

The Promise *of the* Holy Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:25; Isa. 6:1-7; 48:10; Ezek. 36:25-27; Mal. 3:2, 3; Matt. 3:11; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:3; 5:17; 7:1.*

Memory Text: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (*John 14:16*).

Many Old Testament writers promised an outpouring of the Spirit (*Joel 2:28, 29*). John the Baptist—the forerunner of Jesus—informed the crowds that the One who would come after him, the Messiah, would baptize the repentant with the Holy Spirit and fire. However, the disciples of Jesus did not see the need of the Spirit during Jesus’ ministry. Jesus was close to them. Why should they need another?

Of course, Jesus wasn’t going to be around forever, at least in the flesh. The plan of salvation called for Him to leave, to minister the merits of His atonement in the sanctuary above before coming back and claiming those bought with His blood.

Thus, He promised to send them His Spirit. The Spirit would be their Guide and Comforter as they would not be able to follow their beloved Master where He was soon to go.

The coming Comforter was to be the disciples’ constant Companion. He would sustain and comfort them in their loss and more than compensate for their Friend’s departure. Yet, as we will see this week, the promise of the Spirit was not only for them but for us, as well.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, April 22.*

The Promise of Water

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 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” (*Ezek. 36:25-27*).

Look at the promises in the above text. What is God saying He will do for His people? Though these were written to those in another time, why are the principles behind these promises applicable for us today, as well? See also *Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:3; 5:17; 7:1; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:26; 1 Thess. 4:3*.

Ezekiel speaks of the Spirit under the symbol of water. By using the emblem of water, the prophet presents the Spirit both as a cleansing and life-giving Agent. Followers of Christ will have new lives, one in which through the power of the Holy Spirit they are cleansed of filthiness of the flesh and live a life of faith and obedience.

Thus, it's clear from these texts that whatever the work of the Spirit, it includes the process of sanctification. It includes a change of habits, of actions, of words. Most important, it also includes a change of heart.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:3. How does this text help explain what the Holy Spirit will do in our lives?

Focusing on the above text, ask yourself this question: As an “epistle of Christ,” what’s my message to all who read me?

John the Baptist's Promise

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” (*Matt. 3:11*).

“John proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and called the people to repentance. As a symbol of cleansing from sin, he baptized them in the waters of the Jordan. Thus by a significant object lesson he declared that those who claimed to be the chosen people of God were defiled by sin, and that without purification of heart and life they could have no part in the Messiah's kingdom.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 104.

But John was keenly aware that his baptism would not suffice to fit men and women to stand in the presence of God. More was needed than a baptism with water. There was also the baptism of fire.

It's very interesting how both water and fire are used as symbols of the work of the Holy Spirit. It's hard to think of two things that, in one sense, are more opposite from each other than fire and water. And yet, both are used to describe the actions of the Holy Spirit.

How do these texts help us understand the fire image in regard to the Holy Spirit? *Isa. 6:1-7; 48:10; Mal. 3:2, 3; Luke 12:49; Heb. 12:29.*

Fire and water are two great natural purifying agencies, and it is appropriate that both should be used to represent the regeneration of the heart, the work of the Holy Spirit. And yet, fire acts very differently upon us than does water. They both might, in a spiritual sense, accomplish the same thing, but the processes by which they work are different. When we think of water, we often think of something soothing, refreshing, delightful; in contrast, though fire brings with it warmth, it also implies trial (*1 Pet. 4:12*), as well as pain and suffering. The image of a refiner's fire is one that doesn't express a process that would be comfortable or pleasant. And that's, no doubt, because sometimes the work that needs to be done in us is like a refiner's fire: We have to be purged of sin; the dross has to be burned away.

What have been some trials “by fire” that brought about important changes in your life? What did you learn from these experiences that could be of benefit to others?

The Spirit Not Yet Given

“On the last and most important day of the festival Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice, ‘Whoever is thirsty should come to me and drink. As the scripture says, “Whoever believes in me, streams of life-giving water will pour out from his heart.” ’” Jesus said this about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were going to receive. At that time the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not been raised to glory” (John 7:37-39, TEV).

When Jesus spoke these words, the Spirit as a dove had already descended upon Him. An abundance of Old Testament references indicate that the Holy Spirit had long been at work in behalf of humanity. What then does John mean when he says “The Spirit had not yet been given”?

Even though the Spirit had worked with men and women from the entrance of sin, He had not come to earth in His fullness. That was not to take place until Jesus had been glorified (see next week’s study).

As Jesus was about to leave them, what promise did He give His disciples with reference to His presence? *Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:4, 5.*

How does John 16:7 help us understand Christ’s promises to remain with us even unto the end of the world?

Christ’s departure would enrich the disciples and all believers rather than impoverish them. While on earth, Jesus was geographically limited to one particular place at a time. While He was with the three disciples on the mountain, He could not be with the others at the foot of the mountain. He was limited in space, as we are. But the Holy Spirit was not to be cumbered with humanity or limited in space. Being omnipresent, the Spirit is not confined by the limitation of a human body. He is equally accessible to all everywhere. And it’s through the presence of the Holy Spirit that Jesus remains with us, even to the end of the world.

Go back and read the text written out at the top of today’s lesson. Is there anyone you know from whom “streams of life-giving water” have poured out upon you? What was the person like? How could you be more like him or her in those positive areas?

Jesus' Promise

Shortly before His crucifixion, what did Jesus again promise His disciples? What hope exists for us today in that promise (*John 14:16*)?

The word Jesus uses for “pray” in this verse has the basic meaning of “to ask” or “to enquire.” In John’s writings it usually connotes a person asking something from an equal.

