

Promise of the Father?

The Biblical book of Acts marks a pivotal point on Christian history, especially the day that is typically called Pentecost by Christians, but is called Shavuot by the Jews. The word Pentecost is a transliteration of the Greek word 'pentekoste' which means '50', and Shavuot is the Hebrew word for 'weeks'. In both cases, the implication is that to determine when this festival is to be observed, a person has to count.

God instructs his people to observe this festival in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus, which also lists most of the other Biblical festivals –

ESV **Lev 23:15-22** - "You shall count seven full weeks from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering. ¹⁶ You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD. . . . ²¹ And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations.

In Judaism, this day is celebrated as the day God gave the Torah to Israel – which is considered a sign of God betrothing Himself to the Hebrew people. For the Christian world, this day – though 1400 years later – is lauded as the 'birthday of the church' based on the belief that the Holy Spirit was given on that day.

But was that the case? Was the Holy Spirit first given on that day? Based on a number of Old Testament (Tnakh) scriptures, that is not the case¹. Instead, we find that the Holy Spirit was widely available to the Hebrew people. In fact, Yeshua - quite some time before His death and resurrection - said to His disciples –

NKJ **Luke 11:13** - "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Though the giving of the Holy Spirit and the presumed 'birthday of the church' are important topics to discuss, it is not the purpose of this message. Instead, I want to discuss a phrase that is oftentimes used to support the 'Holy Spirit given on Pentecost' belief, and that phrase is 'the Promise of the Father'.

Like I mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit had been given to the disciples within a couple of days of Yeshua's resurrection, but about 40 days later, Yeshua made a statement that has led many to believe that the Holy Spirit was yet to come. That day – just before He ascended to The Father, He said to his disciples -

NKJ **Act 1:4-5** - "... (do) not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, which you have heard from Me; ⁵ "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

This passage is somewhat hard to understand if you don't follow precisely what Yeshua is saying. He's basically saying two things: 1) wait for the Promise of the Father which you heard from Me, and 2) you will be immersed in the Holy Spirit – which appears to have happened at Shavuot.

¹ Psalm 51:11; Isaiah 63:10-11; Daniel 4:8-9,18; Nehemiah 9:20; Luke 1:41



We will discuss this 2nd point later, but for now, let's begin by answering the question "Is the 'Promise of The Father' the same as the giving of the Holy Spirit?"; and the answer is "Not necessarily!" Though they are intertwined, they are not the same thing.

In this study, we will discover what he 'Promise of The Father' really. We will find that the Promise of the Father is a message, a message that has to be delivered to the people, and it has to be delivered in such a way that it can be understood. We will start by defining the message, then identify the messengers, and finally - see the role the Holy Spirit has in delivering the message. We will start by defining the message.

The Message

Within hours of His resurrection, Yeshua appeared to a number of people, specifically two of His disciples on the Road to Emaus, then to all the disciples except Thomas somewhere in Jerusalem. In that later meeting, Yeshua showed them that He was indeed the same man who had been their Rabbi for the previous three and a half years. He then went on to explain to them what had happened the previous few days. He said to them -

NKJ **Luke 24:44-47** - ... "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ "And you are witnesses of these things.

That afternoon, He showed them from the prophecies that it was imperative that He die and then be resurrected in order for those prophecies to be fulfilled. He also showed that - according to the prophecies, a pardon would be heralded to all nations – beginning in Jerusalem. And finally, He reminded them that they were eye-witnesses to all that had taken place.

With all that in mind, He said to them -

Holy Spirit Given on Pentecost?

There are two passages in the Acts 2 account that appear to indicated that the availability of the Holy Spirit was something new. Those passages are Acts 1:4-5 and Acts 2:38-39. Let's take a look at them –

NKJ **Acts 1:4-5** - And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

NKJ **Acts 2:33** - "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Note that what Peter was telling his audience that Shavuot afternoon was that fire dancing on the disciple's heads, and the fact that each person could hear the disciple's words in his own language was the power of God's Holy Spirit, part of which had been given the disciples some 40 days earlier when Yeshua breathed on them.

