

Lesson 4

The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ

Introduction

As we have seen previously, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are co-equals with the Father. Separate personalities, they all possess an eternal nature, are all knowing; all-powerful; and all-present. In this lesson we will turn our focus to Jesus and the Spirit. As we focus on Jesus, we are assuming the traditional understanding of Him as having both a fully divine and fully human nature. The eternal, divine Logos became incarnate as the human person Jesus of Nazareth. As we think of the work of Jesus during His earthly ministry, it is easy to think the cause of His miracles and supernatural acts and wonders originated with Him. After all, He was God in the flesh and possessed the ability to heal the sick, raise the dead, walk on water, and order demons around.

When we read the gospels carefully, however, we will see the supernatural powers exercised by Jesus were derived largely, if not exclusively, from the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This in no way detracts from the glory and power of Jesus, or from the reality of His divine nature. It does, however, emphasize how important Jesus' *human* nature was to the accomplishment of the mission, and also how important the Holy Spirit's role was in the same.

As we study today's lesson, we will see how the Holy Spirit equipped and strengthened Jesus Christ in His *human* nature throughout His ministry.

Isaiah Prophecies about the Spirit's Role in the Life of Jesus

There are three passages in Isaiah regarding the Spirit's empowerment of Jesus:

- Isaiah 11.1-2: *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. **And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him**, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.* Connect this passage to John 1.32-33. When the Spirit came upon Jesus at His baptism, *he remained upon Him.*
- Isaiah 42.1-4: *Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; **I have put my Spirit upon him**; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.* Connect this passage to Matthew 12.17-21 where Matthew says this was fulfilled by Jesus.
- Isaiah 61.1-2: ***The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me**, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn.* Jesus Himself declared that He is the one of whom Isaiah is speaking in Luke 4.17-21.

The Holy Spirit and Jesus' Baptism

The first main event of Jesus' public ministry was His baptism by John as recorded in Matthew 3.13-17, Mark 1.9-11; Luke 3.21-22; John 1.32-34. From this point forward, Jesus would have a very public journey all the way to the cross. Cottrell calls Jesus' baptism the "official inauguration ceremony of his unique mission and ministry."¹⁷ But, if John's baptism was *a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*, Mark 1.4, how did this apply to Jesus? Jesus, completely sinless in every way, accepted this baptism vicariously in the sense that He was identifying Himself with sinful mankind as He did on the cross.

By submitting to the baptism of John, He essentially places His commitment of going to the cross on public record. *Behold, I have come to do your will, O God*, Hebrews 10.7. This helps us to better understand His statement in Matthew 3.15: *Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness*. His baptism demonstrated His personal conformity to the will of the Father set specifically for Him.

All four gospels place the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus, as denoted by the descent of the dove coming down from heaven and lighting on Him. See Matthew 3.16; Mark 1.10; Luke 3.21-22. The synoptics all record this event happening *after* Jesus came up out of the water. John 1.32-33 presents us with John the Baptist's perspective, who says the Spirit not only came down and rested on Jesus, but that it also *remained* upon Him. This was followed by the Father speaking audibly from heaven: *You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased*, Luke 3.22.

The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism is very similar to an anointing ceremony, common to Old Testament times. See 1 Samuel 16.13 when Samuel anointed David to be king of Israel. Exodus 29.7; Leviticus 8.10-13, 30 denotes how priests were anointed. 1 Kings 19.16 also speaks of prophets being anointed. In these cases, the one being anointed was publicly submitting himself to God's will and committing himself to the designated task of office. Of this Cottrell writes, *those doing the anointed were consecrating or setting apart the anointed one for a sacred purpose. It was a public declaration of and dedication to the specified service to God.*¹⁸

While oil was used at the time of anointing in many Old Testament ceremonies (1 Samuel 16.13), in the case of Jesus' anointing it appears the dove takes the place of the oil, symbolizing the presence of God's Spirit upon Jesus to empower and equip Him in every way for the mission. Here is a passage from Isaiah we should consider:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

– Isaiah 61.1

Now, connect this to what Peter said regarding Jesus:

¹⁷ Cottrell, *What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*, p. 138.

¹⁸ Cottrell, *What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*, p. 140.

You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

– Acts 10.38

The anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism is why we speak of Jesus of Nazareth as “the Christ.”

This anointing energized Christ for His threefold mission: (1) Jesus was the Anointed Prophet who proclaimed the good tidings; (2) He was the Anointed High Priest who “made purification for sins”; (3) He was the Anointed King who “[reigns] in righteousness.” He who heightened Jesus’ powers in this threefold ministry was the Holy Spirit. Nowhere is it said that Jesus performed these extraordinary functions in His own power.¹⁹

The Holy Spirit and Jesus’ Temptation

Immediately after Jesus’ baptism, Matthew 4.1 tells us Jesus was *led up by the Spirit* into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Mark uses stronger language saying the Spirit *immediately drove him out into the wilderness*. Whatever the case, the Spirit’s role in Jesus’ life now seems to be far from passive. Instead, He is seen as actively leading Jesus into a direct encounter with Satan.

