

Excursus 3: Inter-New Testament Relationships with Acts 2 (Discussed in Parts 1 and 2)

Old Testament (or Judaism)

Luke 3:16 (cf. Matt. 3:11) records John the Baptist proclaiming that while he ‘baptizes in water’, one will come after him who ‘will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire’ (with allusion to the eschatological tabernacling prophecy of Isa. 4:4 and possibly 30:27-28a).

Revelation 4:5 pictures ‘seven lamps of fire burning before the throne’, which is interpreted to be ‘the seven spirits of God’ (i.e. the Spirit of God). This vision occurs within an overall scene of the heavenly temple where God sits on his throne. The ‘lamps of fire’ themselves are conceived of as burning on the temple lampstands, which Revelation has already identified as the churches.

Revelation 11:3-5 even says that the purpose of the Church becoming temple lampstands on earth is that they would ‘stand before the Lord of the earth’ and be ‘witnesses’ who ‘will prophesy,’ and their prophetic utterance is portrayed as ‘fire proceeding out of their mouth’!

John 7:37-39: ³⁷If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water’ [combined allusion to the temple prophecies of Ezek. 47:1, Zech. 14:8, and, possibly, Joel 3:18]. ³⁹But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Acts

The coming of the Spirit in the form of ‘tongues of fire’ is the fulfilment of John the Baptist’s prophecy (Acts 2:1-4, 17, 33), which itself includes allusion to Isaiah 4:4 and 30:27-30.

Acts 2:2-6, 17-18: the Spirit from the heavenly temple descends in fire and rests upon God’s people in order that they be empowered to ‘witness’ (Acts 1:8; 2:40) and ‘prophesy’ (Acts 2:17-18).

The ‘living waters’ of John 7:39 would appear to be equivalent to the Spirit poured out by Jesus from heaven to those believing at Pentecost (Acts 2:32-38).