

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?

Key Text: *John 14:12*

Teachers Aims:

1. To examine the two primary ways in which the Holy Spirit sanctifies us.
2. To understand what it means to wait for the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Outline:

I. The Holy Spirit's Cleansing as Water (*Ezek. 36:25-27*)

- A. Sprinkling—the light touch of gentle cleaning.
- B. Baptism—going deeper into the truth of God.
- C. Flood—the scrubbing off of those rough edges.

II. The Holy Spirit's Cleansing as Fire (*Matt. 3:10; Luke 12:49; 1 Pet. 4:12-14*).

- A. Purification—deep cleaning of the heart and mind.
- B. Trials—the refining that can make us stronger in our faith.

III. The Holy Spirit Was Promised (*John 14:16-18*)

- A. As our Comforter, He is always near.
- B. As our Teacher, He helps us to understand.
- C. As our Guide, He leads us into all truth.

IV. Waiting for the Promise to Be Fulfilled (*Acts 1:4-7, 14*)

- A. The delay tested their faith in the promise.
- B. Prayer strengthened their faith and opened their hearts.

Summary: The Holy Spirit, being God, will not force His work of sanctification upon us, a work that in many ways is painful and time consuming. The work of the Holy Spirit can feel just as painful and penetrating as the purifying by fire that often comes as we grow closer to the Lord and stronger in our faith. Cleansing isn't always a painless process. We must willingly submit to the Holy Spirit so that He can do His work of making us more like Jesus.

COMMENTARY

Introduction

Christ's departure from earth when He ascended to His Father did not mark any abandonment or diminution of His presence among His disciples, but opened the way for Him to be closer to humanity. Now He would be able to reside in the depths of human hearts through the interpenetrating power and presence of the Holy Spirit, His greatest gift to the church.

I. The Promise of Water

Through Isaiah Christ exhorted, "Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord" (*Isa. 52:11*). Paul echoes this thought: "That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel [personal

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?

being] in sanctification and honor” (*1 Thess. 4:4*). One of the indispensable characteristics of God’s true servants is purity of motive, life, and behavior. Nothing will more quickly disgrace Christianity than the morally polluted lives of its professed adherents. God’s Spirit, “given to those who obey Him” (*Acts 5:32*), sanctifies our lives, enabling us to “cleanse ourselves of all filthiness from the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (*2 Cor. 7:1*). It can hardly be overstressed that it is not by our works of righteousness, but according to His mercy that God saves, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit that He sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (*See Titus 3:5-7*.)

It is this cleansing and renewal that enables us to become living epistles for Jesus. Lives guided by His testimony become a transcription of His counsel applied. He wishes for the pages of our life’s record to bear the watermark, “Holiness Unto the Lord” and a continuous succession of entries that prove His power “to will and to do of his good pleasure” (*Phil. 2:13*) in lives yielded to the sovereignty of His grace. (*See Isa. 26:12; Eph. 5:25, 27; Phil. 2:13*.)

II. John the Baptist’s Promise

John recognized that his baptism was entirely symbolic of Jesus’ regenerative work. (*See Matt. 3:11*.) Jesus declared to Nicodemus that one must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God, for only the Spirit can create the new birth (*John 3:5, 6*). Water both cleanses and sustains life, and so it is with the Holy Spirit.

The fiery aspect of the Spirit’s baptism indicates the superintensity of God’s work to refine our coarse, earthly natures. God manifests Himself as a refiner’s fire to purify His people. Notice, however, that this fire—though it may afflict us at times with the anguish of conviction over sin—does not blister or injure us. (*See Ps. 66:10-12; Isa. 6:1-7; 48:10, 11; Mal. 3:1-4*.) Its ultimate effect is to remove obstructions to our fellowship with Him, and make our lives a transparent medium to display His glory (see Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 470–472).

III. The Spirit Not Yet Given

We are not to understand from John 7:39 that the Holy Spirit was uninvolved with human affairs until this time (*see Ps. 51:11, Isa. 63:11*). The Spirit was not yet manifested in its full power, as at Pentecost, before Christ’s ascension and inauguration as our High Priest. Then the manifestation of the Spirit confirmed the reality of Jesus’ resurrection and the authenticity of His claims. The outpouring of the Spirit was the supreme gift of the gospel, for this gift included all blessings pertaining to eternal life and godliness. (*See Acts 2:38, 39; Eph. 4:8-16*.)

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?

IV. Jesus' Promise

On the night before His crucifixion, Christ described with great detail and methodical development the work of the Holy Spirit (*see John 14–16*). He knew that His disciples would feel His physical absence with heartbroken intensity. He earnestly wanted them to understand that His departure was not a desertion, but the very means by which He would now be able to link with their lives in a far more intimate and unceasing way than was previously possible. Christ was now enabled through the Holy Spirit to be simultaneously and continuously present with them all. This promise of the coming Spirit was not a meager compensation for His return to heaven, but the very means by which the glory of Heaven would come down and fill their souls, to magnify the Prince of heaven in their lives.

