



The Holy Spirit and the Latter Rain

The subject of the Holy Spirit is one that calls for carefulness and delicacy in handling, but it also yields precious and wonderful benefits, for the function and work of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of creation and redemption, and of the whole plan of salvation.

The first place in the Bible where we see the Divine Trio working together is in the story of the creation of our world:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Gen. 1:1, 2.

In this text, the word for God in Hebrew is Elohim, which is plural, showing that the entire Godhead was present and working together in the creation of the world.

"The work of God's Spirit must have some connection with the activity that was presently to be initiated, an activity bringing order out of chaos. The Spirit of God was already present, ready to act as soon as the order should be given. The Holy Spirit has always been doing this very work. This divine Agent has ever been present to assist in the work of creation and redemption, to reprove and strengthen wayward souls, to comfort the sorrowing, and to present the believer's prayers in an acceptable form to God." 1 BC 209 [Not EGW].

The next important activity of the Holy Spirit that we see in the creation story is in the creation of Adam:

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.... God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.'" Gen. 1:26, 27.

"The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Gen. 2:7.

Here again we find that the Spirit of God is a vital part of creation—this time bringing vitality and life from the breath of God into the lifeless form of Adam.

"After God created man in His image the form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it had no vitality. Then...God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, breathing, intelligent being. All parts of the human machinery were put in motion. The heart,

the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the perceptions of the mind, the senses, were placed under physical law. It was then that man became a living soul." TD 273.

Then God took a part of Adam's side, and made a woman to be his life partner, co-worker, associate, and beloved companion, – an equal who could walk together with him in every aspect of his life.

"Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship, the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Even communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship. There was none of the same nature to love, and to be loved.

"God Himself gave Adam a companion. He provided...a helper corresponding to him,—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who would be one with him in love and sympathy.... to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him....she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation." PP 46.

Here we see the fulfillment of what God said when He proposed to create mankind in His image, for He Himself has an equal companion in His Son.

"The Sovereign of the universe was not alone in His work of beneficence. He had an associate—a co-worker who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings.... The Father wrought by His Son in the creation of all heavenly beings. By Him were all things created." PP 34.

But there is a third being in the Godhead, one that is more mysterious, but equally important. This is the Holy Spirit. He is intricately involved in everything that God the Father and God the Son do in creation and redemption. Through the Spirit, everything God speaks into existence becomes a reality. Through the Spirit plants grow and animals function. Through the Holy Spirit we are connected with our Creator and receive from Him the love and character qualities that He makes available to us through Jesus. And through the Spirit our thoughts and feelings are transmitted back to God.

So we can see that the Holy Spirit had a very active role in the creation of the world and of mankind. But in the Old Testament, the most frequent contact and communication between mankind and God was through Christ, the second person of the Godhead. It was Christ who communed with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. It was Christ who reasoned with Cain concerning his anger and jealousy toward his brother, Abel. It was Christ who walked and talked with Abraham, wrestled all night with Jacob, spoke to Moses in the burning bush, led the Israelites through the desert in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, and spoke the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai, with the Father by His side [1 BC 1103].

The activity of the Holy Spirit is always connected with something that God the Father and God the Son are doing. The Spirit is the active agent through which both creation and redemption

are accomplished. Adam was a perfect specimen coming from the hand of God. But there was no life in him until the Holy Spirit was breathed into his nostrils by his Creator. Likewise, we may be alive physically, but if we are not filled by the Holy Spirit, we are dead spiritually and cannot understand the deep things of God.

What is even worse is that Satan and his angels are spirit beings and can inhabit human beings who are willingly in agreement with him. When Jesus was upon earth, He and His disciples cast out many demons which were inhabiting the people of that time. Jesus gave instruction and warning concerning the danger of allowing Satan to possess the mind:

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left. When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wickedly than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.'" Luke 11:24-26.

The lesson to learn here is that we cannot protect ourselves from the activity of evil spirits who want to control everyone's mind and bring them into subjection to his will. To be safe, we must have the higher power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us in order to fill our soul temple with holy thoughts and feelings. Jesus makes this clear in Matthew 12:25, 28:

"Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.... But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

"The prince of the power of evil can only be held in check by the power of God in the third person of the Godhead—the Holy Spirit." Ev. 617.

"It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." DA 671.

"Christ desires nothing so much as to redeem His heritage from the dominion of Satan. But before we are delivered from Satan's power without, we must be delivered from his power within." COL 174, 5.

