



The working of the Holy Spirit in the world enters a whole new dimension with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, as the Book of Acts describes:

- *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (Acts 2:1-4)*

The consideration of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament can therefore be split into two separate periods:

- the period of the Gospels (the time before Pentecost)
- the period of the Book of Acts (the time after Pentecost)

1. The Holy Spirit in the Gospels.

In the study 'The beginning and the end of the O.T. and the N.T.'¹ we explained that the New Testament is named after the 'New covenant' in the blood of Jesus. In principle the New Testament begins therefore with the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. It can thus be stated that Jesus Himself was still living in the Old Testament.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels is thus still under the 'Old covenant', or Old Testament, in the same way as is described in the study 'The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament'².

2. The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.

Jesus promised the new work of the Holy Spirit for the time following His ascension.

He said:

- *It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, **the Advocate** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)*

This new work of the Holy Spirit in the world begins with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost therefore.

The Holy Spirit has been active in the world in a new way from that moment on.

This new work is described in the Book of Acts, from chapter 2 onwards.

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels.

General:

At the time of the Gospels the Holy Spirit was still active as in the Old Testament:

- *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)*

And, just as in the Old Testament, the Gospels describe how the Holy Spirit was active in certain people.

In the life of John the Baptist.

1 Study: The beginning and the end of the O.T. and the N.T.

2 Study: The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.



When announcing the birth of John the Baptist the angel Gabriel told Zachariah:

- *He (John) will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. (Luke 1:15)*

At John the Baptist's circumcision.

When John was circumcised eight days after his birth, and his father, Zachariah, confirmed on a writing tablet that he was to be named John:

- *... his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. (Luke 1:64)*
- *Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied ... (Luke 1:67)*

In the life of Mary.

Luke reports an exceptional operation of the Holy Spirit in the life of Mary.

When the angel Gabriel announced to her that she was to become pregnant of a son, she asked:

- *How will this be, since I am a virgin? (Luke 1:34)*

To which Gabriel answered:

- *The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)*

When Mary met Elisabeth, John's mother.

When announcing the birth of Jesus the angel Gabriel had told Mary:

- *Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail. (Luke 1:36-37)*

Because Elisabeth was the only person who could confirm to Mary what she was told:

- *Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea. (Luke 1:39)*
- *... where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you ... (Luke 1:40-43)*

Following the birth of Jesus.

Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the temple 33 (+7) days after His birth, according to the law on purification from Leviticus 12:2-8.

Simeon came and stood by them in the temple.

- *Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. (Luke 2:25-26)*

Jesus receives the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist was to recognise the promised Messiah by His receiving the Holy Spirit, as he said:

- *I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one Before ... (John 1:33)*

Jesus came to John to be baptised before He began His public ministry.



- *As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and alighting on him (Jesus). (Matthew 3:16) (see also: Mark 1:10 - Luke 3:21-22 - John 1:32)*

Why was Jesus baptised?

On the Great Day of Atonement the high priest had to lay aside his high priest's garments and bathe in water, to offer the first sacrifices of that day like an ordinary priest³.

Likewise Jesus, as the future new high priest, laid aside His glory in heaven and had Himself baptised by John, thereby fulfilling the first act of the law on the Great Day of Atonement.

Paul writes that Jesus:

- *... did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage (interpretation: did not want to hold on to it); rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**. (Philippians 2:6-7)*

Jesus, His disciples and the Holy Spirit.

When one reads the Gospels it appears as if the disciples never really understood who Jesus was, even though they believed Him to be the Messiah.

Through divine revelation Peter even said:

- *You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:16)*

However, when He was taken prisoner, all the disciples left Jesus in the lurch and Peter denied Him as many as three times afterwards.

Jesus sought out His disciples the day He rose from the dead, as John describes:

- *On the evening of that first day of the week ... Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ... Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**" (John 20:19-22)*

Luke also describes what happened that evening.

On the day of the resurrection two men from Emmaus had met Jesus on their way home.

When they finally recognised Him they hurried back to Jerusalem to tell this to the disciples.

- *While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them ... (Luke 24:36)*
- *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." **Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:44-45)*

John and Luke both describe what happened that evening.

The day Jesus rose from the dead He met the disciples and **breathed on them**, so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. He thereby **opened their minds**, so that they would understand the Scriptures.

³ Study: The Great Day of Atonement.



Jesus had said of the Holy Spirit:

- *When he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will **prove the world** to be in the wrong ... because people do not believe in me. (John 16:8-9)*

The disciples also needed this operation of the Holy Spirit therefore, in order to be convinced of whom Jesus really was.

Jesus promised them still more at that time, however, i.e. the deeper experience of the Holy Spirit, who was to come **upon** and give them **power**.

The same evening He told them:

- *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**. (Luke 24:49)*

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts.

This promise of Jesus was fulfilled 10 days after His resurrection, on the Day of Pentecost.

This is the beginning of the new work of the Holy Spirit in the world, as a consequence of the 'New Covenant' in the blood of Jesus, as this is described in the Book of Acts⁴.

See also the study: The baptism in the Holy Spirit⁵.

⁴ Study: The Holy Spirit in the New Testament (2).

⁵ Study: The baptism in the Holy Spirit.