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What Does the Bible Say About The Holy Spirit?

Summary: There is a source of “*power from on high*” that too many Christians have either overlooked or rejected to their own loss. Come and read about the mighty baptism with the Holy Spirit — *a gift that is “for you”* and for today. It will change your life!

After spending 3-1/2 years with Jesus, Peter denied the Lord three times. The third time he even went so far as to “call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, 'I don't know this man you're talking about.' ” ([Mark 14:71](#) - *But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak.*)

Fast forward about seven weeks. Now we see this same Peter preaching an anointed message to crowds of thousands in Jerusalem. It is a virtual certainty that the crowds contained many of those who, seven weeks earlier, had been screaming in the direction of Jesus: “*Crucify him! Crucify him!*” But now we see Peter, the former Christ-denier, preaching boldly and openly about the crucified and now-resurrected Savior. The result of Peter's now-courageous testimony was 3,000 of his audience believing in the Lord and being [water baptized](#).

What made the difference? The answer is simple and is right there in Scripture for us to see. Between his denial of Christ at Passover and his mighty, soul-winning sermon less than two months later, Peter experienced the first New Testament Day of [Pentecost](#). Peter was among the 120 who had received the heaven-sent baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Let's examine this great biblical truth — the mighty Holy Spirit anointing known as the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It was vitally important to Jesus that His disciples receive it. In fact, just before His ascension back to heaven, He forbade the disciples from going forth to minister until they had received this [Holy Ghost power](#) from on high. [Acts 2:1-4](#) –

¹*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

²*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.*

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³And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

[Luke 24:47-53](#)

⁴⁷And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

⁴⁸And ye are witnesses of these things.

⁴⁹And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

⁵⁰And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

⁵¹And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

⁵²And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

⁵³And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

• Just think of it! Peter, James, John, and the other disciples had just finished 3-1/2 years of intensive, daily training by Jesus Himself. They had been with Him “24-7”. He gave them on-the-job-training ministry assignments and debriefed them afterwards. He explained the Word of God to them. He modeled godly behavior and effective ministry. Surely no men on earth, before or since, had been better trained. Yet to these same men Jesus said (*my paraphrase*), “Don’t go out yet to minister. Stay in Jerusalem. You are not fully ready for New Testament ministry. You still need something for effective ministry that you now lack, and that is power from on high.”

• These men had the Word of God. They had been personally trained by Jesus. And yet they were not considered ready for ministry! Why? They didn’t yet have the “power from on high”.

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Let's step forward to the Book of Acts and see how they received this promised power. It is the pattern for the Church then and now.

[Acts 1:4,5,8](#)

⁴And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

⁵For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

⁸But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. [5] For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... [8] you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will *be my witnesses* in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

•• Luke (the author of Acts) continued to record Jesus' parting words to the disciples. Key elements in Christ's message were:

• (As in [Luke 24:49](#)) *And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.*

Don't leave Jerusalem. Wait.

• They knew about water baptism, but they needed to be “baptized in the Holy Spirit”.

• That mighty Holy Spirit baptism would give them the promised *power for ministry*.

• It would make them effective witnesses in the global Great Commission.

•• A brief digression to a related subject is in order here. Contrary to the teaching in some circles, water baptism and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are two entirely different biblical

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experiences. In verse 5 above, Jesus said, “John baptized with water, but ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” Water baptism and Holy Spirit baptism are two distinct experiences, according to Jesus Christ.

[Acts 2:1-4 \(NIV\)](#) - When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. [2] Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. [3] They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. [4] All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

•• In [Acts 1:5](#) - *For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

Jesus had promised that they would be “baptized with the Holy Spirit”. Here in Acts 2:4 they were indeed “filled with the Holy Spirit”, in fulfillment of Jesus’ promise.

• Note: it is clear from the promise-then-fulfillment context that these two expressions — baptized with and filled with the Holy Spirit — mean one and the same thing ([Acts 1:5 with Acts 2:4](#)).

•• Their baptism with the Holy Spirit was the promised source of the “*power from on high*” that they needed for effective ministry.

•• It is vitally important to note here that the immediate, observable, *initial evidence* of their Holy Spirit baptism was their *speaking in tongues*.

•• The results of their being filled with the Holy Spirit were immediate and astounding.

• The formerly Christ-denying, but now Spirit-filled, apostle Peter in Acts 2 preached a bold and anointed sermon that led to the conversion of 3,000 souls that day ([Acts 2:41](#) - *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*).

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- In [Acts 3:1-10](#), Peter and John, fresh from the mighty outpouring of Pentecost, [healed a paralytic man](#) near the temple, -

¹Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

²And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

³Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

⁴And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

⁵And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

⁶Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

⁷And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

⁸And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

¹⁰And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

and another 2,000 were added to the Lord ([Acts 4:4](#) - *Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.*).

- The Spirit-baptized apostles “performed many miraculous signs and wonders” ([Acts 5:12](#) - *And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.)*), resulting in many more conversions to the Lord (vs. [14](#) - *And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*).