"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the three holy dignitaries of heaven, have declared that they will strengthen men to overcome the powers of darkness. All the faculties of heaven are pledged to those who by their baptismal vows have entered into a covenant with God." 5 BC 1110.

You see, the Holy Spirit does not dwell in us without our invitation and permission to do so. Before the cross the Holy Spirit was limited to the choice and cooperation of each person. But because God has now bought us back by the perfect sacrifice of His Son for all humanity, the

Holy Spirit is free to be in the world and seek out every soul with the invitation to come to God and receive salvation. However, He will never force an entrance into anyone who does not open their heart and give Him permission. The beautiful appeal that Joshua made to the Israelites of his time, is an example for us today:

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the god of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Josh. 24:15.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was given to those who obeyed God's law and the laws of Moses, which included the requirements which governed the sanctuary service. God told Moses that the purpose of the sanctuary was so that He could dwell among them. Ex. 25:8. The Hebrew word used here for "among" can also be translated as "in," or "within." Unfortunately, the long history of the Israelites recorded many times when they rebelled against Moses. This stems back to the reaction of the people when God spoke His law on Mount Sinai:

"When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die.'

"Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'

"The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was." Ex. 20:18-21.

Moses was able to speak with God face to face, because he had learned to love, trust, and obey Him. But the people had not yet learned that obedience to a human being does not keep us safe from the control of the evil one. Only our connection with God and loving obedience to Him can protect us from yielding to the temptations of Satan. The sordid history of the Israelites as they traversed through the desert toward the Promised Land shows how futile it was for them to believe that they could obey Moses without having a personal relationship with God. And so it is today. Unless the law of God is written on the tablets of our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our own efforts to obey God will prove to be a failure.

"The law of 10 precepts... is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, 'This do and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan.'" 1 BC 1105.

When our first parents yielded to the temptations of Satan and obeyed him, the whole human race was placed under the power of the evil one. But through the sinless life of Jesus, and His death, resurrection, ascension to heaven, and ministry in the heavenly sanctuary for us, the power of Satan is broken for all who repent of their sins and accept Christ as their personal Savior. Therefore, the Holy Spirit can indwell those who accept Jesus, and remain faithful to their commitment to Him, and allow Him to live out His perfect life in them.

When Jesus was on earth, He could only be in one place at a time, and therefore His blessings and influence were restricted by His humanity. But when He went back to heaven, the promised Holy Spirit in the early rain could be poured out upon anyone who accepted salvation through Him. Peter made this clear to everyone who observed the great change in the disciples and followers of Jesus after Jesus went back to heaven:

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers what shall we do?'

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.'" Acts 2:37-39.

The words of Peter make the Christian life seem so simple and easy. But the reception of the Holy Spirit is only the beginning of our walk with Jesus.

"As God works upon the heart by His Holy Spirit, man must cooperate with Him. The thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul. The thoughts must be pure, the meditations of the heart must be clean, if the words of the mouth are to be words acceptable to heaven and helpful to your associates." 3 BC 1145.

"Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain.... They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain.... They are making a terrible mistake.... The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin...that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree, must be done now.... Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it." TM 507.

Perhaps the greatest reason why many church members will not recognize the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain is because they are looking for power to preach and heal rather than the character qualities of Jesus to be lived out in their lives. Isaiah 11:1-4 outlines these qualities for us:

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.* He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, and with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth."

*["To fear the Lord is to hate evil." Prov. 8:13.]

It is interesting to note that there are six aspects of the Spirit mentioned here, but the seventh aspect, which is the spirit of judgment, is described instead of named, thus emphasizing its special importance. In Isaiah 4, the spirit of judgment is applied especially to God's people who will be perfected at the end of time:

"In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain." Isa. 4:2-6.

Ellen White also applies this scripture in Isaiah to God's final cleansed remnant:

"[Isa. 4:2, 3 quoted.] The work of the investigative judgment and the blotting out of sins is to be accomplished before the second advent of the Lord.... When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him." GC 485.

The seven aspects of the Holy Spirit are represented in the earthly sanctuary by the seven-branched candlestick in the holy place, and was seen by the apostle John in a vision of the throne room of heaven:

"After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, 'Come up here.'... At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.... Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God." Rev. 4: 1, 2, 5.

John also sees Jesus possessing the seven spirits of God, and His purpose is to pour them out upon the earth:

"Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne.... He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Rev. 5, 6.

