

## **Come Holy Spirit      Acts 1:1-8 & 2:1-4**

During the season of Pentecost back in the 90's a yellow banner with red and yellow flames and a white dove was hung with the words 'Come Holy Spirit' in the East Taieri Presbyterian Church.

It was 1992 when I returned from overseas and began worshipping at this church as a new Christian and signed up for baptism. It was something I'd never done before so I didn't really know what to expect. I didn't know what to think or pray. In one service I looked up, saw this Pentecost banner hanging there, and instantly knew that message was for me. So I began praying constantly a simple prayer in the lead up to my baptism. 'Come Holy Spirit'.

Twelve of us were baptised that June at an evening service. We all prayed together in a room out the back of the church with Pastors and supporters. Then we all went into the church and the service began. We each had to share a brief testimony. I was nervous so I continually prayed that same prayer. 'Come Holy Spirit.'

I actually ended up enjoying sharing my short testimony; I can still remember what I said today. Then it was my turn. Still with some nervous anticipation I climbed up and then down into the pool praying 'Come Holy Spirit'. Kneeling in the pool Rev Peter Willsman put his big hands on my shoulders and immersed me under the water and then pulled me up again. I had been baptised in water. I had followed in obedience Jesus' own example and what it was that my heavenly Father had called me and directed me to do. In the pool, dripping wet on my knees as Peter began to pray for me with his hands on my shoulders and his grip loosened, and what I can only describe as something like the force of ten thousand volts of electricity hit me on the head, then flowing down through my body, knocking me back into the water for a second immersion. Pete with his large strong hands was pretty quick off the mark to haul me up again onto my knees to continue his interrupted prayer of blessing over me.

Six months previously I had received the Holy Spirit the night I was born again when I believed in Jesus Christ as my Lord, the boss of my life, accepting and receiving him as my personal Saviour.

It was an experience of, *out with the sin and in with the spirit* of Christ's salvation filling me. I knew I had the spirit of God living in me from that moment, but the night of my baptism was my most powerful experience yet where I certainly received the promised answer to my simple prayer of 'Come Holy Spirit'.

Jesus said to his disciples in Acts 1:4b-5 which is also recorded in Luke 24:49 "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

The gift or 'what my Father has promised' is a direct reference to the coming power of the Holy Spirit prophesied by Joel [2:28-29] in the Old Testament.

Jesus is giving voice to what is both an historic prophecy and a recent promise that is fulfilled in Acts 2:4 when all of them gathered together, praying in one place were filled with the Holy Spirit. When God makes a promise, when God says something, God always fulfils the promise and does what he says he going to do. God keeps his promises and Pentecost is to us proof of that.

The prayerful waiting on God by His disciples, which preceded Pentecost, to this day illustrates what it is that comes before and has lead to every effective effort of Christians for God and major revival in the church. Together, our lives and the missionary effort of the church, is and has always been, founded in prayer. And it always will, just as the experience of the early disciples reveals to us [1:14 & 2:1] They were 'all together' in constant prayer and expectation in one accord waiting to receive and experience the gift that would come at Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus has ascended to heaven. Otherwise known as the Festival of Weeks, The Feast of and the day of first fruits. Celebrated on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Sabbath of the Passover week. So what prayer do you pray together in this situation? How about 'Come Holy Spirit'?

Pentecost was traditionally viewed by Judaism as the day Moses had received the Law from God on Mount Sinai. And now God was about to speak again as the Holy Spirit comes to fulfil God's promise as given in the Law and the Prophets in the old Covenant. In the Old Testament God's word was given and proclaimed through prophetic utterances regularly associated with the Spirit coming upon particular persons for special purposes [i.e. Eldad & Medad - Numbers 11:26-29; King Saul - 1 Samuel 10:6-12].

In Judaism however the belief arose that with the passing of the last of the writing prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi of the early postexilic period, that time when the Jews returned from 70 years captivity in Babylon, the spirit of prophecy had ceased in Israel, and for the last nearly 500 years God now only spoke to his people, they believed, solely through the Torah, the Law of Moses and the Prophets as taught & interpreted by the religious teachers.

This is something that we in the Presbyterian Church can relate to as a denomination along with other mainline denominations who with structured church government systems and many with a more traditional type of worship service that has at it centre the revered Word of God. It's reading and exposition is central to the service, and with a

reliance on biblical teaching and interpretation, it can be elevated and set on a pedestal to the point excluding of the Holy Spirit speaking through a prophet in church. Churches today can therefore be in the same position that Judaism was at the time of Pentecost believing God speaks only through the written Word.

Judaism, however, also expected that with the coming of the Messianic Age there would be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in fulfilment of Joel 2, and that prophecy would again flourish- which is exactly what takes place at Pentecost among the followers of Jesus. What happens when the disciples pray 'Come Holy Spirit' is that God pours out the Spirit filling each one and the relationship of the Spirit to the members of the body of Christ became much more intimate and personal in fulfilment of Jesus' promise of the Spirit. He said in John 14:15-19 "Because he lives you also will live" for "he lives with you and will be in you" which became the way that you knew that you were saved by God as a believer in the body of Christ, living your newly redeemed life in what was now the new Covenant because the Father has 'come to you' by His Spirit just as Jesus said he would.

