

The Holy Spirit *in the* Last Days



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Joel 2:28, 29; John 1:9; Acts 2:14-24; Acts 3:19, 20; James 5:7; Rev. 14:6-16; 18:1-5.*

Memory Text: “Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (*Isaiah 30:21*).

It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, 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. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and he will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light.”—Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Mar. 2, 1897.

What a message is in those words as we end this quarter's study, focusing now on the Holy Spirit in the last days. We'll look at what the Holy Spirit will do in order to prepare a people to spread this gospel and to stand in the final crisis.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, June 24.*

The Spirit in the Last Days

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the hand-maids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (*Joel 2:28, 29*).

Study the above verses, along with Acts 2:14-24. What message do you see here that’s applicable to us? In what ways, if any, have we, today, seen this prophecy fulfilled?

The words of Joel here are some of the most exciting in all Scripture. They point to a time when the Holy Spirit in a mighty way will be poured out just as it was at Pentecost. This outpouring, however, doesn’t happen in a vacuum; it’s all part of a single purpose: to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This point becomes especially clear in Peter’s Pentecost speech, in which, after quoting those verses from Joel, he begins preaching about Jesus Christ (*Acts 2:22-24*).

Joel 2:28 says, too, that He will pour out His Spirit upon “all flesh.” This doesn’t mean all flesh will respond with the surrender and humility needed to receive the blessing of the Spirit. Through the action of the Holy Spirit the Lord is able to touch every soul with conviction. The Bible says: “The true light [Jesus] that enlightens every man was coming into the world” (*John 1:9, RSV*); unfortunately, though, not “every man” responds as God would like.

The good news is that all who do respond, all who will make that surrender, have the promise of eternal life in Christ.

What evidence do you see of the influence of the Holy Spirit upon those who aren’t Christians? What can we do, as Christians, to cooperate with the Spirit in order to help these people see Jesus in a fuller light?

Pentecost and the Last Days

As we saw yesterday, Joel speaks of an abundant outpouring of God's Spirit upon His people, of young men seeing visions, old men dreaming dreams, and sons and daughters prophesying (*Joel 2:28, 29*). He even sets the time frame for this experience. There will be cosmic phenomena with the sun being darkened and the moon turned into blood. Disasters on earth are described cryptically as "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke" (*vs. 30*). All this is to precede immediately "the great and the terrible day of the Lord" (*vs. 31*).

Peter, along with other early Christian believers, viewed Christ's first coming as the last days (*1 Cor. 10:11, Heb. 1:2, 9:26, 1 Pet. 1:20*) and applied Joel's prophecy to the Pentecost experience (*Acts 2:16-21*), linking the gift of prophecy to the gift of tongues.

Read Joel 2:23, which precedes his words about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What imagery does he use?

Joel's prophecy of the coming prophetic gift is set in the context of the early and latter rains (*Joel 2:23-32*). The refreshing, life-giving fall rains, which enabled the seed to sprout and take root, are called the early rain. The spring rain, which brought the grain to maturity and readiness for harvest, is called the latter rain. This phenomenon in the Palestinian agricultural cycle is a symbol of the spiritual refreshing God gives to His people through His Spirit (*Hos. 6:3*). Peter, fully believing he was living in the last days, experienced the early rain. The latter rain is yet to come upon God's people at the end of time.

What are we to understand by the meaning of the "latter rain"?

"Near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

What is your own experience with the "early rain"? Why is it so important to receive the early rain in order to be prepared to receive the "latter rain"? What does it mean "to receive" either rain? What changes do we need to make in our own lives now in order to be ready for the latter rain?

The Latter Rain

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain” (*James 5:7*).

In the context of what we’ve read so far, how do you understand the words of James above? How does this text show us our utter dependence upon a source outside of ourselves for spiritual power?

As we saw yesterday, Joel uttered his prophecy in the context of “rain.” The terms *rain*, *early rain*, and *latter rain* were borrowed by the Hebrew writers in the context of their agricultural seasons. The former, or early, rain fell in the seventh month, usually just after the Feast of Tabernacles. This corresponds to our autumn, or to September–October. For the Israelites, it was the season for the plowing of the fields and the sowing of barley and wheat. The latter rain fell shortly before the grain harvest in March and early April. This rain enabled the grain to fill out and ripen for harvest.

These terms are used by the Bible writers to symbolize great periods of spiritual refreshing in connection with the preaching of the gospel. The important point is that for the harvest to be reaped, there was the need of both rains.

Look up these few verses: How do they help us understand the significance of the rain imagery, especially in the context of our mission as a church? *Matt. 9:37, 13:30, Rev. 14:15*.

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of the spiritual “latter rain” is much like the natural one: It’s to prepare the harvest for reaping. What a powerful image regarding the work the Holy Spirit is to do among His people, for they are the ones God has used to preach the gospel message to the world. “While we cherish the blessing of the early rain, we must not, on the other hand, lose sight of the fact that without the latter rain, to fill out the ears and ripen the grain, the harvest will not be ready for the sickle, and the labor of the sower will have been in vain. Divine grace is needed at the beginning, divine grace at every step of advance, and divine grace alone can complete the work.”—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 334.