Now it becomes apparent that Jesus' perfect life, sacrificial death, triumphant resurrection, and ascension to heaven gave Him the right to pour out upon His disciples on earth the precious qualities of His own character-- wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, fear of the Lord, and righteous judgment. This they received in the early rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost:

"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and poured out what you now see and hear." Acts 2:32, 33.

"When Christ passed within the heavenly gates He was enthroned amidst the adoration of the angels. As soon as the ceremony was completed, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in rich currents, and Christ was indeed glorified, even with the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity." AA 38, 39.

Under the influence and power of the early rain, the disciples and the early Christians spread the message of Jesus to the then-known world in one generation. But the power of the latter rain will be even greater than that of the early rain. This is because the early rain was limited to whatever the followers of Jesus knew about His character and work at that time. But the understanding of the full cleansing from the deep roots of sin was not available until Jesus moved from the holy place in the sanctuary in heaven to the most holy place work of judging the character of every one who has accepted Christ as their personal Savior. Under the latter rain, not only will the gospel message of righteousness by faith be preached to the world, but in addition, the message must also be preached that Jesus' mediatorial work in the second apartment of the sanctuary will produce a people who are fully cleansed from every aspect of sin. This will add to the power and completeness of the latter rain.

"Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of God and their own diligent effort, they must be conquerors in the battle with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God's people upon earth....

"When this work shall have been accomplished, the followers of Christ will be ready for His appearing." GC 425.

This final work of Christ in the most holy place will produce a people who reflect His character flawlessly. Thus, the outpouring of the latter rain will be a sign to His people on earth that He is ending His work in the heavenly sanctuary, just as the early rain was a sign to the disciples that Jesus was beginning His work in the heavenly sanctuary.

Why would the outpouring of the latter rain not be recognizable to those who are not receiving it? It is because the reception and activity of the Holy Spirit is an internal experience with God, not an external power that takes hold of people who have not prepared their hearts to receive it. No one has ever received the Holy Spirit as fully and completely from birth as Jesus did when He was upon this earth. This is not only because He was filled with the Spirit of God from eternity, but also because as a man, He had a perfect character. Ellen White states that "the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character." 5T 310. Jesus' thoughts and feelings were always in complete harmony with, and flowing from, the Holy Spirit and His

Father. Thus he was a continual fountain of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, love, mercy, long-suffering, and all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit. But did the common people and the leaders of the nation recognize this heavenly quality in Jesus' character? No, they saw Him as a threat to their own beliefs and concepts, and wanted to be free from the pricking of conscience that condemned them by His teachings and His righteous life. Only those who were longing for something better than the teachings of the Pharisees and spiritual leaders of the time recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and followed Him.

So it will be in the time of the end. Just as the Jewish nation rejected their Messiah because He was not what they were looking for as a spectacular leader who would free them from the Romans, so Christians of this generation who are looking for a spectacular demonstration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain which will transform them into the people they ought to be, will be sorely disappointed. The internal work of the Holy Spirit will be demonstrated by a holy life, and only those who are seeking for perfection and holiness of character will recognize the outpouring of the latter rain. [See TM 507, above.]

"The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle.... The Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ." TM 506.

"When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our characters, or to cure us of the infirmities of our temper and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects and give them holy characters. The refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us." 2T 355.

"No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven." DA 555, 56.

"The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character." 7 BC 970.

Dear friends, we are living in the last few moments of time, as it were, and mercifully Jesus has extended the cleansing time which takes place during the judgment of the living until every person who is honest in heart and willing to go through the experience that is necessary to reflect His beautiful, loving character is a fully finished product of His grace. When this process is completed, Jesus will pour out the latter rain in its fullness in recognition that His people have

come into perfect agreement with Him on every issue, and thus can be fully sealed by the Holy Spirit, just as He was when He lived upon the earth.

"It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure.... Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all cultivated and hereditary tendencies to evil and to impress His own character upon His church." DA 671.

"You should feel an earnest desire for the Holy Spirit and should pray earnestly to obtain it. You cannot expect the blessing of God without seeking for it." 2 T 263.

Dear friends, please do not idly wait until the Holy Spirit is poured out in the latter rain. The Spirit of God is already being poured out upon those who are seeking for full cleansing of life and character. It is time for every person who wants to be ready when Jesus comes to awaken and trim their lamps and pray for the extra oil of the Holy Spirit to be poured into their hearts and shine out of their lives. Jesus will not turn anyone away who sincerely wants to be ready when He comes. His arms of love are outstretched, inviting us to be a part of His coming kingdom, and He is counting on us to reach every person to whom He sends us with this loving invitation:

"The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.... He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:17, 20.

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