While it was true that the disciples and Godly believers enjoyed a genuine spiritual life before Pentecost this was nothing in comparison to what a Christian's life became after the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Blessing of the HS is given to all believers, not just to a privileged few, which we know to be true from the Old and NT scriptures we've covered. The difference for us today is that we are not necessarily called on to 'wait' for the Spirit. As Christians we have received Him at conversion. However, we are to give way to the spirit, Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commands". And his words challenge us therefore to yield more and more of our lives, each day and in every area of our being, because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, requires the entire possession of our own living beings. This is tied to what we call 'Sanctification' a word that was introduced to us in the Alpha Session this last week, which means that anyone who believes in Christ is first of all justified and made right with God. Such a one receives salvation and is therefore set apart and made holy as a saint. So as a saint, or sanctified, we are now to live and grow more in the image of Christ as we gradually give over our daily lives to the will of God. This is sanctification and through it we grow further in the likeness of Christ our Lord and Saviour with the Holy Spirit, whom we have accepted and received, his truth dwelling within us as we live dedicated lives in obedience to Christ's commands and God's will.

When I climbed out of that baptismal pool in June 1992 that marked the occasion when God the Holy Spirit made it clear to me once again that

'I love you, I'm with you and I want you Kent, all of you'. And do you know what? The battle has continued to rage ever since. My remaining pride, my humanity rising up from time to time, resisting God, grieving rather than pleasing the Holy Spirit when I do it, not desiring to give it all, give everything over to God. To have every area of my life, thinking and feeling, completely submitted to, and under the Sovereignty of God, the Holy Spirit's rule and reign over me, over my spirit. I will remain ever thankful that as imperfect as I am that through the sanctification process, the Holy Spirit who I know I have grieved deeply at times, remains with me, and comes again with his truth and God's word for me when I turn and repent, ask and receive His forgiveness for sin, am cleansed, and then pray once again, 'Come Holy Spirit.'

Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch lady who was imprisoned in the Nazi run Ravensbruck Concentration Camp during World War II along with her family for harbouring Jews in their home, after the war became a preacher travelling around sharing the Message of God's Amazing Love. A man came forward at the end of one of her meetings and said that as a former concentration camp guard who had become a Christian he would like to be able to ask forgiveness from a former prisoner. He did not recognise her but Corrie recognised him as one of her own camp guards who had brutally tortured and sadistically treated her and the other prisoners including her family whose treatment by him and the other guards had ultimately led to their deaths. All she could sense welling up in her was anger, hatred, bitterness, and unforgiveness and the desire for revenge against this man. She had just been preaching on the love of God, to whom in her deep inner agony she turns to praying, "God I cannot and will not in my own humanness forgive this man for what he has done. I do not have the ability, so come by your Holy Spirit, fill me with your love, a love that will allow me to forgive this man." And the Holy Spirit came and filled her with such a love for this new brother and creation in Christ – a love that allowed her to forgive the most heinous person for their sadistic sins against her and her family. She could not do this on her own but with the Holy Spirit coming upon her she was enabled and empowered as Christ's witness, to speak God's Word from her heart to this man. This is what the coming and empowerment of the Holy Spirit did for Corrie in what for her was an impossible situation for her to respond in a Christ like way on her own strength.

As a follower of Christ wouldn't you like or think that you would benefit from a greater measure of the Holy Spirit to enable and empower you in your daily life in each and every circumstance. Including past situations where you need God's love to be able to forgive those who have sinned against you?

What would our lives be like if that was the case where we each gave up the sovereignty in the areas within our lives where we need to do so, Just as Corrie Ten Boom did so, areas that are not given over to God, where Christ's Spirit is not allowed to rule and reign?

What would your life be like with God in complete and total control over your will and spirit?

What would our church be like if we could all do this?  
If we were to pray in unison and one accord, "Come Holy Spirit"

**To Summarise:** When we Pray 'Come Holy Spirit'

Firstly, we are asking God to come and fill us in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel, along with Jesus' desire for his disciples to pray, believe and receive the gift promised by the Father so that we unreservedly and wholeheartedly might speak his loving words of truth as Christ's witnesses enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. And,

Secondly, by doing so we are asking that the Holy Spirit will come and fill us, reign over us, in each and every area of our beings which means to have our own spirit come completely under the control of the Holy Spirit just as happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. Pray 'Come Holy Spirit' and you are asking God to immerse or re-immerse you in His Spirit.

When the Holy Spirit has complete control of us- the thoughts of our minds, our emotional reasoning and the feelings of our hearts, including doubt, no longer hold sway because we have completely and utterly submitted ourselves to God and therefore our spirit is free to be controlled by God's promised gift of the Holy Spirit. So much so that even your words, just like the disciples at Pentecost, are God's Words that he chooses to utter through you. Now wouldn't that be something! For God to be able to speak to and through you in this way. May we each be open and receptive to God's Spirit in this way.