

Holy Spirit and You

Advance in Faith 1 — Unit 3 Week 2 — Jesus and Holy Spirit



Introduction

In our first session we looked at Holy Spirit's work in Old Testament times, and how radically different it is for us. Following his death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus flooded us all with his cleansing Spirit at Pentecost. No longer is it just a few prophets and leaders who have the Spirit: all of us (male/female, young/old, slave/free) work in the power of the Spirit to reveal Jesus as the ruler of earth, the one who restores creation to what God always intended.

That's a staggering calling, an amazing empowerment given to us by Jesus our ruler! In this session we'll look at how Jesus promised Holy Spirit to us (John 14–16), and what it looks like now that we have received the Spirit as Jesus promised (Acts 1–2).

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit (John 14–16)

At his baptism, people saw Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus (Luke 3:22). Jesus was then described as “full of Holy Spirit”, “led by the Spirit” (Luke 4:1), and working “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14).

In Old Testament times, Israel had struggled. 600 years before Jesus, they were crushed by Babylon and taken into exile. Isaiah declared that God would send a mighty conqueror who would work with the power of God's Spirit to release them from exile, making them God's kingdom once again. Jesus claimed to be that promised ruler! In Luke 4:18, he applied this passage to himself:

Isaiah 61:1-2 (my translation):

¹ The Spirit of our ruler YHWH is on me,
for YHWH has anointed me
to announce good news for those oppressed.

He has sent me to heal those whose hearts are crushed,
to decree that the exiles can go home
and those who've been locked up are free to go!

² I'm announcing the jubilee year,
when your debt is erased by YHWH's generosity.

With hindsight, we can see how Jesus' entire ministry operated in the power of the Spirit, but Jesus' claim seemed scandalous to the townsfolk who had watched him growing up as a boy (Luke 4:15-30). They knew the stories of leaders like Samson who had saved Israel with mighty strength as the Spirit of YHWH rushed upon him (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14). They could not imagine Jesus as that kind of saviour. Jesus did not use the Spirit's power to slaughter enemies as Samson had done. He used the Spirit's power to heal, to release, to announce the good news of liberty from slavery, back into God's care.

Gradually the disciples began to understand that God was present with them in Jesus of Nazareth. Later they described Jesus as Immanuel — *God-with-us* (Matthew 1:23). In Old Testament times, God was present in the temple: God resided in the Holy Place, not in the defiled world. It was in the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) that God lived. But now, in Jesus, God had stepped outside the Holy Place, into the defiled and violent world. God had done the unthinkable: entering the unclean, unsafe world, as a vulnerable human. He could be killed.

As he made his final journey to Jerusalem, Jesus knew that the evil rulers planned to do away with him. To keep their own power, they would judge him unfit to live. They would put him to death. His disciples couldn't grasp it: they expected the Messiah to defeat their enemies. The night before his crucifixion, Jesus was concerned that his disciples would feel abandoned, as if God had been defeated and they were now on their own. He told them this:

John 14 (NIV) ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another advocate** to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ...

²⁵ All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, ~~the~~ Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

The first thing to notice here is that Holy Spirit is a person. In the same way that Jesus was God's presence with the disciples, Holy Spirit is God's presence. He's a person, not some impersonal force.

Secondly, Holy Spirit is described as *paraclete* (advocate). This is a legal metaphor: the whole passage uses the language of a court case.¹ Within hours, the disciples would see Jesus facing court and being condemned. The Sanhedrin would judge him unfit to live, and Caesar's court would execute him as a criminal. His disciples will be devastated, but Jesus tells them that is not the end of the matter. A higher court will overrule the combined powers of Jerusalem and Rome. Holy Spirit will *advocate* for him, giving testimony that he is not a criminal but the true Prince—son of the heavenly ruler—whom

¹ The legal metaphor is evident in words like: commandment, law, sin (violating the sovereign's commands), guilty (verdict), truth (investigative), testify/witness (give evidence), convict, justice, and judgement (the court's decision).

they rejected. The resurrection is Holy Spirit's evidence vindicating Jesus. Raising Jesus from the dead is the Advocate's testimony (legal statement) about him:

John 15 ²⁶ When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

So, the disciples who recognised Jesus alive again after his crucifixion will also need to give their testimony that Heaven has overruled, that Jesus is alive and ruling heaven and on earth.

