

## ***The Holy Spirit and Spirituality***

### ***The Holy Spirit: Working Behind the Scenes***

Lesson #2 for January 14, 2017

Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:5,9; Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Exodus 31:1-5; John 16:13-15; Galatians 5:16-23.

1. It should be very clear to every Bible-studying and Bible-believing Christian that the focus of the Holy Scriptures is on Jesus Christ and His Father. The Holy Spirit always plays a supporting role. However, that is not an insignificant role. He was there at creation. (Genesis 1:1-2) He sustained Jesus Christ from His birth and throughout His ministry.
2. However, unless we search carefully, we may know very little about the Holy Spirit.
3. We have a hard time understanding the role of the Holy Spirit because He works so quietly and unselfishly behind the scenes. Our natural selfishness cannot really understand that kind of behavior.
4. Read John 3:3-8 and Ezekiel 37:5,9. Why did Jesus use the term *wind, spirit, breath (ruach* in Hebrew and *pneuma* in Greek) to denote His Spirit? While we cannot see the wind itself, we can certainly see the powerful work and effects that it has. We may be baffled by the way the wind works; but, we cannot deny its power. The Holy Spirit is described as giving life to the lifeless. That life-giving power places Him firmly in the Trinity as a Member of the Godhead. Who has the power to give life? Only God.
5. So, why do you think the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit working together choose to keep the Holy Spirit's work somewhat quiet and mysterious? A correct understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit must, of necessity, invite humility on our part.
6. Ellen White stated:

The mysteries of the Bible, so far from being an argument against it, are among the strongest evidences of its divine inspiration. If it contained no account of God but that which we could comprehend; if His greatness and majesty could be grasped by finite minds, then the Bible would not, as now, bear the unmistakable evidences of divinity.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 170.2; *FLB* 14.6.
7. Read Genesis 1:1-2. Compare Colossians 1:16-17; and John 1:1-3. Is it not clear in these verses that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were in full cooperation in the process of creation? See also Job 26:13; 33:4; Psalm 33:6,9; 104:29-30.
8. What do you think is implied when it says that the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters at the time of creation? Do we have evidence that all three Members of the Godhead were involved in creation? Remember that Lucifer wanted to be a part of that committee! Did the war in heaven take place before the creation of this earth? Or, after? It must have been just before creation while the Members of the Godhead were considering how to go about creating this earth that Lucifer/Satan became jealous of Christ. Satan was cast down to this earth. (Revelation 12:10-12) We know that very soon after Adam and Eve were created, Satan was there at the tree to tempt them.
9. We should be exceedingly grateful that the Holy Spirit was not only active at the creation in the beginning but also is fully active in re-creation in our lives today.
10. The Holy Spirit was active in assisting the children of Israel to create that beautiful

sanctuary at the foot of Mount Sinai. (Exodus 31:1-5; 25:8) Does it appear to you that the Holy Spirit might be especially involved in creating that which is beautiful and attractive?

11. Do you think the Holy Spirit is ready to work with us, using our talents to further the kingdom of God?
12. It is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned as frequently in the Old Testament Scriptures as He is in the New Testament. Following Pentecost, His work was intensified.
13. If they had been willing to accept Jesus's words, the disciples should have been prepared for what happened on crucifixion weekend. Read Luke 18:31-34; John 16:13-14; and John 15:26. Unfortunately, Christ had to speak these words to them: "I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear." (John 16:12, *GNB*) If the disciples had been more open to the workings of the Holy Spirit, might they have done better that weekend? Why were their minds blinded?
14. Is it our pride that makes it hard for us to join with the Holy Spirit in His work?