- Spirit-filled Stephen ([Acts 6:5](#) - *And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:*) “a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs” ([6:8](#) - *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*).

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- Spirit-filled Philip (Acts 6:5) preached in Samaria with miracles, *healings*, the casting out of demons, and numerous conversions (Acts 8:5-14).
- Spirit-baptized Peter was used by God to heal lame Aeneas, and two entire towns turned to the Lord (Acts 9:34-35).
- The same Spirit-filled Peter raised the dead woman Dorcas, with the result that “many people [in her city] believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:40-42).
- And the rest of the Book of Acts shows many more instances of believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, ministering God’s word with power, resulting in many coming to the Lord.
- The record of Acts subsequent to Pentecost certainly proves Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 - *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.* that this Pentecostal baptism would give His followers “power ... [to] be [His] witnesses”.
- Before Pentecost, when Jesus had been taken prisoner in the garden of Gethsemane, “...all the disciples deserted him and fled” (Matthew 26:56 - *But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.*). After Pentecost, the same disciples were bold witnesses for Jesus with power (Acts 4:29-31

²⁹And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

³⁰By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

³¹And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

and many other post-Pentecostal Scriptures).

• Acts 2:1-4, of course, was the first and great New Testament Day of Pentecost. But this Holy-Ghost outpouring of “power from on high” was never intended to stop there. The baptism with the Holy Spirit that Peter and the others received that day was, in Peter’s words, for all believers. Let’s see Peter’s declaration of this in the inspired Scripture account:

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[Acts 2:37-39](#) (NIV) When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “*Brothers, what shall we do?*” [38] Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

- Newly Spirit-filled Peter stood up in the crowd at Pentecost and preached. When many came under conviction and asked what they should do, Peter replied that they should repent and be baptized and they would receive this same Pentecostal, Holy Spirit baptism that Peter and the 120 had received.

- “The promise [*of being filled with/baptized with the Holy Spirit*] is for you.”

- “The promise is ... for your children.”

- “The promise is ... for all who are far off.”

- I write this from Anchorage, Alaska. It would be difficult to get more “far off” from Jerusalem than where I sit today! But the promise of the baptism with the Holy Spirit was for me ... for you ... for all of us who are “far off” and choose to believe for this great blessing.

- Note: believing in simple faith is a key to receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in tongues. In the Great Commission, Jesus said, “These signs will accompany those who believe ... they will speak in new tongues” ([Mark 16:17](#) - *And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;*). It is not a mystery why those who don’t believe in the biblical baptism with the Spirit don’t receive it. It is, said Jesus, for “those who believe”.

- This mighty Pentecostal baptism being “for all who are far off” is consistent with the global Great Commission, which all believers understand is for the entire Church Age, not just for the first century. As noted just above, Jesus said in that worldwide commission that certain signs would accompany and confirm the preaching of the Gospel, including that “those who believe ... will speak in new tongues” ([Mark 16:17](#)). This initial evidence of the Pentecostal baptism

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with the Spirit is part of the Great Commission command to “go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” ([Matthew 28:19-20](#) –

¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

). And one of those things that Jesus had imparted to His first disciples, to be shared among “all nations” throughout the centuries, is the importance of being “baptized in the Holy Spirit” ([Acts 1:5](#)).

• Now let’s proceed to some more Scriptures in the Book of Acts showing believers being filled with the Spirit — remembering from [Acts 1:5](#) with [Acts 2:4](#) that being “filled with” and being “baptized with” the Holy Spirit are two expressions for the same, identical experience.

[Acts 10:43-49](#) (NIV) “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” [44] While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. [45] The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. [46] For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, [47] “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

• Some anti-Pentecostal preachers have tried to convince their listeners that the [Acts 2](#) Pentecost was a one-time experience, never to be repeated. But this portion of Scripture clearly disproves that false teaching. Here in [Acts 10](#), as at Pentecost in Acts 2, the “gift of the Holy Spirit ... came on all” the listeners to Peter’s sermon.

• How did Peter and his companions know that these Gentiles at Cornelius’s house had received their Pentecost? The text tells us: “...FOR they heard them speaking in tongues” (vs. [46](#)). That is how they knew then; that is how we know today that someone has been filled with

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the Holy Spirit. They speak in tongues.

• Peter understood correctly that this was another occurrence, another reception, of the blessing of that first Pentecost, which was intended, as we have seen, “for all” ([Acts 2:39](#) - *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call.*), not just for the 120 at Pentecost. He declared, “They have received the Holy Spirit JUST AS WE have” — power from on high ... speaking in tongues.

• When Peter shared this testimony with the Jerusalem Christians, he said: “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?” ([Acts 11:15-17](#) –

¹⁵And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

¹⁶Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

¹⁷Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

). Those Gentiles received “the same gift”, the same experience of being “baptized with the Holy Spirit” that the Jewish Christians had received at Pentecost.

