
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 25: PENTECOST

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The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

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Lecture 25

PENTECOST

Lecture Theme:

The ascended Christ pours out his Spirit upon his people, and the Spirit glorifies the Son, taking the things of Christ to show them to his people.

Text:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Jn. 16:13–15).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 25

If you were told by a close loved one, a person on whom you greatly depended, that they were going away and that you would see them no more, you would probably be devastated. You would feel a profound sense of loss. You might wonder how you would go on in their absence. This is precisely how the disciples felt when Jesus foretold of His departure in John chapters 14 to 16, but He assured them that His departure would result in no loss to them. Rather, it would result in tremendous gain for them. How is that possible? The answer is because He promised that He would send them His Spirit, Who would not just dwell with them but also in them. Why is Pentecost a significant event in God’s plan of redemption? What is the connection between Christ’s departure and the coming of the Spirit? How is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ in His earthly ministry essential to our understanding of the outpouring of the Spirit? What is the relevance of Christ’s ascension to Pentecost? What is the role of the Spirit in the salvation and life of every believer? In this lecture, we will consider the fulfillment of Christ’s promise to send the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit would change everything both for the salvation of God’s people and the mission of His church. Pentecost was a one-time event in God’s history of redemption that would have ongoing ramifications for the rest of time.

First of all, we will note in this lecture Christ’s promise of the Spirit. And so, we begin with Christ’s promise of the Spirit. As Jesus approached the time of His sacrificial death upon the cross, He delivered to His disciples what has come to be called His farewell discourse, recorded in John 14, 15, and 16. He told them of His coming departure and His going to prepare a place for them so that they would be with Him where He is. This was obviously disconcerting to the disciples. We see that in John 16:6, but he assured them, as we see in chapter 14:18, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” How could he both go and come? Well, the answer is He would come to them through His Spirit. Just as He had been a Comforter to them, Christ had been a comforter to

them, the Father would send them another Comforter: John 14:16, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” You see the same thing in chapter 14:26. It is for this reason that Christ insists that it is to their advantage that He go away. In John 16:7, Jesus says, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” The Holy Spirit would take the place of Christ as His representative on earth. The Spirit is the only true Vicar of Christ, not the Pope of Rome, who is a usurper and an enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Two things would coincide at once: Christ’s going and the Spirit’s coming, both Christ ascending and the Spirit descending. All of this instruction was preparation for the outpouring of the Spirit on God’s people, but before we can consider the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Christian, we must first begin by exploring the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ. This is indispensable to understanding the theology of the New Testament. So, that brings us, secondly, to Christ and the Spirit. We read in Psalm 45:7, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” This text is fulfilled in Christ as we see in Hebrews 1:9. Christ was given the Spirit without measure. The Spirit came upon Christ before Christ gave the Spirit to His people. Indeed, Christ received the Spirit for the purpose of His people being able to receive the Spirit.

So, we must begin by considering the relationship of the Holy Spirit to Christ throughout His ministry. The Puritan John Owen, really more than any other that I’ve discovered, has developed this wonderful theme. I want to highlight a handful of, I think, important points regarding this. First of all, the Holy Spirit was present from the beginning of Christ’s incarnation. Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Just as the Spirit hovered over the waters at creation in Genesis 1, so likewise we read in Luke 1:35, “And the angel answered and said unto her,” that is Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Secondly, the Holy Spirit was active throughout Christ’s ministry. So, we read in Isaiah 11:2 of the prophecy of Christ, which says, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” This is referring to Christ. The Son of God in His humanity grew in wisdom by the Holy Spirit, not from sinful folly to wisdom but from one degree of sinless, holy wisdom to another degree, a growing degree, of wisdom. At His baptism, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him like a dove. Christ entered into the fullness of the Spirit at the inauguration of His public ministry, and then He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, as we see in Matthew 4:1, and He came forth preaching and accomplishing signs by the Spirit. All throughout, it is the Spirit upon Christ working in Him, and through Him, and with Him in His earthly ministry.

Thirdly, we see the ministry of the Spirit at the cross. So, in Hebrews 9:14 we read, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The Spirit sustained Christ in His sacrificial death upon the cross, and just as He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, so the Spirit preserved His body from corruption in the grave, in the tomb.