NKJ **John 20:22** - And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

So when Shavuot came some 50 days later, the disciples had already been given the Holy Spirit. Their audience was simply witnessing the power of that spirit.

This next verse simply shows that, just as Yeshua stated in Luke 11:13, the Holy Spirit would be given to their audience as well if they turn to following YHVH.-

NKJ **Acts 2:38-39** ³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."



NKJ **Luke 24:49** - "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Let's analyze what Yeshua just told them.

The Greek word from which we get 'promise' is 'epaggelia' (1860) and its primary meaning is "announcement". It is derived from the root word "aggelos" (32) which is most often translated 'angel'. We know that angels are messengers from God, therefore, the 'Promise of the Father' is the Father's message.

We also know that angels are oftentimes sent to clarify what the recipient was witnessing. For example – when the angel was sent to Joseph, Mary's husband, the angel did not announce that His wife was pregnant, he explained why his wife was pregnant².

So, the 'Promise' can be an announcement, a declaration, a message, or a clarification of why something is happening.

From the Luke passage, we see that the 'Promise of The Father' is something that can be "sent". The Greek word is 'apostello' (Strong's 649), and in fact the reason why Yeshua's disciples are later called "apostles" is that they were "sent" with a message.

In addition to being sent, we find that the message is sent "upon" them. The word that is used for "upon" is the Greek preposition "epi" (1909). It is the same word that describes building a house 'upon' a rock (Matt. 7:24). So, the 'Promise of the Father' is carried forward 'upon' or by the disciples.

We find out more about the 'Promise of the Father' when Luke continued his story in Acts 1:4 –

NKJ **Acts 1:4** - And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me..."

Here we find that the 'Promise of the Father' is something that the disciples had heard directly from Yeshua. It is also something they needed to 'wait' for, and they needed to wait for it in Jerusalem.

So far, we've seen that the 'Promise of the Father' is:

- a message, announcement, and/or an explanation of something they had or are currently witnessing
- something that can be sent
- something that the disciples can carry or convey like a messenger
- something they had heard directly from Yeshua
- something they needed to wait for in Jerusalem

So what is that message? Paul defined it in his letter to the synagogue in Antioch. In that letter, Paul rehearsed to his Jewish brothers the history of the Hebrew people beginning at their time in Egypt down to the time of King David, and then said –

NKJ **Acts 13:23** - "From this man's seed, according to *the* promise (epaggelia), God raised up for Israel a Savior -- Jesus --.

The promise was that God would send a deliverer to Israel from the seed of David. Paul stated that the promise had been fulfilled in the person of the resurrected Yeshua. He went on to say –

NKJ **Acts 13:26** - "Men *and* brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

² Matt. 1:20



Paul's audience included "sons of the family of Abraham" which could have included both Jews and non-Jewish Israelites. In addition, there were some who were "God fearers" who would have been non-Israelites. Paul's point was simply that "salvation has been declared to you". He then told them -

^{ESV} **Acts 13:32-34** - And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³this He has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, "' You are my Son, today I have begotten you.' ³⁴And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, "' I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

The "Promise to the Fathers" (as Paul called it) was fulfilled in the event that included the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem having Yeshua put to death and His later resurrection back to life. His resurrection established Him as King of Israel as Paul indicated in his reference to Psalm 2 ³.

Paul's reference to "the sure blessings of David" is a phrase taken from Isaiah 55:1-5 which is a reference to the Messianic Kingdom, which in turn is a picture of the united Kingdom of Israel and Judah under one king - King David. Paul, as did Peter in Acts 2, likened Yeshua – Israel's true deliverer – to King David with the exception that, unlike David, Yeshua will never die ... He would be king forever.

