Andreascourse 9 'Filled with the Holy Spirit'



Acts 1, 2

God is not static but dynamic: He is Three-in-One
The teaching that God is one is central in the Christian (and also Jewish) faith. See for example the 'Sjema Israel' (Hear Israel) that every young Jewish boy or girl should know by heart: *'Hear, o Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.'* (Deut. 6: 4 and 5).

Essential in the Christian faith: God has revealed Himself in three ways, in three 'Persons':

- God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth (God above us)
- God the Son, who came to earth to suffer, to die and to raise from the dead (God with us);
- God, the Holy Spirit, who wants to live in us and teach us the truth of God (God in us).

It means that God is not 'static', not just a Ruler of the universe dictating his commandments, but He is a God of love, who contains in Himself the joy of a loving relationship (the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who love one another and affirm one another)

The Triune God revealed Himself in creation and redemption



Already on the first page The Spirit of God is already mentioned on the first page of the Bible (Genesis 1: 2 –hovering over the waters). Jewish rabbis always indicated that God created heaven and earth by speaking (by using communication, the word). In John's Gospel Jesus is called The Word, which was there from the beginning. He was God's communication to the universe. That is why the Bible says that the Word was instrumental not only in the creation of heaven and earth, but also in the redemption of the world from its lostness. God gave Himself in Christ to save the world from its sin. 'Sin' means that the world lost its real destination: to be a world enjoying God and glorifying Him forever. One of the best known verses of the Bible is John 3: 6 *'God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'.*

The work of the Holy Spirit
But how can we understand this, how can we believe this, how can we see the reality of it? We cannot see or touch it with our normal human understanding. God is too high to be grasped by human rational thinking or emotional intuition or whatever.
It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates our hearts and minds and opens them for God's reality, God's beauty and glory.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is many-sided:

- His work is in creation and He gives renewal and life to it (Genesis 1:2; Gen. 2: 7; Psalm 104: 30).
- He bestows creative gifts to people, the gift of speaking and teaching, of leadership and prophesy (Exodus 31: 3; 35:31; Judges 3:10; 11: 29 etc; 1 Sam. 10: 6, 10; Isaiah 61: 1-3).
- He convicts of sin (Psalm 51:13); He opens a human heart for receiving Gods grace and for prayer (Zach. 12: 10).
- The prophet Joel prophesied about a new outpouring of the Spirit after a time of confession and repentance. He announced a personal and social renewal in Israel. (Joel 2: 28-32). The Prophet Ezekiel announced this as well (Ez. 36 : 26,27).

The Holy Spirit and Jesus
Jesus received power through the Holy Spirit after his baptism (Luke 3: 22). He gave Him strength for his ministry of preaching, teaching and healing (Luke 4: 18, 19).
Jesus explained the work of the Spirit to Nicodemus (a Jewish teacher). Only by the Holy Spirit we can be born again and can our life be renewed (John 3: 5,6). Jesus called the Holy Spirit the Comforter and Counselor, whom He would send to the disciples after his return to the Father (John 14:16).
Jesus promised the gift (the baptism) of the Holy Spirit so that the disciples could become witnesses of Jesus to all nations. (Acts 1: 4, 5 and 8).

Why do we need the Holy Spirit?
The Holy Spirit explains all the words and deeds of Jesus to those who follow Him (John 14: 16, 17, 26; John 15: 26; John 16: 13, 14). He is the ' inner' teacher and helper.
He convicts of sin (John 16:9). He teaches how to pray (Rom. 8: 26), He helps to understand God's Word (1 Cor. 1: 12, 13; Eph. 1; 17).
He brings spiritual fruit consisting of love, joy, peace etc. (Gal. 5:22).
He also provides special gifts like the gift of wisdom, leadership, prophesy, healing, speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 12; 1 Cor. 14).

The outpouring of the Spirit in Acts 2

In the book of Acts (chapter 2) we find the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as promised by the prophets and by Jesus. This happened during the Jewish feast of Pentecost ('Feast of Weeks', 7 weeks after Easter). This feast was meant to remember Gods gift of the law on mount Sinai. It was also a harvest festival. The first fruits of the harvest were brought to the temple as a sign of thankfulness to God. God gives His Spirit as a new 'law' written not in stone or on paper, but in the hearts of people. His Spirit is the symbol of a great harvest.
It is very clear from the book of Acts that the Spirit helped the apostles to speak and teach with great power. Here we find the birthday of the New Testament church (Acts 2: 42-47) and the start of the worldwide spreading of the Gospel around the earth.