Fourthly, all three persons of the Trinity were at work in Christ’s resurrection, including the Spirit. Romans 8:11 says, “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” So, the Spirit has a role in the resurrection of Christ, and you will note here again the connection of union with Christ. That same Spirit, that Spirit that was on Christ, Who raised Christ, is the Spirit Who quickens, makes alive, the mortal bodies of God’s people as well. We will consider the role of the Holy Spirit in Christ’s ascension under the next point.

Lastly, the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit is a Christ-centered ministry after Christ’s ascension. In John 15:26 we read, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” The Spirit’s ministry is to testify of Christ. The focus of the Spirit is on Christ, glorifying Christ, showing Christ to His people. In John 16:13–15 it says, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me,” that is Christ,

“for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” You see, the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Christ, to glorify Christ, to take the things of Christ and to show them to His people. Under this second point, we see something very important: the relationship of Christ and the Spirit.

Thirdly, Christ giving the Spirit. The ascension of Christ marks another notable event in God’s history of redemption. Christ is taken above the highest heavens to be enthroned and to reign as the King of kings and to serve His people as their exalted Mediator. We sing of this wonderful event in several Psalms: Psalms 2, 24, 68, 110, and others. In this lecture, however, we are focusing on one primary consequence of Christ’s ascension and exultation, namely, His pouring out of the Spirit upon His people. Just as He promised, this great event in the history of redemption took place on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. We read Peter saying in Acts 2:33, “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which you now see and hear.” All that we’ve seen under the previous point means that the Holy Spirit cannot be rightly known or enjoyed apart from Christ. This is why He is called the Spirit of Christ in various places throughout the New Testament.

All of the blessings of God purchased by Christ become ours through the Spirit. Our communion with the Spirit is shaped by the Holy Spirit’s communion with Christ. Now, you realize there is only one Holy Ghost, the same Spirit Who dwelt on Christ is the same exact Spirit Who indwells His people. It’s not as if there are many; there is one. The same Spirit dwelling in Christ, dwells in the hearts of all His people. Christ gives the same Spirit to all who are united to Him by faith. This lies at the heart of the new covenant, the Covenant of Grace, as prophesied in Ezekiel 36:27, “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” This does not mean that the Old Testament believer did not have the Holy Spirit at all, which was obviously necessary for their salvation, when David can pray in Psalm 51:11, “and take not thy Holy Spirit from me,” but it does mean that at Pentecost all the fruits of Christ’s completed Spirit-filled work resulted in a greater measure of the Holy Spirit being given to His people.

As in all the actions of God, this was a ministry of the whole Trinity. The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father, we see that in John 14:16 for example, and the Holy Spirit was sent by the Son as we see in John 15:26. Specifically, the Holy Spirit is sent to indwell God’s people, to dwell in them. So, contrary to the teaching of some, every Christian has the Holy Spirit. There are some who wrongly teach that there are Christians [who] still need to receive the Holy Spirit, who haven’t received the Holy Spirit yet. That’s not what the Bible teaches as we read in Romans 8:9, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” So, every Christian is indwelt by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit serves as an earnest, or a pledge, or a down payment of their full and completed redemption at the final resurrection. The Holy Spirit is the seal of all that Christ did for His people. He is the gift of the ascended Christ. So, what do we see? We see Christ sending a Spirit. Christ ascends to heaven. He is given the fullness of the Spirit, which He then pours out on the day of Pentecost on His people and that Spirit comes to indwell the Lord’s people, taking all that belongs to Christ and bringing it to bear in their own souls.

So, that brings us fourthly to the Spirit and the Christian. The Bible teaches that the Christian is born of the Spirit. One example is John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The Holy Spirit regenerates the believer and indwells the believer, bringing him from death to life. He takes all that Christ is, all that Christ has accomplished, in the salvation of His people, and the Spirit applies Christ’s work to the souls of His elect. And so, without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, there would be no one who is a recipient of all of the provisions and all of the attainments of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit is the One Who applies these things. He also convicts people of sin. He comes to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come. The Holy Spirit enlightens the Christian, comforts the believer, supports, sanctifies, and empowers the Lord’s people. The place of the Spirit in the life of the Christian is indispensable. We need to recognize that the ministry of the Spirit can never be separated from the Scriptures.

So, the Word and the Spirit must always be held together. Otherwise, you end up in trouble. If you have the Word without the Spirit, you end up in rationalism. If you have the Spirit without the Word, you end up in mysticism. They have to be held together. The Spirit Who inspired the Scriptures, as we see in II Timothy 3:16, is also the same Spirit Who illuminates the mind of the believer, opening their eyes, enabling them to understand the

Bible. The Spirit does not give new revelation to the contemporary Christian. He accompanies the revelation of the Scripture with power, making its influence powerful in the soul.