"The Spirit's message to us is never 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me' but always 'Look at *Him*, and see His glory; listen to *Him*, and hear His word; go to *Him*, and have life; get to know *Him*, and taste His gift of joy and peace.' The Spirit, we might say, is the matchmaker, the celestial marriage broker, whose role it is to bring us and Christ together and ensure that we stay together."—J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit: Finding Fullness in Our Walk With God*, revised and enlarged edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2005) pp. 57, 58. (As quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Wednesday, January 11, 2017.)
15. Let us notice very clearly that the work of the Holy Spirit is always to promote our understanding and cooperation with the Spirit of Christ. That is why we are called *Christians* and not *Pneumians*: Followers of Jesus Christ and not followers of the Spirit. (See Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* [Wheaton, Illinois.: Crossways Books, 2007], page 284.)
16. Consider some of the ways in which the Holy Spirit was involved in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
17. Read Luke 1:34-35. In some way that we clearly do not understand, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary; as a result, she became pregnant with baby Jesus. How did Christ become a fetus? We have no idea!
18. The Holy Spirit was also present at the baptism of Jesus. (Luke 3:21-22) Is it significant to notice that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all present on that occasion?
19. Read Mark 1:12; Matthew 4:1; and Luke 4:1-2,14. Did the Holy Spirit lead Jesus out into the wilderness for the purpose of being tempted by the Devil? Of course not! Jesus went out into the desert to contemplate His future life, His ministry, and His future death. Not eating for 40 days made Him enter into a critically-low state of nutrition of which the Devil hoped to take advantage; then, Satan brought his temptations on Christ. But, just as the Holy Spirit through His inspired words assisted Jesus in rebuffing the Devil, He will come to our aid when we are tempted. (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15-16)
20. Read Luke 24:44-49; Galatians 5:16-23; and Ephesians 4:23-24. These passages spell out in brief the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church.
21. As quoted from the *Bible Study Guide*: The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus in at least the

following ways:

1. By teaching about Him [Christ] in the Holy Scriptures in a trustworthy and reliable manner. Nothing that is necessary for us to know about Christ and His salvation is missing or misleading. It's all there in the Word of God, if we would but read it in faith and submission.

2. By drawing men and women into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gently works on people's hearts and minds. He gives them understanding so that they understand spiritual things and so that they will be willing to place their trust in Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Leader and Redeemer.

3. By reproducing Christ's character in us. He thus brings to life Christlike virtues in our lives (*Gal. 5:22, 23*). Through the blood of Jesus we are given victory over sin (*compare Rev. 12:11*), and the Holy Spirit enables us to walk in faithfulness to God's commandments.

4. By enabling us to live a Christlike, selfless, and loving life of service to others. He calls men and women into specific lines of work for God and enables us to reach out to others in the attractive Spirit of Christ.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Thursday, January 12*. [Word in brackets is added.]

22. Can we understand how the work of the Holy Spirit in exalting the character of Christ and teaching us about His ministry also brings glory to the Father? (Matthew 5:16)

23. Think of your own personal experience. Can you identify times when the Holy Spirit was active in your life?

While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 173.1; *AG* 22.5; *Mar* 70.4; *MYP* 158.1; *YRP* 15.4.

24. But, we constantly need to remember that the work of the Holy Spirit is not a once-in-a-lifetime event. The Holy Spirit must work with us every day. His work is the work of a lifetime.

25. Could we as Christians learn to work in a powerful way and finish the gospel by working behind the scenes as the Holy Spirit does? In our attempts to try to reach out to others, how can we make Jesus the center of our attention just as the Holy Spirit does? How would we go about doing that?

26. Try to imagine yourself accompanying Nicodemus on that evening in the early days of the ministry of Jesus. What do you think attracted Nicodemus? Remember that as a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus was one of the most respected men in the nation. There were only seventy members of the Sanhedrin, and they were the supreme council for the Jews. Nicodemus played a very key role—much of it quietly behind the scenes—in the ministry of Jesus and later in the work of the early Christian church. (See *The Desire of*

Ages 167-177.) On several occasions, Nicodemus managed to frustrate the Sanhedrin's plans to arrest Jesus and kill Him. Nicodemus must have realized that it was possible that he would be discovered talking to Jesus. What do you think Nicodemus would have said to his fellow members of the Sanhedrin if they had found out? We do not know how much time Nicodemus spent with Jesus that night. It may have been quite a while.

27. We certainly should not condemn Nicodemus for going quietly to seek out Christ at night. He almost certainly would have been thrown out of the Sanhedrin if other members had known of that visit. It was probably nothing short of a miracle that he went at all. Surely, it was the work of the Holy Spirit on his heart that led to that visit which has proved to be such a blessing to Christians down through the millennia.
28. What was the final result of that night meeting? Nicodemus helped to protect Jesus on several occasions when Jesus was being attacked in meetings of the Sanhedrin. Then, he went boldly forward and with Joseph of Arimathea and John, the beloved disciple, took down the body of Jesus from the cross and gave it a royal burial. Finally, Nicodemus spent all he had financially to promote the cause of Christ.