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Numbers 11:25, 26; Malachi 3:3; John 6:63; Acts 2:1-4; Revelation 19:10*

- 1 Jesus—and Old Testament prophets—foretold the coming of the Holy Spirit, which would not happen until after Jesus went back to heaven. There is, however, plenty of evidence that the Holy Spirit was present and active before then. How is the Holy Spirit's ministry after Christ different from His ministry before and during Christ's ministry?
- 2 Gifts of the Spirit have, and have had, a reputation for being flamboyantly supernatural and miraculous. Certainly that is part of it, but should this be the primary emphasis of the gifts? Explain your answer. What is the higher purpose of all phenomena connected with the Holy Spirit?
- 3 The Holy Spirit is often spoken of in terms of substances that are crucial to life, like water and breath. As Christians, we receive a new life when we accept Christ and what He has done for us. How does the Holy Spirit help us to sustain this new life?
- 4 In addition to being a life-giving agent, the Holy Spirit is a purifying agency. What needs to be purified, and why? Does being purified necessarily imply suffering? Why, or why not?
- 5 The Holy Spirit's mission is to bear witness to Jesus' earthly life and ministry. How does this occur? Has the Holy Spirit, over the centuries, changed His methods for accomplishing this? If so, how and why?

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?

V. Another Comforter

“Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer.

“[Christ adds] ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things.’ No more will you say, I cannot comprehend. No longer will you see

Witnessing

Have you ever wished for a new start in life? Maybe you’re tired of your job—your coworkers are unfriendly and the working conditions are poor. Maybe you’d like to get out of financial debt—pay off the credit cards, the school loans, the huge house payment. What about longing for a better relationship with your home church—a church family that isn’t so critical and that is more accepting of you? Maybe you feel like your personal relationship with God is marginal—you pray when you need His help, but otherwise, He’s always on the periphery of your life. You just haven’t had time to make Him a priority yet, but you plan to get to Him someday.

The new start you long for in life starts with repairing and renewing your relationship with God. Be still and listen with an open heart, and it won’t be long before you feel the Comforter fill the open spaces in your life. He’ll guide you as you begin the process of setting your life back on course. No longer will getting out of debt seem impossible. Relationships at work will improve because *you* begin to see things in a new and better light, and *you’re* more tolerant and willing to cut others more slack.

About that improved relationship with your church family: You’ll find that if you, even on a tentative basis, reach out to them, they, in turn, will reach out open arms to you.

The most dramatic change that needs to take place must be in your personal relationship with God. Once you begin to open your mind and your heart to Him, the Holy Spirit will lovingly lead you daily into a renewed and strengthened walk with Christ. No more longing for a new start—your new life has arrived. Because of the change you have experienced, you’ll welcome the opportunity to reach out to others who are hurting as you were, so that they might also know this life-changing experience. They, in turn, will witness to others who will witness to others . . . and on it goes. All of this is possible if hearts and minds remain receptive to the power of the Holy Spirit and His promise of a changed life.

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.

through a glass, darkly. You shall ‘be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.’ Eph. 3:18, 19.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 670.

“The measure of the Holy Spirit we receive will be proportioned to the measure of our desire, and the faith exercised for it, and the use that we shall make of the light and knowledge that shall be given to us.”—Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 188.

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: Have each person in your Sabbath School class share one thing that they are good at doing. Now read Exodus 31:3. “I have filled [Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (*NIV*). Why is it important for us to recognize the gifts of ministry given to us by the Holy Spirit? How does this insight help us realize that each person is an important agent of God’s mercy and salvation to the world?

Thought Questions:

1 Fire and water: We welcome the first when we are cold and the second when we are thirsty. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27 and Isaiah 6:1-7, 48:10. Why do we have difficulty with the concepts of *cleansing* and *refining* or *purifying*? Why is it so critical to allow God’s Spirit to work change in our lives? Share a personal testimony of how a *trial by fire* in your life was a blessing and gave you a new desire to serve God.

2 When a friend is near, letters and phone calls seem unimportant. After they leave, those contacts are necessary to maintain the relationship. Discuss Jesus’ promise to send “another Counselor” (*see John 14:16-18, NIV*). What does this gift tell us about our need? How is this an example for us to follow when dealing with those who are uncertain or misinformed about salvation?

Application Question:

Sarah has a live orchid and two living (and very lively) little dogs in her home. Describing something as *alive* connotes activity, vibrance, and enthusiasm. Read 2 Corinthians 3:3, then rewrite it in your own words. Take a moment to list how you are currently acting as a “letter . . . of the living God” (*NIV*). If you are currently discouraged about your witness for Him, ask Him for a new anointing of His Spirit.

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?