So, to be led by the Spirit is to believe and obey what the Bible teaches. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the Word according to the Word of God. The singing of Psalms is an example that we saw in a previous lecture. In Ephesians 5:18–19, Paul says to “be filled with the Spirit,” singing the songs of the Spirit. In the parallel passage of Colossians 3:16 he says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” He goes on to speak about singing the Word of Christ in the Psalms. The Holy Spirit sanctifies the believer through the Word as we meditate on it in reading and under the preaching and in singing and applying the Bible to our lives. And so, to rightly understand the ministry of the Spirit, we need to understand the place of the Scriptures in the life of the believer.

Conversely, we’re not to resist the Word of God as the Jews did under the Old Testament and under Stephen’s ministry. We see references to this in Acts 6:10, in Acts 7:51. They were resisting the Word of God. Nor are we to grieve the ministry of the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30, thus losing the power and pleasure of our obedience. We’re also warned of quenching the Spirit by dampening His ministry through a sinful lifestyle, rather than burning with love for His holiness. After all, He is called the Holy Spirit.

The modern charismatic movement has placed great emphasis on particular gifts of the Spirit such as various miracles and extraordinary signs and wonders. This is a great mistake. These unique gifts of the Spirit were given as signs and confirmations of new revelation in the New Testament. Mark 16:20 says, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” Likewise, Acts 2:22, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” Miracles were temporary signs attached to the apostolic era, not permanent features for the church in history. Furthermore, the charismatics have confused the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit by thinking that walking in the Spirit means exercising supernatural powers. We cannot separate the gifts of the Spirit from the person of the Holy Spirit, nor the gifts of the Spirit from the knowledge of Christ.

As we saw earlier in this lecture, the Holy Spirit’s main work is to magnify the Son and to take the things of Christ and to show them to us. When the Spirit does this, it results in conformity to Christ. We read in II Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass,” that’s referring to the Bible, “the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The ministry of the Spirit is at work. We behold the glory of Christ in the Scriptures, which the Spirit enables us to see. He shows us the things of Christ, and we’re changed into the likeness of Christ. The truth is that the New Testament places the greatest emphasis on the fruit of the Spirit’s ministry producing holiness in Christ’s likeness in the life of the believer. You’ll know the well-known list of the fruit of the Spirit as it is given to us in Galatians chapter 5. In all of this, you can see the pieces coming together of the relationship of Christ and the Spirit, the outpouring of the Spirit upon His people, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life of the believer. It affects, doesn’t it, the way in which we preach God’s Word. We preach Christ. Why do we preach Christ? Because the promise is that the Spirit will magnify the Son, that He’ll take the things of Christ and show them to us. And so, when we’re preaching Christ throughout the whole Bible, we do so with the assurance that this is indeed the very vein in which the Holy Spirit operates.

Lastly, when Christ ascended and poured out His Spirit, He bestowed other gifts on His church through the Spirit, namely, church officers. So, in Ephesians 4 Paul speaks of grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ in verse 7. Then he refers to Christ’s ascension in Psalm 68:18 (Ephesians 4:8) and applies it to the giving of church offices. Ephesians 4:11 says, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” The offices of apostles and prophets ceased with the period of the New Testament, but pastors and teachers continue until Christ’s second coming.

How are church officers gifts of Christ through the Spirit to the church? Well, the verses that follow in Ephesians 4 explain that the purpose of these gifts is to build up and to edify the body of Christ and to strengthen the maturity of God’s people in sound doctrine. So, Paul can write to the Corinthians and say in I Corinthians 3:21–22, “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours.” The Spirit’s role is indispensable in the life of the Christian and

in the corporate church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the head of His body, the church, and the church is indwelt by Christ's Spirit, Who carries forward God's work of redemption, magnifying the Son.

Well, in conclusion, in this lecture we have learned that the ascended Christ pours out His Spirit upon His people, and the Spirit glorifies the Son; It takes the things of Christ to show them to His people. You can see how this fits within the overarching theme of this course, how God is throughout the history of redemption unfolding, disclosing the revelation of Himself in Christ. The ministry of the Spirit fits perfectly within that framework: the way in which God reveals Himself and His glory to His people. In the next lesson, we will turn our attention to the recipients of this blessing. We will consider what the New Testament teaches us about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.