Matthew 4.1-11 and Luke 4.1-13 provide us with a few details of what happened while Jesus dwelt in the wilderness. Luke suggests Jesus was tempted for the entire 40 days, Luke 4.1-2. So does Mark (1.13a). Matthew says the three main temptations came after Jesus fasted for 40 days and had become hungry, that *the tempter came*, and enticed Him.

What was the Holy Spirit doing during this time?

We can conclude that the Spirit was with Jesus, strengthening and encouraging Him, helping Him overcome them, etc. Note again how Luke words it. Jesus was *led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil*, 4.1b-2a. Are Satan’s attacks in the wilderness simply mere temptations that all humans experience? Or is there more? While there was definitely a moral struggle going on, and expectations to live up to regarding being a perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 9.14), there is much more going on here.

Part of Jesus’ coming was to do battle with Satan (2 Corinthians 4.4) and to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3.8). **Satan did not initiate this confrontation, God did, when the Spirit drove Him out in the wilderness.** Cottrell argues that in this story, Jesus is beginning the task of:

Crushing the serpent’s head, Genesis 3.15, thereby reversing the curse from the garden.

- Binding the devil, Matthew 12.29.
- Rendering Satan powerless, Hebrews 2.14.
- Confronting His enemies, Psalm 2, 45.
- Setting up His kingdom, Matthew 12.28.

¹⁹ Lehman, Chester K. *The Holy Spirit and the Holy Life*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1959.

When you think about Jesus doing this in the form of a human being, no wonder He needed the empowerment of the Spirit!

The Spirit and Jesus' Ministry

Observing Luke 4.1 again, we read that Jesus was *full of the Spirit*. Luke 4.14 says Jesus began His ministry *in the power of the Spirit*. John 3.34 says that the Father gave the Spirit to the Son without measure.

Going back to the beginning of this lesson, remember that we read three passages from Isaiah and noted their connection to the teaching of the gospels. Matthew 12.17-21 says Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah 42.1-4. In Luke 4.18-21 Jesus Himself says He was the fulfillment of Isaiah 61.1-2.

With these passages in mind, we may safely conclude that Jesus was “guided, impelled, animated, and supported by the Holy Spirit at every step of His messianic ministry.”²⁰

Jesus' Prophetic Ministry

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him, Deuteronomy 18.17-18. Both Peter and Stephen apply this passage to Jesus (Acts 3.22; 7.37.) Every word that Jesus spoke was a word from God, not just because He Himself was divine, but also because He was filled with the Spirit. One of the purposes for the Spirit's anointing over Jesus was for the purpose of prophetic proclamation:

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me **to proclaim good news to the poor**. He has sent me **to proclaim liberty to the captives** and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**”

– Luke 4.17-19

Here, Jesus ties His preaching with the accompanying spiritual works as the direct result of being anointed with the Spirit. “While there was resident in the person of Christ all the attributes of deity, in the limitations of His earthly walk Christ chose to be dependent on the Holy Spirit for the exercise of His prophetic gift.”²¹ See also Acts 1.2 where Luke says Jesus had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

Jesus' Kingly Ministry

²⁰ “Wherefore, when the Son assumed human nature He took it just as it is, i.e., incapable of any holy action without the power of the Holy Spirit. Hence He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that from the beginning His human nature should be richly endowed with powers. The Holy Spirit developed these powers; and He was consecrated to His office by the communication to His human nature of the Messianic gifts by which He still intercedes for us as our High Priest, and rules us as our King. And for this reason He was guided, impelled, animated, and supported by the Holy Spirit at every step of His Messianic ministry.”

See Kuyper, Abraham. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900.

²¹ Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*. Galaxie Software, 2008.

Jesus' ministry was energized by the power of the Spirit, Luke 4.14; Acts 10.38. The *power* aspect specifically relates to His role as Messianic King, who came to establish His authority over all things. This has a specific connection to Jesus' overthrow of Satan's usurped dominion and establishing His own eternal kingdom in its place, Acts 26.18; Colossians 1.13.

The Spirit's role in Jesus' kingly mission is clearly seen in reference to Jesus' work of casting out demons. By doing this, Jesus was binding the strong man (the devil) and plundering his domain (Matthew 12.28-29). This was the process of fulfilling the Isaiah 61 prophecy, for which the Spirit had anointed him *to set free those who are oppressed*.

Jesus said He did these things:

- *By the spirit of God*, Matthew 12.28.
- *By the finger of God*, Luke 11.20.

Luke 10.17-21 says Jesus rejoiced at seeing people delivered from Satan's grasp. Notice how the text says how Jesus *rejoiced in the Holy Spirit*.