This is the first direct promise made by Jesus to His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Evidently, He is referring to the Day of Pentecost. Yet, this was not the Spirit’s first appearance on the earth.

“Before this the Spirit had been in the world; from the very beginning of the work of redemption He had been moving upon men’s hearts. But while Christ was on earth, the disciples had desired no other helper. Not until they were deprived of His presence would they feel their need of the Spirit, and then He would come.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

What do these texts tell us about the influence of the Holy Spirit on human beings prior to the coming of Christ? *Exod. 31:3; Num. 11:25; 1 Sam. 10:6; Ps. 51:10, 11; Ezek. 36:25-27.*

John 20:22 shows that before He left His disciples, Christ “breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Again He said “Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you” (*Luke 24:49*). But not until after the Ascension was the gift received in its fullness. Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then, in a special sense, the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. In other words, though Christ gave them this wonderful promise, they had to be prepared to receive it. Is it any different today for us?

We’re often told to pray for the Holy Spirit, but what must you do in order to be prepared to receive it?

Another Comforter

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (*John 14:18*).

“Another Comforter” (*John 14:16*) was coming to take the place of Jesus. Up to this time Jesus had been with the disciples and had been their Helper in every emergency. But now another Person was coming to take His place.

The Greek word translated “Comforter” is a compound word made up of *para*, which means “alongside,” and *kletos*, which means “one called.” Thus *parakletos* means “one called to stand alongside another,” or one called to take his or her part to help another in any emergency that arises. It has the meaning of “advocate” or “counselor.”

Further, the same verb form is translated “exhort.” Thus, He is also an “Exhorter.” In fact, this latter meaning is the prominent feature of the work of the Spirit as outlined by John. He will “teach” and “bring all things to your . . . remembrance” (*John 14:26*). He will testify of Christ (*John 15:26*). He will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (*John 16:8*). He will guide into all truth and show things to come (*vs. 13*). He will glorify Christ and receive from Him and impart to the disciples (*vs. 14*).

Yet, the Word also conveys the thought of a helper always at hand with counsel, strength, exhortation, or whatever help is needed. Though Jesus all but equates Himself with the presence of the Spirit, it’s clear the Holy Spirit will do for them what Christ Himself would do.

How do these texts (*1 John 3:24, 4:13*) help us understand the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today?

The apostles and their fellow believers were not to be left alone or without help after Jesus ascended to heaven. An all-adequate Helper was to be with them. “By the Spirit, He said, He would manifest Himself to them.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 670.

In what ways have you experienced the reality of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter? Be prepared to share your answer with the class.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 36, 40, 41, 52–54; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 100–103, 668–672; *Gospel Workers*, pp. 284–289.

“The Holy Spirit is Christ’s representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

“If we look to Jesus and trust in Him we call to our aid a power that has conquered the foe on the field of battle, and with every temptation He will make a way of escape. When Satan comes in like a flood, we must meet his temptations with the sword of the Spirit, and Jesus will be our helper and will lift up for us a standard against him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 426.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, discuss your answers to Thursday’s final question.
- ❷ Do you know anyone going through a fiery trial right now? Why not, as a class, get in touch with that person and let him or her know your concern and ask whether there is anything the class, as a group, could do to help?
- ❸ In what ways can we do some of the same work as the Holy Spirit? That is, how can we comfort, exhort, or teach others? Are we not, by doing these things, showing the reality of the Spirit in our lives? What other ways can we manifest the presence of the Holy Spirit? How does the work of the Holy Spirit in us harmonize with all the Bible commands for loving others and ministering to their needs?

Sacrifice of Love

Ramesh Rathod

Mukam and his wife, Gimil, are rice farmers in India. They faithfully attended their village church until religious trouble broke out in 1995 and several churches were destroyed. Fearing more violence, the people closed the church.

In 2000 Mukam and Gimil learned that a group of Adventists planned to hold evangelistic and health meetings in their village. The villagers provided housing for the team members. Mukam and Gimil hosted several team members in their small home.

Excited to hear gospel preaching again, Mukam and Gimil invited everyone to attend the meetings. Between 300 and 400 people gathered to hear the health lectures and spiritual messages. Mukam and Gimil were impressed that these Christians had brought them a new understanding of God's Word. When leaders of other churches tried to convince Mukam to reject the "heretic" Adventists, Mukam refused. "What have they taught that is against the Bible?" he asked. The accusers could not answer, but they warned the couple that they might lose their salvation if they listened to such "heresy."

But Mukam and Gimil stood firm and were among the first 17 people who prepared for baptism. Another 50 were baptized several months later, and the group of believers has continued to grow.

The group needed a church, and Mukam offered part of his two-acre rice paddy. Their home stood on the highest land, which sloped down to a creek that sometimes flooded during heavy rains. When the pastor suggested that the lowland was not suitable for a church, the couple asked for time to think about what to do.

The next day the pastor returned to find Mukam and Gimil's house gone. "What happened?" he asked, shocked. Gimil explained that her relatives helped her tear down their house to make room for the new church. With the materials they had saved from their home, they built a lean-to on the side of their son's house nearby.

"It is our sacrifice of love to our God," Mukam said. With help from the conference, the members built a church that seats 200 people.

Adventist work is spreading quickly in this region of India. Mukam and Gimil's church has spawned three other churches in nearby villages. Several new congregations have formed, and more villages have asked Adventists to come and teach them God's Word. Today 2,000 Adventists worship in four churches and 20 companies in the area.

Our mission offerings help advance the work of Christ in India and around the world.

Ramesh Rathod is a district pastor in the Surat region of western India.