



God's holy spirit

READING FOR THIS LESSON - Psalm 51.

Power that cannot be measured



"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
(Genesis 1:1).

Think of all the work that has to be done in order to build a house. Think of all the planning and preparing; the need for men skilled in different trades, all working together. What a lot of thought and energy it takes!

How much thought and energy, then, must it have taken to create the heaven and the earth? Where did the power come from for this great work? We are told in the Psalms,

"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm" (Psalm 33:6, 9).

God's Spirit

The power of God, working out His purposes, is called in the Bible, His "Spirit". So we read in Genesis 1:2,

"The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

In Job 26:13 we also read,

"By his breath the skies became fair."

God's power was also used to direct the minds of the men who wrote the Bible. They did not write down their own ideas; but were used by God to write His words. So we read in 2 Peter 1:21,

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man: but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

When we speak of "*prophecy*", we usually think of foretelling the future. But in the Bible the word "prophecy" means speaking God's words, whether they are about the past, the present, or the future. Such words are to be for the benefit of the believers as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:3,

"But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort."

You may notice in the words of Peter that the spirit of God is called His "Holy Spirit". The word "Holy" means, "set apart" for a special purpose. In the Bible the words "Holy Ghost" appear, but because the Greek word (in which the New Testament was originally written) translated "ghost", is also translated "spirit" in other places. As the word "ghost" can be so easily misunderstood, it is better to refer to this great power of God as the "holy spirit".

The holy spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ

It was the holy spirit that brought about the birth of the Jesus. So the angel told Mary,

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

You will see here that the "Holy Spirit" and the "power of the Most High" are one and the same thing.

At his baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus was given the holy spirit without measure. We read in John 3:34,

"For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit."

God's power was given to Jesus. There were other men of Old and New Testament times to whom God had given a portion of His power - but no other man has ever been fit to possess such power as God gave to Jesus.

The disciples were promised the holy spirit

Jesus promised his twelve disciples that they also would be given the holy spirit, after he had gone away from them. In John 14:25-26, he said,

"All this have I spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, 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."

Here Jesus speaks of the holy spirit as if it were a person; and some people actually think that it **is** a person - part of the Trinity. But we have already seen quite clearly from the Bible that the holy spirit is the **power** of God; so we know this idea cannot be right. Why, then, in some places does Jesus speak of the holy spirit as if it were a person?

Just turn to Psalm 65, and read verse 13, which says,

"The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing."

Now when we read this, it gives us a beautiful picture of the ripe grain standing high in the valley - but we don't for one moment imagine that the valleys are actually shouting and singing. That is just the Psalmist's way of describing what he saw.

So when Jesus spoke of the holy spirit as if it were a person doing this or that, he is just showing us what a very real thing this spirit or power of God actually is.

The holy spirit given to the disciples

We have seen that Jesus Christ promised power to his disciples before he went into heaven. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and

"..wait for the gift my Father promised..." (Acts 1:4).

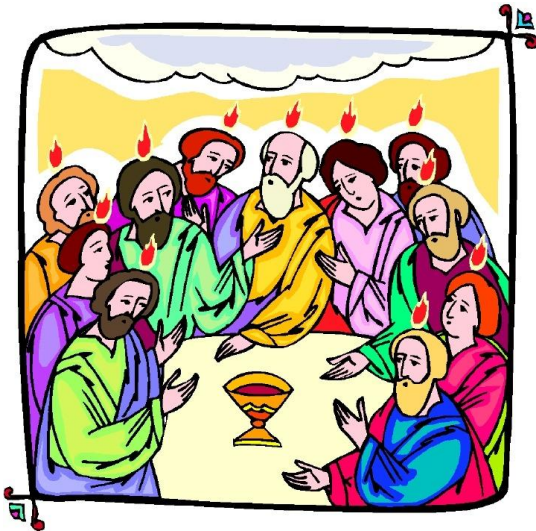
He then promised them that

"in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (verse 5).

In Acts 2:1-3, we read how, as the disciples were waiting, the holy spirit came to them. As they were gathered together, the spirit came with a sound

"..like the blowing of a violent wind" (verse 2).

Tongues of fire were seen over each one of them; and this was a sign that the holy spirit had been given to them. From then on, they were able to work many miracles, as Christ had promised them.



The spirit today

We have seen that those who wrote the Bible did so by the power of God's holy spirit. At one time during his ministry Jesus said,

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63).

When we read the Word of God, we are in a sense receiving the spirit of God. This can cause a wonderful change in our lives, helping us to become more pleasing to God.

Let us, then, read the Word of God carefully and prayerfully, remembering the words of Peter in his first epistle,

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"
(1 Peter 2:2).

What we have learnt about the holy spirit.

1. The holy spirit is the power of God.
2. The Bible was written by the power of the holy spirit.
3. Jesus was born by the power of the holy spirit.
4. All God's prophets had a measure of His spirit, but to Jesus it was given "*without measure*".
5. After Jesus had gone into heaven, the holy spirit was given to his disciples.