

The Promises of God

Promise of the Spirit

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and on My maid-servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.
(Joel 2:28-32)

<http://tinyurl.com/GodOfPromises>

Promise of the Spirit

Key Verses:

Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:38–39

God promises His Spirit to dwell with and in His people.

Core Theme

From the beginning, God's plan was not only to dwell among His people but within them. The promise of the Spirit fulfills God's desire for fellowship, holiness, and empowerment in His people.

God's Character in History

At Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4, 16–18):

The Holy Spirit was poured out upon all believers in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy. Tongues of fire, the sound of a rushing wind, and bold proclamation marked this new era.

Ongoing Work:

Throughout the book of Acts, the Spirit empowered the church to witness, to perform miracles, to discern truth, and to establish unity among believers.

The Spirit's presence became the sign of belonging to Christ's body (Acts 10:44–48; 19:1–6).

Summary:

The outpouring of the Spirit marked the birth of the church and continues to define its mission. The Spirit's guidance is seen in comfort, conviction, and courage among believers.

God's Character Revealed

God promises to send His Spirit to dwell with and in His people

John 14:15-21 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. (16) And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — (17) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (18) I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. (19) "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. (20) At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. (21) He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

John 16:5-8 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' (6) But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. (7) Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (8) And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment..."

From the beginning, God's plan was not only to dwell among His people but within them. The promise of the Spirit fulfills God's desire for fellowship, holiness, and empowerment in His people.

God's Character Revealed in Jesus

John 16:7; Acts 1:8. Jesus promised and sent the Spirit to empower His people.

Joh 16:4-15 But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. "And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. (5) "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' (6) But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. (7) Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (8) And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) of sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; (11) of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (12) "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. (13) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (15) All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.

Act 1:6-11 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (7) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. (8) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (9) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. (10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, (11) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

God's Invitation to Know Him

Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14. The Spirit is God's seal and guarantee of our inheritance.

Rom 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Eph 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

God's Character Revealed in Jesus

John 16:7 (NASB 1995):

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

Acts 1:8 (NASB 1995):

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Summary:

Jesus not only promised the Spirit but directly sent Him after His ascension.

The Spirit continues Christ's work on earth—teaching, guiding, and empowering His people.

The Holy Spirit Before the Time of Jesus

The Spirit was active but selective

Before Pentecost, the Spirit was **active but selective**; coming upon individuals for specific purposes:

- **Creation:** *"The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."* (Gen 1:2)
- **Joseph:** Given wisdom and discernment (Genesis 41:38).
- **Moses and the seventy elders:** Empowered to lead (Numbers 11:25).
- **Joshua:** Filled with the Spirit for leadership (Deuteronomy 34:9).
- **Judges:** The Spirit came upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson for deliverance (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:6).
- **Prophets:** The Spirit spoke through them to reveal God's will (2 Peter 1:21).

Difference:

- In the Old Testament, the Spirit's presence was temporary and external.
- In the New Covenant, His presence is permanent and internal (John 14:17).

The prophets foretold a universal and inward work of the Spirit:

- **Isaiah 32:15:** *"Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high..."*
- **Ezekiel 36:26–27:** *"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes."*
- **Zechariah 12:10:** *"I will pour out on the house of David... the Spirit of grace and supplication."*
- **Joel 2:28–29:** The clearest promise; an inclusive outpouring on all people.
 - God promised a new heart, a new spirit, and direct fellowship with Him.

Apostolic Teaching about the Holy Spirit

God with us, and God in us

The Apostles taught that...

- The Spirit is **God's gift** to all who believe and are baptized (Acts 2:38–39).
- The Spirit **dwells in believers** and marks them as belonging to Christ (Romans 8:9).
- The Spirit **produces fruit** (Galatians 5:22–23) and **distributes gifts** (1 Corinthians 12:4–11).
- The Spirit **intercedes** for believers (Romans 8:26).
- The Spirit **unites** the church as one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
- The Spirit **bears witness** to the truth (1 John 4:13).

How the Apostles Recognized the Spirit's Work...

- **Speaking in tongues** and **prophesying** confirmed the Spirit's presence (Acts 10:44–46; 19:6).
- **Boldness in witness** and **holiness of life** were marks of the Spirit's power (Acts 4:31).
- **Discernment, peace, and unity** within the church were signs of His leading (Acts 15:28).
- **The Spirit's fruit** - love, joy, peace, patience - was evidence of His indwelling (Galatians 5:22–23).