Holy Spirit's legal case for overturning the decision of the Jewish and Roman authorities is that their verdict was flawed on three counts (John 16:8-11):

- **Sin** = rebellion against God as our ruler, i.e. making our own rules and not submitting to God's authority (claiming power for ourselves). John has already charged that the authorities wanted to do away with Jesus in order to keep their own power (John 11:48). Holy Spirit will convince the world that this decision was motivated by humans grabbing power for themselves and refusing to submit to our divine sovereign.
- **Righteousness** = doing right, justice. Humanity has not done right in relation to God's authority over us. They rejected the Prince whom God sent (Luke 20:13-14). Holy Spirit will convince the world that this was evil. He will act to set things right: he will establish Jesus as the true ruler—the one who restores the world to its rightful ruler.
- **Judgement**: The judgement passed on Jesus by the Roman authorities in collusion with the leaders of God's own nation was not only erroneous: it was evil. Holy Spirit overruled their judgement, vindicating Jesus by raising him from the dead. Holy Spirit now works in the lives of Jesus' followers to show that his judgement is right! The reign of sin and death has been judged (overthrown), and Jesus is now Lord!

In summary, this is what Jesus told his disciples the night before his crucifixion:

- a) He was about to face trial and be condemned by the powers that run the earth.
- b) The disciples would find themselves without Jesus, but Holy Spirit would come and be God's presence with them.
- c) Holy Spirit would overrule Jesus' condemnation by raising him from the dead—testimony that the rulers got it wrong.

- d) Holy Spirit would convince the world's powers they were wrong on three counts: they rebelled against God's rule (sin); they did evil to keep their power (rejecting the righteous one); their judgment of Jesus was now overturned (resurrection).
- e) Holy Spirit would empower Jesus' followers to give their testimony that Jesus is alive and installed as earth's ruler.
Sin and death have been dethroned. Jesus rules! Good news!

Jesus envisioned his followers, in partnership with Holy Spirit, declaring his lordship over creation—the world he freed from domination by evil and death.

Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit (Acts 1–2)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he spent 40 days with his disciples, eating and talking with him so they knew he really was alive. He talked about his favourite topic: the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). He instructed them to wait until he had poured out Holy Spirit on them. Holy Spirit would empower them to be Jesus' *advocates* (Acts 1:8). This is the same root word Jesus' used to describe their ministry and the ministry of the Holy Spirit back in John 15:26-27.

As Jesus was saying this, he was caught up into the cloud of God's presence.² Jesus ascension was his coronation: he ascended the throne of heaven, and from there he rules the earth. Luke is not saying that Jesus has gone far away and is now irrelevant to the rest of the book of Acts: he's saying that Jesus has ascended the throne, so the rest of the story is his unfolding reign!

So, what is the first thing King Jesus does after his death, resurrection, and ascension? He pours out the Holy Spirit in a way the world has not known since Eden.

In Old Testament times, God lived in the temple, and the entire design of the temple screamed: THIS IS HOLY SPACE: ONLY THE HOLY MAY APPROACH. For example, the surrounding fence was designed to keep out the unclean, the sacrifice altar to cleanse the worshippers, the laver where the priests had to wash before entering the Holy Place, and still almost no one could enter the Most Holy Place!

But in Jesus, God had faced and dealt with the unclean powers that dominated the earth. Jesus was installed as ruler of heaven and earth. The whole earth was now his "holy land," his kingdom. And so he poured out his Holy Spirit on his citizens.

² God's presence is regularly described as a cloud: compare Exodus 13:21-22; 16:10; 24:16; 40:34-38; Numbers 16:42; 1 Kings 8:10-12; Ezekiel 1:4; Daniel 7:13; Luke 9:34-35; 21:27; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2; Revelation 1:7; 14:14-16.

When Jesus was enthroned as the Lord of heaven and earth, the ruler over all nations, his first act was to empower his citizens. He poured out Holy Spirit at a moment when people from all over the world had gathered in Jerusalem for one of the three annual feasts—Pentecost:

Acts 2:4 They were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The most common expression of Holy Spirit's ministry in the OT was verbal: prophets *spoke* by the Spirit. It is not surprising to see people speaking prophetically in response to the Spirit's presence. In this case, they are speaking languages they have never learned.