What is not evident in Paul's letter, but is never-the-less mandatory for there to be a united Kingdom of Israel, is that the 'exiles of Israel' – better known as the 'Lost Ten Tribes' - would have to be gathered back to YHVH. A means of salvation would have to be provided by which they can once again be a part of the people of Israel. As we will see, Yeshua was that salvation.⁴

The "Promise of the Father" is rooted in the Tnakh⁵. It is pictured by the Passover / Exodus story and is mentioned by nearly all of Israel's prophets. The Hebrew word from 'promise' is the word "dabar" (דָּבָר – 1697) which simply means "word". In the Hebrew world, your word is your promise ... if you say it, it's assumed that you are going to do it. It's like us saying "I give you my word".

Solomon's prayer of dedication is a good example –

^{ESV} **1 Kings 8:56** - "Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised (dabar). Not one word (dabar) has failed of all his good promise (dabar), which he spoke (dabar) by Moses his servant.

In the eyes of King Solomon, God's word was His promise, and up to that point, God had done for Israel everything He had said He would do. Up to Solomon's day, whenever Israel as a people would sin (in most cases – idolatry), she would eventually repent and YHVH would send a judge to deliver her. But the prophets showed that there would be a time when Israel would sin and not repent. According to the prophecies, when that happened, God would divide Israel and scatter her through the nations.⁶

Daniel spoke of this scattering after Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians – approximately 200 years after the northern kingdom of Israel had been exiled -

^{NKJ} **Daniel 9:7** - "O Lord, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day -- to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in

³ Psalm 2:6-7

⁴ there are many articles on the Ami Yisrael web site that deal with the 'return of the exiles'

⁵ the Old Testament

⁶ Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:63-64



all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

Notice that according to Daniel, the men of Judah were experiencing 'shame of face', but Israel (the Lost Sheep) had been driven off to various countries. They are the ones Daniel described as being 'far off'. While in captivity, some of Judah repented, turned back to God, and he returned them to the Promised Land, but Israel remained scattered since she (as a people) had yet to repent. Yet there was still hope for Israel as shown by the words of Moses who prophesied before His death saying -

NKJ **Deuteronomy 30:1-3** - "Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² "and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ "that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you.

Though scattered to the 'farthest parts under heaven', Israel would eventually come to her senses and desire to return to YHWH. God's 'promise' – His word and His message – and when she does repent, He will draw her back to Himself and she may return.

The concept of the re-gathering of the exiles was preached by Peter on the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost) just a few weeks after Yeshua had been resurrected. Notice what Peter was telling this gathering of Jews and non-Jews who had come to Jerusalem from the various nations to observe the festival -

NKJ **Acts 2:38-39** - ... "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ "For the promise (epaggelia') is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

When you substitute the primary meaning 'epaggelia' into the Peter's statement, it goes like this –

³⁹ "For the **announcement** is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Again, this is just what Paul said in Acts 13 ... God raised up a deliverer – Messiah Yeshua – who will gather the exiles – those who are 'afar off' - and do just as David did - re-unite Israel and Judah as one kingdom.

Paul explained this to the believers in Ephesus by showing that the non-Jews (the northern 'Lost 10 Tribes') had become aliens to the community of Israel and had become strangers to their covenant with God, but because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, the former exiles were now being drawn back to the covenant -

NKJ **Ephesians 2:11-14** - Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- ¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one ...

Because of the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua, the exiles – those who were 'far off' - can now begin to return to YHWH.



So, what is the Promise of the Father? It is the message that YHVH would send His Son to redeem His people⁷, join Israel and Judah back together⁸, and restore the kingdom to Israel⁹. It was the message of salvation that Yeshua's disciples heard directly from Him and was subsequently laid on them to be spread throughout the known world.

Let's now take a look at the messengers themselves.

The Messengers

It goes without saying that the messengers were Yeshua's disciples, but what is oftentimes misunderstood is that their message was not about Him, it was about His role in the restoration of the Kingdom of God. They received that message from Him -

NKJ **Mark 1:14** Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God ...