God's promise of the Spirit is the fulfillment of His plan to dwell among His people.

Through the Spirit, believers experience God's presence, power, and assurance.

He is the living connection between the risen Christ and His church—God with us, and God in us.

How Early Christians Recognized the Spirit's Work

They experienced Him as the living presence of God

Scripture inspiration (the Spirit spoke through the prophets and apostles).

Holiness of life (the Spirit transforms believers into Christ's likeness).

Church unity (the Spirit maintains one faith and one body).

Witness and martyrdom (the Spirit gives courage to confess Christ).

Spiritual gifts (prophecy, healing, discernment continued in some communities).

Theme	Early Church Understanding
Nature of the Spirit	Divine, not created; one with the Father and the Son.
Work of the Spirit	Inspired the prophets, empowered the church, sanctified believers.
Presence	The Spirit dwelt in the church as the living presence of God.
Unity	The Spirit was the bond of unity between believers and Christ.
Trinity	By the 2nd century, the Spirit was clearly confessed as part of the Triune Godhead.

The Apostolic Fathers (AD 90–150)

These writers were closest in time to the Apostles. They often spoke of the Holy Spirit in practical and moral terms.

The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)

Mentions baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The Spirit was tied to new life and obedience.

This reflects the same Trinitarian confession seen in Matthew 28:19.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 110)

Called the Spirit "the bond of unity" between believers and Christ.

Taught that the Spirit gives discernment and truth to the church:

"Do nothing without the bishop and the presbyters; do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God, and the presbyters in the place of the apostles, and the deacons... entrusted with the service of Jesus Christ, who was with the Father before the ages, and in the end was revealed."

(*Letter to the Magnesians* 6)

The Spirit's presence was assumed as the power maintaining order and love in the church.

Polycarp of Smyrna (c. AD 110–140)

Spoke of the Spirit as the source of endurance and holiness.

"He who raised up Christ from the dead will raise up us also—if we do His will and walk in His commandments and love what He loved."

(*Letter to the Philippians* 2)

The Spirit empowers obedience and faithfulness under persecution.

The Apologists (AD 150–200)

As Christianity faced criticism from pagans and Jews, the apologists explained the Spirit's divine role in creation and prophecy.

Justin Martyr (c. AD 155)

Affirmed the Spirit's divinity and prophetic activity.

"We worship and adore the Father, the Son, and the prophetic Spirit."

(*First Apology* 6)

Saw the Spirit as the voice of prophecy throughout the Old Testament.

Said the Spirit inspired all who spoke truth, even before Christ's incarnation.

Athenagoras of Athens (c. AD 177)

Wrote that the Spirit "moves the prophets" and reveals the mysteries of God.

Explained the Trinity in terms of harmony and distinction, saying the Spirit is not a created force but a divine person proceeding from God.

The Theologians and Bishops (AD 180–250)

Here, the teaching on the Holy Spirit became more developed and clearly Trinitarian.

Irenaeus of Lyons (c. AD 180)

Described the Spirit as the "breath of God" and the means of renewal.

Called the Spirit one of the "two hands of God"—the Son and the Spirit—through whom God created and redeems humanity.

"Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace."

(*Against Heresies* 3.24.1)

Emphasized the Spirit's role in sanctifying believers and uniting them with Christ.

Tertullian (c. AD 200)

Was the first to use the Latin term "Trinitas" (Trinity).

Argued the Spirit is a distinct person but of one substance with the Father and the Son.

"The Spirit is third from God and the Son, as the fruit from the tree, or the stream from the fountain."

(*Against Praxeas* 8)

Taught that the Spirit distributes spiritual gifts and leads the church into truth.

The Early 3rd Century (AD 200–250)

Origen of Alexandria

Saw the Spirit as the agent of sanctification and knowledge of God.

"No one can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit."

(*On First Principles* 1.3)

Described the Spirit's work as enlightening the mind to understand Scripture.

Distinguished the Spirit's work in the church from the Father's act of creation and the Son's act of redemption.

