

THE  
*Holy*  
SPIRIT

# *Jesus' Teaching About the Holy Spirit*

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (John 14:26).*

John's Gospel contains most of Jesus' teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. The first three Gospels include Jesus' promise that the Spirit would tell the apostles what they were to say (Matthew 10:19, 20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12). They also include His warning about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:31, 32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). One Gospel, Matthew, records Jesus' words about His casting out demons by the power of the Spirit of God (12:28) and His instruction that baptism was to be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (28:19). Two Gospels reveal that David spoke through the help of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 22:43; Mark 12:36).

## **JESUS' STATEMENT IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**

Luke recorded a statement made by Jesus concerning the giving of the Holy Spirit: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). By itself, this verse would seem to suggest that a person could receive the Holy Spirit simply by praying. An examination of other passages, however, indicates that more than prayer was required in order to receive the Holy Spirit.

A similar statement is made in Matthew: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (7:11). Do other passages of Scripture teach that more than asking is necessary to receive gifts from God? The answer is a resounding "Yes!"

Jesus taught His disciples to ask God, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Who would argue that in order to receive daily bread one simply has to ask and it will be given to him? We are to work to provide for our needs. Paul wrote,

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need (Ephesians 4:28).

Nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we kept working night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you; . . . For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread (2 Thessalonians 3:8-12).

God requires proper actions of those who pray for His blessings. In order to receive a gift from God, one must ask in Jesus' name (John 14:14), ask in faith (James 1:6, 7), ask for the right things (James 4:3), make requests which are according to God's will (1 John 5:14), and keep God's commandments, doing what is pleasing in His sight (1 John 3:22).

Similarly, more than asking of God is required before the Holy Spirit will be given to us. The Bible does not give one example of anyone being given the Holy Spirit on the basis of prayer alone.

## **JESUS' TEACHING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN**

The rest of what Jesus had to say about the Holy Spirit is found in the Book of John. The Holy Spirit's activity in the new birth (John 3:3–5) and the indwelling of the Spirit (John 14:17) will be discussed in other lessons.<sup>1</sup> The concern of this lesson is Jesus' statements in John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:13.

### **The Setting**

The setting of Jesus' promises concerning the Holy Spirit is of utmost importance. Where was Jesus at the time? Who was with Him? To whom was He speaking?

The comments under consideration were made just before Jesus and His disciples left the upper room where they had observed the Passover and Last Supper. After leaving the temple in Jerusalem, where they had observed a gift made by a poor widow (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4), Jesus and His disciples had walked to the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:1–3). With the approach of the Passover, Jesus had sent two of His disciples (Mark 14:13) into the city (although not named, this was obviously Jerusalem) to prepare for the observance of the Passover feast (Matthew 26:18; Mark 14:14; Luke 22:10, 11). They had been told to inquire concerning a guest room—a large furnished upper room—where they could eat the Passover (Mark 14:14, 15; Luke 22:11, 12).

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<sup>1</sup>In the lessons concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit, miraculous gifts of the Spirit, conversion, and indwelling of the Spirit, we will discuss passages which indicate that more than prayer is required before we can receive the Holy Spirit.

“And when it was evening He came with the twelve” (Mark 14:17), that is, the apostles with whom Jesus reclined at the table (Luke 22:14; Matthew 26:20). The apostles are the only ones reported to have been present with Jesus at the Passover feast.

John gave the time element for the discourses of Jesus that are recorded in John 13–16. He stated that before the Passover was eaten Jesus knew His hour to depart had come (John 13:1). “And during supper, . . . Jesus, . . . rose from supper, . . .” (John 13:2–4). Combining this with information given in the other Gospels, we can be sure that the only people with Jesus during the Passover meal were the twelve apostles. They alone were included in the subsequent discussions and events in the upper room. After the departure of Judas, just the eleven were present (John 13:30). Including more than these apostles would contradict the setting.

### **The People Included**

While Jesus' statements in John 13–16 were addressed to the apostles, He made references to different groups of people. (1) When Jesus said “you,” He meant the apostles, not every Christian. Thus we must rely on other New Testament passages which promise the same benefit in order to conclude that other Christians could expect what was promised to the apostles. Unless such passages are found, we must accept that the promises involved no one other than the apostles. (2) When Jesus said “he,” “him,” “a man,” or “they,” either believers in general were included with the apostles, or just others (not the apostles) were intended.

“Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You shall seek Me; . . .” (John 13:33). In this context, only the apostles were meant when Jesus said “you.” However, the next statement addressed to “you” (the apostles), had previously been made to the Jews: “. . . and as I said to the Jews, I now say to you also, . . .” (John 13:33). While Jesus was speaking exclusively to the apostles here, He had on another occasion indicated that people other than the apostles would face the same situation.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another” (John 14:34a). This command was given to the apostles, but the New Testament indicates that all the followers of

Jesus are to love each other (1 John 3:23).

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me” (John 14:21a). By using the word “he” with a qualifying phrase, Jesus included not just the apostles, but anyone who keeps His commandments.

“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20b). The word “they” in this passage means others besides the apostles, while “you” means just the apostles.

The following statements were made only to the apostles:

“But these things I have spoken to you, that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you” (John 16:4).

“A little while, and you will no longer behold Me” (John 16:16a).

“These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming, when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, . . .” (John 16:25).

“Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone” (John 16:32a).

