to pray fervently. It was realized in 1975. It became the seed of the ISBC, through which God has raised many spiritual leaders throughout North America.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://romans1015.com/moravian-revival-2/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gcdiscipleship.com/article-feed/2013/01/16>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.chpress.net/column-detail.html?cate=h\\_column&c\\_id=97&id=17518](https://www.chpress.net/column-detail.html?cate=h_column&c_id=97&id=17518)

In the 1985 World Mission Report in Korea, Dr. Lee shared a vision to send missionaries to Russia within 10 years. At that time, America's relations with Russia were quite hostile. We were surprised. Yet this vision captured our hearts and we began to pray for it. We ate Russian bread, watched Russian dances, and listened to "Moscow Nights." God answered, and within five years there were UBF student missionaries in Moscow. Through their one-to-one Bible teaching, God has raised Russian shepherds as spiritual leaders for their nation.

Recently, there has been a great work of the Holy Spirit at Asbury University in Kentucky. On February 8, after the regular chapel service ended, a few students remained behind. They sought God through sincere repentance and worship, and the Holy Spirit was poured out on them. Others began to join them. Within a few hours 1500 people filled the chapel. A time of continuous worship of God and repentance began, which lasted for 16 days. Word spread outside of Asbury and people began pouring into the little town of 6,000. It is estimated that well over 50,000 came, including students from over 200 campuses. So many people came forward shedding tears of repentance; the carpet was soaked. Many people were delivered from addictions— to drugs, alcohol, gaming, pornography and the like. People found release from the burden of sin and new freedom. Most of all, it was a time when the Holy God met Generation Z. Gen Z suffers much from anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. These students could not find any hope in the world. But they found hope in Jesus Christ. Among them was Daniel Lee, a second gen in St. Louis UBF. He was deeply touched by the love of God through the Holy Spirit. Later he testified that he was full of joy and found a clear life purpose to serve God. Upon hearing his testimony, his younger brother confessed Christ as his Savior, forgave his parents and asked their forgiveness. When young men receive the Holy Spirit they can have God's vision for their lives!

Notice that daughters are mentioned in the prophecy. Daughters have hope in Jesus. Young American women face many painful and difficult issues: gender inequality, sexual harassment, social abuse, and more. So many have had their hearts broken by family members, friends or romantic interests. They carry a hidden sorrow and experience fear and shame. Who can help them? Where can they find hope? In Jesus! When they come to Jesus and receive the Holy Spirit, he will wipe the tears from their eyes. He will give them a new heart and spirit. They will become powerful gospel witnesses who shake their households, communities and cities, and even their nation.

“Your old men will dream dreams.” The tendency of old men is to look back on their lives. They treasure the memories of past glory and feel deep regret over missed opportunities, failures, and sins. They lose a sense of purpose and meaning. Though they anticipated a peaceful retirement, nagging regrets and sorrow rob them of enjoyment. Yet when old men receive the Holy Spirit they can dream. They can envision God advancing his kingdom. They can see a new generation of young people arising in gospel faith and taking leadership in his mission. They foresee disciples of Jesus being raised on every campus in the world; Christ’s kingdom transforming this world. And they can bless young people joyfully, knowing that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. How wonderful life is for old people who have God’s dream in their hearts!

The prophecy also mentions servants. These are people who are outside the privileged class. The Holy Spirit empowers and uses these people too. As many people celebrate Juneteenth, I am reminded of William Seymour, an African-American holiness preacher at the turn of the 20th century. His mentor, Charles Parham, was not allowed to let Seymour in the classroom at his Bible school due to Jim Crow laws. So Seymour sat outside and listened in through open windows. Later, he received an invitation to move to pastor a local congregation in Los Angeles. As he sought the Lord earnestly, studying Acts 2, the Holy Spirit began to work among them in power. It was the start of the Azusa Street revival of 1906, through which the Holy Spirit’s work spread all over the United States and throughout the world.

Why does the Holy Spirit empower gospel witnesses? Verse 20 tells us “...that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” The Holy Spirit calls and uses weak sinners as Christ’s witnesses to save lost souls. He is not willing that any be lost, but wants all to believe in Jesus Christ and be saved. This is why our gracious Father God is pouring out his Spirit in our times. Let’s pray for young people to see the glory of Christ and catch God’s vision for their lives.