Here are 6 passages again for further reflection and for deeper understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Day 1 Acts 1 verse 1 – 9 *Jesus promises what the disciples didn't understand*.

- If possible: pray before you start reading and reflecting, try to quiet down your thoughts and feelings.
- Read the passage again, note your questions and insights
- Questions to help further reflection:
    - What instructions does Jesus give to his disciples before He is taken up to heaven?
    - Do you think that it was easy for the disciples to wait for the gift of the Father (verse 4)? Why/why not?
    - What helps you to wait for something important that is going to happen, but still is not there?
- Ask God to help you to wait for the gift of a new work of the Holy Spirit in your life, your family or among your friends.

Day 2 Acts 2 verse 1 -13 *The power of His Spirit*



- Find a quiet place and a good moment, an dif possible pray before you start reading.
- Think over the passage again.
- Questions for further reflection
    - What amazes you in this passage and why?
    - Why do you think that these extraordinary signs are manifested here?
    - Can you imagine what you would have thought and felt being present at that place in Jerusalem?
- When you close in prayer: pray to be open for the fact that God's Spirit works in a wonderful way and that you may see some of His signs in your life.

Day 3 Acts 2 verse 14 – 21 *Signs of renewal by the Spirit*

- Try to silence your thoughts and feelings, pray and concentrate on God's word
- Read carefully and 'chew' on some of the words or phrases in the passage.
- Questions for further reflection:
    - What are the main features of this outpouring of the Spirit as promised by Joel the prophet?
    - These are dramatic words. Do they remind you of any events that you experienced?
    - How can you be safe according to this passage?
- Close in prayer, pray for insight to understand these words and for learning to know the power of the Holy Spirit.

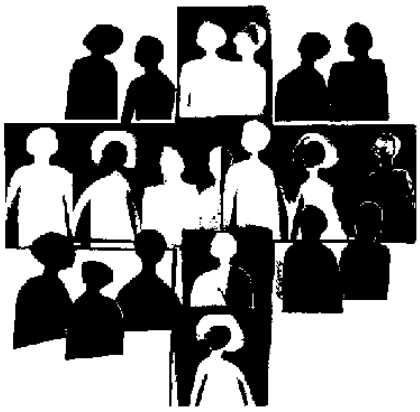
Day 4 Acts 2 verse 36 – 41 *How to become a Christian*

- Find a good place and moment to be alone with the Word of God and to pray.
- Read and reread the text attentively. Peter has given a sermon to the people standing around. Many knew about Jesus whom they had seen crucified. Also many religious leaders, who initiated Jesus' condemnation and death sentence. Peter

explains Jesus' death and resurrection from the prophetic words of the Psalms. He explains what God did through Jesus…
    - What, do you think is the main point that the author wants to tell us?
    - How can we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? What should we do?
- Close in prayer. Pray for a deeper understanding of the work of Jesus and of the gift of the Spirit. Pray that the Holy Spirit will do the work of conversion and renewal in your life.

Day 5 Acts 2 verse 42 – 47. *The first Christian fellowship*

- Start to ask God that He will speak to you through this passage, that you may read 'words of life' here.
- Read this passage carefully. It is a description of the first Christian fellowship, the beginning of the world wide Christian church.
    - What are the most important attributes of this young Christian church?
    - If you compare this passage with the church(es) that you know, do you see differences?
    - Do you want to join and be active in a Christian community (congregation, church)? Why/why not? How are you going to practise this?
- For closing prayer: ask God to help you to make a real commitment to the Christian fellowship and give you insight about what you might be able to give and what to receive.



Day 6 Acts 4 verse 23 – 31. *Prayer for God's power*

- Find some rest and calmness. Maybe your day was (or will be) busy. If possible, pray for concentration, that God speaks to you through his Word.
- Read the passage, choose some words or phrases for further reflection and meditation.
    - Peter and John have been put in prison by the Jewish authorities because they spoke in the name of Jesus and healed a paralysed man at the entrance of the temple. They are accused of distributing the teaching of Jesus and 'anti-social' sentiment. Here the persecution of the followers of Jesus starts, and it will grow with the growth of their witness. It has never stopped until today. What is striking in the reaction of Peter and John?
    - What actually do they pray for?
    - Did you ever think about suffering because of your faith? Have you experienced this already? What will help you to face suffering courageously and not to give in (like Daniel and his friends)?
- Pray for steadfastness in case of trouble and opposition. Pray that you may recognize the real enemy.