lesson3. The Promise

(Epaggelia) **A promised good or blessing, an announcement, a message**

> *Frodo: I'm going to Mordor alone.*
>
> *Sam: Of course you are, and I'm going with you! I made a promise...Gandalf said "Don't you leave him, Samwise Gamgee," and I don't mean to. I don't mean to.*
> *(Fellowship of the Rings, J. R. Tolkien)*

Jesus made a promise to His disciples in that when He returned to His Father, they would send the Holy Spirit to be with and live in His followers. He promised that they would be empowered just like He was to do the things that He did, and then some. When Jesus makes a promise, it is as good as done! As I was pondering this, a scene from Lord of the Rings popped into my head where Frodo (at the end of 'Fellowship of the Rings') is going off on his own to complete the mission that was given him. His friend Samwise Gamgee chases after him declaring that he would not leave him to go on alone. You see, he had made a promise that he would stay with Frodo, and he intended to keep it. Jesus promised us that He would not leave us 'as orphans' to go on alone. He promised to come back again, through the Holy Spirit and then one day by actually returning at the end of all times to bring us back to Himself.

Take some time to read the first two chapters of Acts (written by Luke) and then go through the observations below…

I. Promise Made

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

Acts 1:4-8 ~ Let's break it down…

i. Vs. 4
   - 'wait for the promise which you have heard from Me'
     - Remember what Jesus said in: John 14:16,18,23,26; 15:26; 16:7
       (a) He will send the Holy Spirit to indwell us.
       (b) He has promised to be with us forever. (See: Deuteronomy 31:6,8; Joshua 1:5)
       (c) He will not leave us as orphans. He will come to us! (John 14:18)
       (d) They (the Father & Jesus) will make their home in us, because they love us. (John 14:23)

ii. Vs. 5
   - 'you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'
     - 'baptizo' immersed, cleansed, washed, overwhelmed

POINT of INTEREST:
Baptizo… Not to be confused with the word bapto. The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. 'He that believes and is baptised shall be saved'. Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle! Bible Study Magazine, James Montgomery Boice, May 1989.

iii. Vs. 8

- 'You shall receive power'
  - to receive means to take hold of or claim what is rightfully ours
  - the power referred to here is '*dunamis*'. In other words, the mighty, miracle working, strength and ability of the Holy Spirit will come upon us. His dunamis or dynamite energy…
- 'You shall be my witnesses' in Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, to the end of the earth
  - this is to testify powerfully of Jesus to the world
  - first at home (Jerusalem), then to our nation, then to our world

2. Promise Kept

READ: Acts 2:1-4

i. They acted out their faith by returning to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12-14) & waiting 'in one accord' for God's promise of the Holy Spirit

ii. Through the disciples' obedience & faith, God's word was realized.

- Look again at John 14:23 (Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.)

iii. **Suddenly!**

- **They heard.** God moves in, like a violent wind. It was noisy & powerful and it was inside their house!
- **They saw**. Something that scripture describes as 'divided, tongues of fire' rested on each of them.
- **They were filled.** They were baptized (immersed) with the Holy Spirit.
- **They spoke.** The Holy Spirit prompted them to talk in several different languages!

POINT of INTEREST:
Pentecost… the second of the three great Jewish feasts, celebrated at Jerusalem yearly, the seventh week after the Passover, in grateful recognition of the completed harvest.

3. Promise Continued…

"For the Promise is to you and your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:39 NKJV

i. Acts 2:5-41 Following this initial baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter came out and explained to a crowd that had gathered just what was going on. Jerusalem was full of people from many nations as they were there celebrating Pentecost. They could hear what was going on in the upper room and actually thought the believers were drunk! (and it was only 9am!) After he preached to them, he offered them the same Gift of Salvation & the Holy Spirit and the Bible says that over 3,000 people were baptised that day!

ii. The Samaritans received this gift. (Acts 8:14-17)

iii. The Gentiles received this gift. (Acts 10:44-46a)

iv. The Ephesians received this gift. (Acts 19:2-6)

v. I have personally received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I had been asking for a while that God would give me this gift and had been waiting for Him to fulfil His promise to me (just as we have seen laid out in scripture). It was at a church service and I was at the front praying and crying out to God. I was repenting of my sins and just emptying myself of 'me' and asking again that He would fill me. All of a sudden I remember seeing the word 'pride' literally flowing upward out of my mouth and away from me. It was at that point that His Spirit fell on me and I started to speak in a language that I had never known (and I still don't know :). I don't remember contriving what happened or stressing over it. It was as though the moment I truly surrendered my all to Him, He was able to move in. I was overwhelmed by His Spirit and so grateful for His gift to me. It was one of the most intimate times of worship that I had experience up until that point in my life. And, He has never left me.

vi. You might want to take some time with your group and ask for their personal testimonies with regards to the Holy Spirit falling upon them.

Conclusion

It is God's will for us to be full of His Spirit. I am reminded of what Jesus said in Luke 11:11-13: *"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? [12] Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

The Father wants to bless you and He wants to give you His Spirit to dwell powerfully within you. Will you empty yourself of yourself and ask Him to baptize you today with the gift of His Spirit. He will be true to His Word!

Read Acts 1 – 4

MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT…

The Promise had a price

We have a lot of things that need batteries: remote controls, phones, toys, lights, computers… They are all intricately designed objects created for specific purposes; and are all useless without energy flowing through them, inanimate dust collectors without power to propel them. But, when you take the right sized battery (or batteries), pop open the back and insert you get a different picture, don't you? Now, you have an inanimate object with the proper power supply, ready for the task it was designed for. Unfortunately, it is still inanimate! Until we turn the thing on and put the energy to use, we have nothing more that what we started with!

Jesus talked about this with His disciples. He said that unless we bear fruit, we will be cut off (John 15:1,2). He is the vine, the Father is the farmer (nurturer, caretaker), and we are the branches. Branches are there to grow things, but everything grows from the life of the vine. Or, if we go back to the battery analogy; every battery operated object is meant to do something, but needs the battery to do it.

You see, the Promise of the Father has a Price. The price for Jesus was death. He paid for all of our sin through His death. Yes, the Holy Spirit is a free gift to us for by His grace we are saved, but there is a responsibility or price to His Lordship in our lives. The price tag for us is still death (sorry to be so morbid here, but hang in because this is good!). Like I said, the price for us is still death, but not quite like Jesus. Jesus took care of the big picture items like paying for our sin, conquering the devil and giving us eternal life. Ours is a death to ourselves, to who we think we are, to our self sufficiency and to our sin nature. It is a death to our nearsightedness and permission for God to show us what we were really created for in the first place. It is a death to complacency and a birthing to the purposes of God.

I must die to me. I must empty myself of me to give room for the Holy Spirit to move in. When He moves in, it is for keeps. His word is true, His promises are sure, and when He says that He covenants to stay with us; He stays.

We have been given the Promise of the Father… the gift of His Spirit to come and live in us; to be our helper, our teacher, advocate, guide, conscience, healer and Saviour. He is to be the very air that we breathe, the joy of life and the proof that God exists and loves us dearly. He is eternity dwelling in us!

Allow His Holy Spirit to empower you, to baptize you today.

…Yanda