Do you remember how the different languages came into existence in the Old Testament narrative? After the flood, the 70 nations spread out and built their own kingdoms (Gen 10). They tried to establish a central government at Babel, but God reserved that authority for himself. Their heavenly ruler *confused* their languages, so they could *not understand each other*, in effect *dividing* humanity (Genesis 11).

Here, their heavenly ruler reverses his previous actions. He is *uniting* humanity, so what's *confusing* is that they *do understand each other*:

Acts 2:6 At this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

What were they saying? "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God" (2:11). This is exactly what Jesus said they should expect: they would partner with Holy Spirit in testifying about Jesus (John 15:26-27). That's what they are doing: telling the story of how the powers of the earth put Jesus to death, and yet God raised him up and made him the liberator and ruler of humanity!

God had promised a new era when God would pour out his Spirit on *all* people (Acts 2:17-20, quoting Joel 2:28-32). Everyone in this new era would operate with Holy Spirit's prophetic power, regardless of maturity (young/old), gender (male/female), or status (free/slave).

In the very city where the rulers put Jesus to death, Peter gives testimony that the rulers were wrong. God demonstrated they were wrong by raising Jesus from the dead and giving him complete authority as ruler and king ("Lord and Christ" in 2:36). So Peter charges them to change their mind about Jesus (repent) and submit to his authority (be baptised). The roles are reversed: Jesus is making a judgment about the ones who judged him! He's offering to release them from guilt and to cleanse them with Holy Spirit. He continues to do this down through the generations that operate under his authority (2:38-40). That's what our partnership with Holy Spirit looks like!

Conclusion

What Jesus did, in his cross and resurrection, has returned us to God's care, to live as his community, under his governance. Jesus is our ruler, and he has empowered us to live as citizens of his government, providing his care for the people who've been crushed by evil!

This is a partnership with God. Having cleansed us, he has given us his Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit empowers and motivates us to:

- a) live as restored humans rather than broken humans;
- b) live as agents of Jesus' care in the world that needs to be set right;
- c) operate as empowered agents to demonstrate the difference Jesus' kingship makes.

Holy Spirit restores our broken humanity, making us living models of what humans under God's authority were meant to be! That's an amazing partnership that defines our lives, our *raison d'être*.

Memory Work

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Group Questions

1. How do you understand what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2? What changed on that day?
How is Holy Spirit's presence in the world different now than before that time?
What practical difference does this make for followers of Jesus?
2. The night before he was condemned to death, Jesus used a legal metaphor to explain how Holy Spirit would vindicate him—words like *advocate*, *testify*, *justice*, and *judgement* (John 14–16). Describe Holy Spirit's role in the world today.
What is the case he's seeking to prove, and how we live as his partners in that work?
3. At the end of Acts 1, a few people were huddled in an upper room in fear, uncertain how to move forward. At the end of Acts 2, there were thousands of believers, full of the Holy Spirit, figuring out how to be the kind of community God had always intended humans to be. That was the difference that Holy Spirit made.
What does it look like for us to be living life in the power of the Spirit today?
Share your stories with each other.

Take Home Exercise

When Jesus poured out Holy Spirit in Acts 2, people from many places were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. In their own languages, they heard the “mighty acts of God” i.e. what God had done in Messiah Jesus to bring the world back under his governance. They felt as if they belonged, as if God was bringing the whole divided world back together under Jesus as Lord.

Acts 2:42-27 describes the lifestyle they developed in response to his amazing picture of restored humanity. They lived as if they really believed that Jesus was now in charge of the world, as if they had been appointed as his representatives to ensure everyone was cared for. What can you do in your world to express the same belief that Jesus is now Lord and we are his representatives, expressing his management of our world?

If possible, get together with some other believers and discuss that question. Perhaps a family member, a friend you share coffee with, or people in your connect group. Discuss how we can model the kingdom of Jesus. What is Holy Spirit calling you to do?

In preparation for our next session, read Galatians 5 and Romans 8. What do these chapters tell you about Holy Spirit and how we do life with him?