The Context - “Born of Water and the Spirit”

Born Again – Rebirth and Indwelling

John 3:5-6 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

The Meaning of “Born Again”

- The phrase can also be translated “born from above.”
- It means a new origin, a new source of life; life that comes **from God**, not from human effort or lineage.

John 1:12–13 says:

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

So, the new birth is:

- **Initiated by God**
- **Effectuated by the Spirit**
- **Resulting in a new nature** capable of knowing and loving God

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (26) I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

The Context — “Born of Water and the Spirit”

John 3:5–6 (NASB 1995)

- “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”
- Nicodemus was a Pharisee, deeply trained in the Law. When Jesus spoke of being “born again,” Nicodemus thought in physical terms. But Jesus pointed to a **spiritual birth**—a birth brought about by the **Spirit of God**.

The Meaning of “Born Again”

- The phrase can also be translated “born from above.”
- It means a new origin, a new source of life—life that comes **from God**, not from human effort or lineage.
- **John 1:12–13** says:
 - “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
 - who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- So, the new birth is:
 - **Initiated by God**
 - **Effectuated by the Spirit**
 - **Resulting in a new nature** capable of knowing and loving God

Connection to Old Testament Promise

Jesus expected Nicodemus to recognize His teaching from **Ezekiel 36:25–27**, which says:

*“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean...
Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.
I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.”*

Here, “water and Spirit” point to cleansing from sin and renewal of the heart—exactly what Jesus described as being “born again.”

The **new covenant** promise was not about external law but **internal transformation** by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit - the Agent of New Birth

New-Birth / Indwelling – Two Sides of the Same Reality

Aspect	Description	Key Text
Rebirth (Regeneration)	The moment when a person is made spiritually alive by the Spirit	John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5
Indwelling	The ongoing presence of the Spirit within the believer	John 14:17; Romans 8:9–11
Result	New nature, new desires, new life in Christ	2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:22–25

Titus 3:3-7 *For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. (4) But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, (5) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, (6) whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

- The **Spirit both cleanses and renews**; the new birth is the moment the Spirit enters to make one alive to God.

John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' (8) The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

John 14:15-18 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. (16) And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— (17) the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. (18) I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

Romans 8:8-11 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

2 Cor 5:7-21 For we walk by faith, not by sight. (8) We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. (9) Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (11) Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (12) For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have *an answer* for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. (13) For if we are beside ourselves, *it is* for God; or if we are of sound mind, *it is* for you. (14) For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; (15) and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (16) Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him *thus* no longer. (17) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.** (18) Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (21) For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Gal 5:16-26 I say then: **Walk in the Spirit**, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (19) Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, (20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, (21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.** (24) **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** (26) Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The Indwelling Spirit – Evidence of New Birth

A Continuation of the Work of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:8-11 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

- To be “born again” is to receive the Spirit’s life.
- To be “indwelt by the Spirit” is to continue living in that life.
- You cannot have one without the other.

The Spirit:

- Awakens us to faith (**John 16:8–11**)
- Joins us to Christ (**1 Corinthians 12:13**)
- Lives within us as God’s seal (**Ephesians 1:13–14**)
- Transforms our character (**Galatians 5:22–23**)

Thus, the new birth is the **beginning** of the Spirit’s work; indwelling is the **continuation** of it.

Joh 16:7-11 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. (8) And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) of sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; (11) of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

1Co 12:12-13 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Eph 1:13-14 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Gal 5:22-25 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (24) And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Jesus’ Analogy of the Wind

John 3:8 (NASB 1995):

“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it,
but do not know where it comes from and where it is going;
so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

- The Spirit’s work in regeneration is mysterious yet observable by its effects—just as wind cannot be seen but is known by its movement.
- Likewise, those born of the Spirit show evidence: repentance, faith, love, and obedience.

The Apostolic Understanding

The Apostles taught that being “born again” and receiving the Spirit are one event in salvation:

- **Peter:** “You have been born again... through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23)
- **Paul:** “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- **John:** “By this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” (1 John 3:24)
 - In all these, rebirth and indwelling are united. The Spirit gives new birth and remains to abide within.

Theological Reflection

- When Jesus said, “*You must be born again*,” He was revealing the entrance to the kingdom: a life animated by the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit’s indwelling presence is both the proof and the power of that new birth.
- In short:

Rebirth is the Spirit’s entrance; indwelling is His residence.