After the Lord's ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and questioning was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus.

Nicodemus related to John the story of that interview, and by his pen it was recorded for the instruction of millions. The truths there taught are as important today as they were on that solemn night in the shadowy mountain, when the Jewish ruler came to learn the way of life from the lowly Teacher of Galilee.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages* 177.1-2.

29. While we recognize that the Holy Spirit was present in creating that gorgeous and beautiful world back in the beginning, He is just as active today in re-creating lives after the nature of God. Does it take more creative power to make something new? Or, to repair it when it has been damaged?
30. Are we willing to make the glorification of God a major factor in our lives? In light of the accusations, lies, and misrepresentations of the Devil in the great controversy, we need to do our best to correctly represent the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We cannot do better than following the example of the Holy Spirit.
31. Does the Holy Spirit intend for us to become puppets under His control? If so, why are we told that the last part—and perhaps the most important part—of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control? (Galatians 5:22-23) Why does this verse say that all the characteristics mentioned are the fruit (singular) instead of fruits (plural) of the Spirit? When the Spirit gives us love, all the other characteristics follow. Does the Holy Spirit ever take control of our lives against our will? Never! He will guide us, but only when we make the choice to allow Him to do that and then follow His direction. His work may begin with conviction of our sin; but, if we allow Him, He will remake us into the image of Jesus Christ. There are two sides of freedom. If given complete freedom, some people will do all sorts of disastrous

things. Others, given freedom, will joyously serve God.

32. What would Christianity be today without the work of the Holy Spirit? Would we be anything more than a hollow shell of religiosity?
33. As we mentioned in our previous lesson, the Holy Spirit took prime responsibility in revealing the truth about God to us through revelation in the production of the Scriptures as we know them; but now, He is also active through the process of inspiration in helping us to understand those inspired words.
34. There is probably no clearer contrast in the Bible between the works of the Devil and the work of the Holy Spirit than what is found Galatians 5:16-24. On which side would you like to find yourself? Are you prepared to accept the eternal guiding principles of the Holy Spirit? How do we allow the Holy Spirit to come into our lives? There is certainly no hesitation on His part. But, we must be willing to give up our natural desires. We must be willing to sacrifice our pride, selfishness, lust, as well as our desire for self-exaltation.
35. Read again Ezekiel 37. What are we supposed to learn from this brief illustration? Clearly, God, working through the Holy Spirit has the power to bring life out of dry bones. Even today, the Holy Spirit will work with us—if we allow Him to do so—in reviving and reforming our lives and then helping us to help others. Ezekiel was a prisoner in Babylonia at the time of this vision.

Appreciate the fact that God is our efficiency. We do not remember this, and therefore we lose much in religious experience. We work ourselves in place of being worked by the Holy Spirit's power.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Southern Africa* 81.0.

36. The Holy Spirit was very active in the original creation of our world. He is just as active in producing those changes necessary to prepare us for an eternal life with God. We need to spend more time with the Word—the Bible and Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit will transform us by beholding the truths we learn about God. We will see the beauty of Jesus and want to be more like Him. (See *Steps to Christ* 105.2; *Great Controversy* 555.1.)
37. Think of all the conflicts which take place in our world today from full-scale wars to conflicts within the church itself. Nearly all earthly conflicts arise because one or more persons is/are motivated by satanic ideas—greed, selfishness, hatred, pride, etc. Try to imagine how different things would be if all Christians allowed their lives to be guided by the Holy Spirit.
38. What could we do to make that more possible? Should we spend more time reading and contemplating the Word of God, the Bible, and being guided in our understanding by the Holy Spirit?
39. The more we recognize the beauty of Christ, the more we will be attracted to Him. The better we understand God's side in the great controversy, the clearer it will be to us why God's plan for the universe and for our lives is the only possible way to live in a universe full of love and peace. Try to imagine what it would be like to live in a universe controlled by satanic principles.
40. Are we ready to allow the Holy Spirit to remake our lives?

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