But the message was not intended for the entire world, it was directed at a certain group of people – the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel -

NKJ **Matthew 15:24** But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

So Yeshua's message of the kingdom was intended for the Lost Sheep, or rather, the Lost 10 tribes of Israel, and Yeshua wasted no time in preparing his disciples to preach that message. In fact, shortly after they were called, it says that -

NKJ **Matthew 10:5-7** These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶ "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷ "And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

The disciples went out boldly and taught the message they had been given. They rejoiced at being able to perform miracles to substantiate what they were teaching ¹⁰. But there was a big difference between what Yeshua had them do then and what He was going to have them do after He died. That difference was that Yeshua would not be alive. While Yeshua was alive, they knew that they could depend on Him, after all – He was their master. He could perform miracles – heal the sick, turn water to wine, and raise people from the dead. He could even speak to a tree and it would die. When they were with Him, if they had questions, they would just go to Him. He had all the answers. If they did not understand something He had said, He would sit down with them and explain it. With Him there, they had the confidence in what they were doing; but without Him, they were not quite sure.

That's where the Holy Spirit comes in -

The Purpose for the Holy Spirit

Yeshua knew that His disciples were dependent of Him. He knew that even though they had been with Him for 3-1/2 years, they still did not truly grasp who He was and His message. Nor would they understand what was soon to take place. So on the night of Yeshua's betrayal, He sat down with his disciples for a meal and told them –

⁷ Psalm 130:7-8

⁸ Ezekiel 37:15-23

⁹ Acts 1:6

¹⁰ Luke 10:17



NKJ **John 16:12-14** - "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now. ¹³ "However, when He¹¹, 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.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit – at least in regards to the disciples – was two-fold. It was to guide them to the truth, and explain to them the events they had, or were about to witness. In the above passage, the word ‘declare’ comes from the same Greek word as the word “promise”. As we saw before, that word is ‘anaggello’ (312) and it means ‘to announce, to make known.’ In effect, what Yeshua was saying was that the Holy Spirit would take Yeshua’s words and make them clear to the disciples ... almost like Him being there with them. One of the things that would certainly need to be explained would be why their Messiah had died. So after his resurrection – so as not allow them to remain discouraged for long - He sent them the Spirit.

NKJ **John 20:19-22** - Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

The word ‘receive’ in the above passage is an active verb. It means “to take hold of”. Yeshua was giving them the Holy Spirit right then and there, and they were to take hold of it and put it to use. He did so because they needed to understand what they had witnessed and how it fit into the words of the prophets.

As witnesses of Yeshua’s ministry, death, and resurrection, the disciples were in a unique position to testify to what He had said and done. With the added bonus of the Holy Spirit, they could now begin to pull the puzzle together and begin to show others what had happened, but they were still not sure about what was going to happen in the future. For instance, they still thought the Kingdom of God would begin in a few days; after all, Yeshua was still with them! But their understanding and enthusiasm quickly waned, and even though they had been given the spirit of God just days earlier, they abandoned their calling and returned to Galilee to again be fishermen. After meeting with Yeshua there, they returned to Jerusalem as they had been instructed, and met with Him on the Mount of Olives. (Acts 1:12). It was from there that He said to them -

NKJ **Acts 1:4-5** - "... (do not) depart from Jerusalem, **but to wait for the Promise of the Father**, "which," *He said*, "you have heard from Me; ⁵ "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

As mentioned before, this passage leads one to believe that the Holy Spirit was not made available until Shavuot. But we have seen that – based on the prophecies and the words of Paul – the “Promise of the Father” is the message of the Restoration of the Kingdom through the death and resurrection of the Messiah. Therefore, the “Promise of the Father” cannot be the giving of the Holy Spirit at Shavuot. So how does verse 4 and verse 5 tie together? Let’s analyze each verse ...