[Acts 19:1-6 \(NIV\)](#)

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples [2] and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” [3] So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. [4] Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” [5] On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. [6] When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

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•• As in the Acts 2 Pentecost at Jerusalem, and as in the [Acts 10](#) “Pentecost” among the Gentiles, when these Ephesian believers “receive[d] the Holy Spirit”, they too “spoke in tongues”. And in this instance they also prophesied. The baptism with the Holy Spirit opens the door to your being used in other *gifts of the Holy Spirit*, such as prophecy in this instance.

•• By now we have seen a recurring theme. When believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit, there is an immediate evidence of that experience — they speak in tongues ([Acts 2:4](#) - *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*; [Acts 10:46](#) - *For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter*; [Acts 19:6](#) - *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*).

• The apostle Paul likewise was a Spirit-filled believer ([Acts 9:17](#) - *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*), and he, like the others who had been baptized with the Spirit, spoke in tongues ([1 Corinthians 14:18](#) - *I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:*) — “I thank God that I [Paul] speak in tongues...” Like Paul, I am personally thankful for this Holy Spirit baptism in my life since 1971, and for the God-given, edifying ability ([1 Corinthians 14:4](#) - *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.*) to speak in tongues every day as the Spirit gives utterance ([Acts 2:4](#)).

What, then, should believers do to receive this mighty baptism with the Holy Spirit?

1. First, believe that it is “for you ... for all” ([Acts 2:39](#) - *For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call.*), not just for a select few.

2. “Repent and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” ([Acts 2:38](#) - *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*). The baptism with the Holy Spirit is for Christian believers. Be sure that you are “right” with God, that you are born again by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is also important to be baptized in water ([vs. 38](#)),

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although it is certainly possible, as at Cornelius's house, to be filled with the Spirit before water baptism ([Acts 10:47-48](#) -

⁴⁷*Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?*

⁴⁸*And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*

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3. Remember who the Source of the baptism with the Spirit is — that is, Jesus Christ. In all four Gospels Jesus is called the One who “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” ([Matthew 3:16](#). - *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:* See also [Mark 1:8](#) - *I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.*, [Luke 3:16](#) - *John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:*, and [John 1:33](#) - *And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*). Look with faith to [Jesus, the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit](#).

4. Hunger and thirst for this Holy Spirit anointing of “power from on high”. Let Paul’s command — “be filled with the Spirit” ([Ephesians 5:18](#) - *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*) — be the cry of your heart. From a repentant and faith-filled heart that is forgiven and “right” before God, look to Jesus for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, expecting Him to grant it as a free gift. You can’t earn it; that’s why it is called “the gift of the Holy Spirit” ([Acts 2:38](#) - *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*). It is yours to receive.

Remember the Ephesians’ disciples of [Acts 19:1-6](#) –

¹*And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,*

²*He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.*

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³*And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.*

⁴*Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.*

⁵*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*

⁶*And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*

. They knew the Lord, yet Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They had not, so Paul instructed them further in the things of the Lord, then laid hands on them, and they “received” and spoke in tongues ([vs. 6](#)). You too can receive.

5. There are many ways to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Be open to God to fill you with the Holy Spirit in any context which He places before you.

- At the first Pentecost (see [Acts 1:14](#) - *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* with [Acts 2:1](#)- *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*), those who received were gathered together, apparently in prayer. It was a group setting into which the Lord sovereignly poured out His Spirit.
- At Cornelius’s house ([Acts 10:44](#) - *While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.*), right in the midst of Peter’s anointed sermon they were all baptized with the Spirit.
- In Ephesus ([Acts 19:6](#) - *And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.*), they received the baptism with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of Paul’s hands.
- The variety is obvious. You can receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit in any of a number of ways:
 - Another believer lays hands on you and prays for you to receive. This is how the apostle Paul was filled with the Spirit ([Acts 9:17](#) - *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.*).

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- You may be all alone in your room, or even alone driving your car down the road. I know several people who were filled with the Spirit in one of those ways.
 - You can be in a church meeting, where preaching and prayer and worship bring faith to a high level, and you receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit after responding to the preacher's invitation. This is how I received in 1971.
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- In sum, anywhere that you find yourself, in an atmosphere of love and worship and seeking after all that the Lord has for you, you can receive!
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Pentecost is for today! It is “for you”! Like those in Jerusalem, in Ephesus, and at Cornelius's home, like the apostles Peter and Paul and the other disciples, you too can be filled with the Spirit, speak in tongues, and receive that “power from on high” to be Christ’s witnesses wherever you go.

If this message has stirred your heart today, find a quiet place before the Lord. Allow worship of Him to spring up within your heart. And ask Him, “Lord, pour out upon me today that mighty Holy Spirit baptism.” He is faithful. Expect Him to fill you with His Spirit. Expect to speak forth in tongues as the Holy Spirit enables you. Or if you prefer, go and ask one or more other *Spirit-filled believers* to pray for you to receive. And you will, because it is “for you”!