When Jesus used “you” on these occasions, He was referring specifically to the apostles. If no other Scripture indicates that others could expect the same benefits, then the statements apply to the apostles and no one else. This is important to understand, because Jesus’ promises concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in this section of John were exclusively for the apostles.

### **The Promised Spirit**

Jesus’ promise concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16–26; 15:26, 27; 16:7–15) was made to the apostles alone. This is evident from the contexts of these passages: “These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you” (John 14:25); “And you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:27); “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). These statements were made to those with whom Jesus was abiding, who would bear witness, who had been with Him from the beginning of His ministry, and who at that time could not yet bear His full teaching.

These references identify the apostles.

What Jesus promised the Spirit would do when He came also indicates that only the apostles were included. He would (1) teach them all things, (2) bring to their minds all Jesus had said to them, (3) guide them into all truth, and (4) show them things to come (John 14:26; 16:13).

What would happen if the Spirit did the same for people today? (1) They would not need the Bible. The Spirit would give them all the necessary spiritual knowledge. (2) They would not have to read Jesus’ teaching. The Spirit would bring to their minds everything Jesus said. (3) They would have no basic reason to study. The Spirit would guide them into all the truth. (4) They would not need to prepare or to consider beforehand what to say or teach. The Spirit would give the right words to them (Matthew 10:19, 20). (5) Like Paul, who was inspired by the Spirit (Galatians 1:11, 12), they would not require instruction, but would get their teaching directly from Jesus through the Spirit (Ephesians 3:3–5). (6) Their teaching would be equal to that of the inspired writers of the Bible. The same Spirit who guided the writers of the Bible would guide them also. (7) They would be able to speak and write without making mistakes. Those who wrote the Bible were guided by the Spirit to write God’s message inerrantly. Based on this fact, we can have faith that the Bible is complete and without error. (8) They would be able to look into the future and know what is to come. They would be able to make predictions with far more accuracy than today’s so-called spiritualists, psychics, and fortune tellers.

The Scriptures teach that prophets received revelation along with the apostles (Ephesians 3:3–5). These were endowed with the Spirit through the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 6:6). Thus, before the Word was available in its written form, it could be given verbally through the help of the Spirit.

The difference between the apostles and other New Testament Christians who received gifts of prophecy is that the apostles were taught all things, reminded of all Jesus had spoken, and guided into all the truth, while others received only partial revelation. Because the Spirit revealed everything they needed to know, the apostles had to depend on no one else for truth. Other Christians, even those to whom some

truths were revealed (John 14:26), had to depend on the apostles for the complete revelation (2 Timothy 2:2).

### The Helper

Jesus spoke of the Spirit as the Helper (Gk.: *parakletos*).

In the [Hellenistic literature] which constitutes the linguistic milieu of the [New Testament], the word, as commonly used, had a legal connotation and referred to one who speaks for someone in the presence of another.<sup>2</sup>

As applied to the Holy Spirit, the Greek word is so rich in meaning that adequate translation by any one English word is impossible. The KJV "Comforter" is as satisfactory as any, if it is taken in the fullest sense of one who not only consoles but also strengthens, helps, and counsels, with such authority as a legal advocate has for his client.<sup>3</sup>

As long as Jesus was with the apostles, He was their Counselor, Helper, and Comforter. After Jesus left, the Holy Spirit came to stand in His place. Jesus promised the apostles, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, . . ." (John 14:16); "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). Jesus did not mean that He Himself would come back to them; rather, He meant that He would return to them through the Holy Spirit. Jesus later said, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). Jesus would not be the Holy Spirit, the Helper, the One who came to them; He would send another Helper (John 14:16), the Holy Spirit, to remain with them.

### The Timing

What Jesus said after He had breathed on the apostles on the evening of His resurrection (John 20:19) has caused some to wonder when the Spirit came to the apostles. At that time Jesus said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22b).

Evidently, we are to understand this in the same way we understand the words spoken by

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<sup>2</sup>P. K. Jewett, "paraclete," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 4, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1975), 597.

<sup>3</sup>"Advocate," *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1987), 20.

Jesus a little earlier, when He was instituting the Lord's Supper. He said, "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Jesus stated that His blood was "poured out" even before it had been poured out. Seemingly, Jesus saw future events as so certain that He could speak as though they had already been accomplished. The same must be true concerning the giving of the Holy Spirit.

According to John, the Spirit was to be given after Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). Jesus indicated that He would be glorified through His death (John 12:23, 24) and that after His death and resurrection He would enter into His glory (Luke 24:26; see also Philippians 2:8-11; 1 Timothy 3:16).

Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He told the apostles not to leave Jerusalem. They were to wait to be baptized with the Holy Spirit "not many days from now" (Acts 1:4, 5; see also Luke 24:49). The Spirit came with power (Acts 1:8) on them ten days later, during the Jewish feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). They did not receive the Spirit when Jesus breathed on them.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus prepared the apostles for His departure by promising them the Holy Spirit, who would be with them as another Helper in His place. They would not be abandoned like orphans after Jesus left, but would be given the Spirit. Through the Spirit, Jesus would continue to be with them. In this way, He would give them spiritual power and guide them into all truth as they went into all the world to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15). ■

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### *The Holy Spirit and Jesus*

The purpose of the Holy Spirit's work was not to overshadow Jesus, but to glorify and magnify Him. Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; . . . He shall glorify Me; . . ." (John 16:13, 14). Like John the Baptist, who pointed to Jesus and not himself (John 1:26, 27), the Spirit was to exalt Jesus so that He would receive all honor, glory, and power (Revelation 4:11).