Yeshua instructed them to remain in Jerusalem and await the Promise of the Father – the message they had heard from Him. This could be understood to mean that they would see a manifestation of the “Promise of The Father” that they would be able to recognize from His previous teachings. It appears that

¹¹ The Holy Spirit is the understanding and power that God gives an individual so that the person can fulfil his/her calling. The Greek language always applies gender to a noun, thus the Holy Spirit is referred to as ‘He’.



this did indeed take place on Shavuot that year when they saw Jews and non-Jews from every nation and tongue gather in Jerusalem for the festival. They would certainly see that as a fulfillment of Deuteronomy 30:1-6 as well as many other passages that speak of the return of the exiles.

Verse 5 is the problem. How does it tie into verse 4. What does John baptizing in water, and them being baptized in the Holy Spirit have to do with the message as we now know it?

The understanding comes from realizing that the disciples had already been given a 'measure' of the Holy Spirit on the day Yeshua was resurrected, but that alone had not moved them to want to get out and proclaim the message they had been trained to give. They still lacked the confidence to preach it without their Teacher being with them.

So, the disciples needed help – not only to understand the message, but to have the faith to go forward with it.

That help is found in verse 5 -

The verse starts with the word "for" which tends to connect the concept of being baptized in the Holy Spirit with the Promise of the Father – as if both were the same, which we know is not the case. So let's analyze that word.

The Greek word translated "for" is from the Greek word "hoti" (ὅτι - 3754). It is a neuter word that generally means "that, because, since" and is usually used as a conjunction to connect thoughts by giving the reason why you said what you had previously said.

"Hoti" comes from the masculine word "hostis" (ὅστις - 3748) which means "whoever, whatever, who".

Though the neuter word "hoti" (ὅτι - 3754) and its masculine root "hostis" (ὅστις - 3748) are normally spelled different (as shown), according to Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, the Greek word "hotis" is oftentimes spelled the same as "hoti" except for a comma between the first and second letter (ὅ,τι) or a small space between the first and second letter (ὅ τι)¹². That being the case, it would not be a stretch to believe that the first word in verse two could actually be "who", and if that were the case, the passage might read like this -

"... being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father which you have heard from Me, who John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

We know that Yeshua was indeed baptized in water by John, and as a result, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove¹³. Though born of and filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, He received more of the Spirit upon baptism as a mark that His ministry had begun¹⁴. The disciples, on the other hand, would begin their ministry by receiving the Holy Spirit via Yeshua's breath, but later as if they were baptized or dipped¹⁵ in the Holy Spirit. In other words, they would be given a large portion of the Holy Spirit so that they could do the job they had been given – preaching the message of the Yeshua to the nations.

With such a large measure of the Holy Spirit, the disciples would have the knowledge, confidence, and boldness to clearly give the message they would be required to give in the face of the mixed crowd they

¹² Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1993, ISBN 0-8010-8872-0, pg. 457a

¹³ Matt. 3:16

¹⁴ Acts 10:36-38

¹⁵ 'baptize' (907) means 'to dip'. In Hebrew thought, it is like dipping a piece of cloth in dye.



would be facing on their first Pentecost without Yeshua being with them. The Spirit would continue to help, encourage, and explain to them the questions they might have and the trials they would face.

With such a large measure of the Holy Spirit, the disciples would have the knowledge, confidence, and boldness to clearly proclaim the message they were intended to carry to the nations.

Conclusion

So, though the Promise of the Father – the message that Yeshua's death and resurrection enabled the Tribes to return to the covenant – was the Message of the Day ... being dipped in the Holy Spirit is what enabled them to give it.

What we have seen is that the Promise of the Father is the message of redemption through the death and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. It is the message of the prophets, the good news proclaimed by Yeshua, and the announcement given to the disciples by the resurrected Messiah. It was and still is a message of joy, hope, and peace.

Why is this important to know? Because it provides consistency in the scripture. Instead of Pentecost being about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of a NEW thing, i.e. – the Church, it is about something YHWH had been prophesying would happen for over 1400 years – the Redemption of His people.

The Holy Spirit is the vehicle by which the message of God would be delivered to the world, and as we know, the message of the Promise of the Father “turned the world upside down”¹⁶.

Shalom Aleichem

¹⁶ Acts 17:6