

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
April 14, 2013

The Holy Spirit Comes

Read Acts 2:1-13

Key verse: “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2:4)

The New Testament word that is often used to refer to the Holy Spirit is the word *paraclete*. The word literally means “one who comes alongside.” *Paraclete* was also a word used to describe the following battle tactic: “Greek soldiers went into battle in pairs,” says Gordon Dalbey. “So when the enemy attacked, they could draw together back-to-back, covering each other’s blind side. One’s battle partner was called the *paraclete*” (from Dalbey’s *Healing the Masculine Soul*).

Jesus knew that, to live for Him and to accomplish His mission, His followers would need a power beyond their own. So, Jesus promised the disciples they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would come alongside them and help them fight the good fight of faith.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples these instructions: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

Acts 1:15 tells of a group of about 120 believers who met together to pray and seek God. It was likely this group that was gathered on the day of Pentecost. This is what happened to them: “Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak” (Acts 2: 2-4).

“Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting.” In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is often symbolized by “wind” or “breath.” On the Day of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit is marked by an audible wind.

“They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them.” In the Old Testament, fire often symbolized the presence of

God. Still today, our worship services often begin with acolytes lighting candles on the altar as a symbol of God's presence with His people.

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak." The following verses, vv. 5-13, describe the nature of the "other languages." People from "every nation" (v.5) heard the disciples speak "as the Spirit enabled them" (v. 4). The miracle occurred as the listeners heard the disciples "speaking in their native languages" (v. 6). In other words, the disciples were enabled miraculously to speak in languages that they had never learned to speak.

This miraculous event is significant because Jesus had promised: "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" (Acts 1:8). From the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been given to believers to empower them and to help them be effective *witnesses* for Jesus Christ. "Nobody can be indwelt by the Spirit of God," said Bishop William Temple, "and keep that Spirit to himself. Where the Spirit is, He flows forth. And where there is no flowing forth, He is not there."

Every believer today, to have the power necessary for victorious Christian living and to be an effective witness for Christ, needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The New Testament makes it clear that every believer, at conversion, receives the Holy Spirit. In fact, Romans 8:9 says: "if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." So, the question for the Christian is not "Do I have the Holy Spirit?" but rather *"Does the Holy Spirit have all of me?"*

We can answer yes to that second question if daily we will surrender our lives fully to Jesus, ask Him to fill us with the Holy Spirit, and by faith receive the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

Thanks be to God!

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