Some have taken Jesus' credit to the Spirit for the casting out of demons and applied it to the working of all His miracles. "Jesus Christ wrought His miracles here on earth in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 12:28, we read, "I cast out devils by the power of the Spirit of God." It is through the Spirit that miracle working power was given to some in the church after our Lord's departure from this earth (1 Corinthians 12:9, 10), and in the power of the same Spirit, Jesus Christ wrought His miracles."²² Others urge caution at taking the view that the power of the Spirit was responsible *for all of Jesus' miracles*:

There are some clear instances in Scripture which point to a conclusion that the power of the Second Person was not entirely inoperative and could be used at will. It seems that Christ chose to perform miracles in the power of the Spirit rather than that He had no alternative. Frequently in reference to the miracles of Christ the word power (*dunamis*) is used (Mark 5:30; Luke 5:17; 6:19; 8:46). The power in point is often said to have proceeded from Christ. In connection with the healing of the woman who touched Christ in the throng, Christ perceived that "power proceeding from him had gone forth" (Mark 5:30; cf. Luke 8:46). Again in Luke 5:17, the power to perform healing is referred to Christ Himself: "The power of the Lord was with him to heal." According to Luke 6:19, power came forth from Christ in performing the miracles of healing. From the language of these passages, a conclusion might be reached that Christ in some instances acted in His own power. The final solution to the problem cannot be reached except to state that Christ performed His miracles in the power of the Spirit, and that He could if He wished and probably did exercise His own power as well. In the unity of will and action of the Trinity, the cooperation of the Second and Third Persons in doing mighty works should be expected.²³

Jesus' Priestly Ministry

All of Jesus' life on earth was in preparation for the one, climactic event of the cross. When we speak of His priestly ministry, we are speaking of His offering Himself as the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. Concerning the role of the Spirit in this aspect of Jesus' ministry, we observe the following:

²² Torrey, R. A. *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as Revealed in the Scriptures and in Personal Experience*. New York; Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1910.

²³ Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*, p. 97-98.

For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, **who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God**, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

– Hebrews 9.13-14

In Matthew 26.39-45 we read of Jesus' prayers in the garden on the night before His crucifixion. From the perspective of human nature, Jesus is overwhelmed by the seeming impossibility of the next step of His messianic journey. As you read the three prayers, it seems that His heart and mind grow increasingly calm and made ready for the awful ordeal that awaits. Notice 26.42: *My father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done*. If ever there was a point where the Spirit strengthened Jesus, this would be it, where He is given the resolve to see the mission through to the end. Some scholars tie Matthew 26.39-45 in with the Hebrews 9.14 passage that we just read above. It was by the power of the Spirit that Jesus was equipped with the resolve to be the perfect offering for sin.

“If the Spirit’s presence empowered Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, which it did, surely there was no point in this ministry where the Spirit’s power was more needed than here.”²⁴ “In the difficult hours of Gethsemane and all the decisive moments leading to the cross, the Holy Spirit faithfully ministered to Christ”

To this, Walvoord also adds a few comments related to Jesus' statement in Matthew 27.46: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*”

It is possible that there was a cessation of the Spirit’s ministry during this period without altering the fact that Christ offered Himself by the Spirit of God. While the Holy Spirit could succor Christ in making His decision and in fulfilling the eternal purpose of God in taking the path which led to the cross, only Christ could bear the load of sin. In this the Holy Spirit could not avail.

The work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the sufferings of Christ on the cross consisted, then, in sustaining the human nature in its love of God, in submission to the will of God and obedience to His commands, and in encouraging and strengthening Christ in the path of duty which led to the cross. In it all the ministry was to the human nature, and through it to the person of Christ. The inquiring mind must ever confess that this truth is infinite and beyond our complete comprehension.²⁵

The Spirit and Jesus' Resurrection

Just as it was in the initial creation, so it was in the first act of God's new creation: the resurrection of Christ. All three persons of the Trinity were involved:

- The Father: Ephesians 1.17-20.
- The Son: John 10.17-18.
- The Spirit: Romans 8.11 - While the one who actually raised Jesus from the dead is the Father, notice that He did so through the agency of the Spirit. In Romans 8.11, Paul is seeking to give Christian's assurance of their own future bodily resurrection, which is based on the indwelling

²⁴ Cottrell, *What the Bible says about the Holy Spirit*, p. 149.

²⁵ Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*, p. 100-101.

presence of the Spirit. For this to have any force, Paul must be implying that God raised Jesus from the dead through the same Spirit who dwells in us.

- Other references to the Spirit's role in the resurrection are found in Romans 1.4; 1 Peter 3.18 and 1 Timothy 3.16.

The exact role of the Spirit in raising Jesus' body from the dead is not explained in the Bible. Since He is the *Spirit of life*, Romans 8.2, we can rightly infer that He was the person of the Trinity whose life-giving power brought Jesus' crucified body back to life.

For Thought and Reflection

1. What does Isaiah say regarding the Spirit's connection with Jesus during His earthly ministry?
2. What was the purpose of Jesus' baptism?
3. Why did the Spirit compel Jesus to go into the wilderness to be tempted of the Spirit?
4. How did the Spirit aid the Son in His prophetic ministry?
5. How did the Spirit empower the Son in His kingly ministry?
6. By whose power did Jesus cast out demons?
7. By whose power did Jesus work miracles?

8. How did the Spirit empower Jesus in carrying out His priestly ministry? Can you see a connection between Hebrews 9.14 and Matthew 26.39-45?

9. What are your thoughts in regard to the Spirit's "absence" while Jesus was on the cross?

10. How was the Spirit involved in Jesus' resurrection?