The Refreshing

“Repent therefore, and turn again [be converted, KJV], that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus” (*Acts 3:19, 20, RSV*).

Look at this incredible statement by Peter. Notice how closely he links repentance and conversion with the “times of refreshing.” In other words, what happens here in our hearts is linked with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We must never forget the reality of this close tie between heaven and earth.

What three great last-day events is Peter referring to in the text above? What does he say that shows these are, indeed, last-day events?

Peter’s statement contains a most definite temporal element. Under inspiration, Peter is referring to great events of earth’s last days—the mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit and the final blotting out of the sins of the righteous—which are tied to a third climactic event, the second advent of Christ.

Read Revelation 14:6-16. Why do we know that these are events that immediately precede the Second Coming? How do we see in these verses evidences of a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

All through these texts we see evidence of the Holy Spirit working through His people, not only to prepare them to preach the “everlasting gospel” (*vs. 6*) to the world, not only to warn others against worshipping “the beast” (*vs. 9*), but also to prepare them to stand as those who “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (*vs. 12*). If this isn’t the work of the Holy Spirit among us, nothing is.

As you look at the church today, why is it so evident that we will need a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in order for it to do its work? Why is it so evident that you need it, as well?

The Loud Cry

Though we saw at Pentecost a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we believe that in the last days we will see something even more powerful. The whole world needs to know the truth about the Lord Jesus in the context of the three angels of Revelation 14, as opposed to the false doctrines of Babylon that lead to the mark of the beast. And, quite simply, who else, at this point, but Seventh-day Adventists are preaching this distinctive message? And yet, what Adventist, looking at the task ahead, believes we can do it without a supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Thus, we believe that in the very end the Holy Spirit will bring His gifts to the church in a remarkable way. He will have to; otherwise, final events, as portrayed in prophecy, will never happen.

Read Revelation 18:1-5. What evidence do we find in these verses that shows what the results of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church will be?

This “loud cry” extends everywhere, as the Lord uses His church to call out all His people from Babylon, the false religious and political systems of the world united in some final last-day persecuting power. This cry contains the ultimate plea to escape the last plagues (*Revelation 15*) and find shelter under the arms of Jesus, the Savior. In this, the final battle between the followers of the Lamb and the followers of the beast, Christ will be exalted through the renewed Pentecostal power that’s to be poured out on the earth (*Rev. 18:1*) through the Holy Spirit. At this time, we will see the harvest reaped through the latter rain.

Thus, in the very last days, the consummation of the Cross and the work of the Cross will reach fruition. All the dead in Christ will rise (*1 Thess. 4:16*), and together with those who are alive, we all will be taken off this sinful planet, once and for all (*vs. 17*). Thus, at the end, we’ll see the climactic manifestation of the Holy Spirit as He works on the hearts, not only of those who are called to proclaim this message but on those who receive it and who stand with us—not only in the last days against the forces of Babylon—but on the sea of glass in heaven, as well (*Rev. 15:1-5*).

What a gift we’ve been given in the Holy Spirit!

Write out a prayer thanking the Lord for the Holy Spirit and asking for the preparation in your own heart that will be needed in order for you to stay faithful, not only during the final crisis but even now.

Further Study: Ellen G. White, *Education*, pp. 35–38; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 238–243; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 578, 593–595; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 21–23; *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 64–68, 506–509.

“We must not wait for the latter rain. It is coming upon all who will recognize and appropriate the dew and showers of grace that fall upon us. When we gather up the fragments of light, when we appreciate the sure mercies of God, who loves to have us trust Him, then every promise will be fulfilled.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 984.

“The convocations of the church, as in camp meetings, the assemblies of the home church, and all occasions where there is personal labor for souls, are God’s appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 508.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 As a class, talk about world affairs and trends as they relate to our understanding of last-day events. Though we mustn’t be sensational, what evidence do we see that points to the final crisis? As a class, what things can you do to help your local church understand the times we are living in and the need to prepare to receive the latter rain?
- 2 As a class, think about the work of the Holy Spirit and ask this question: Of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and of all the work He does for the church, what’s the one thing you believe your local church needs the most? Discuss.
- 3 What did you learn from this quarter’s study that has impacted your life the most? What have you learned that impresses upon you the need for personal change? If the study didn’t touch on some things you wished were touched on, why not pursue studies in that area on your own?

From Pit to Pastorate

Charlotte Ishkanian

Jacob Gore was a Protestant pastor in southern Sudan when he was arrested for teaching children Christian songs in an area where Christianity is forbidden. He was tossed into a deep pit with 71 other condemned men. Food and water were dropped to them, and the only ones allowed out of the pit were never seen or heard from again.

Gore shared his faith in Jesus with his fellow prisoners, who eagerly clung to it as their only hope.

After four months Gore was released from the pit and warned never to preach in that area again. He escaped to an area where he could preach freely, and was assigned to pastor seven churches in a new area. When he arrived he found Adventist lay workers holding Bible seminars. He wanted to attend, but he did not dare. However, he encouraged some of his church members to go and report what they were hearing.

Gore noticed some strong differences between what he believed and what the Adventists taught. He went to visit one of the lay pastors to discuss the Bible. Gore asked many questions, and accepted the lay worker's offer of Bible studies. Eagerly he dug deeper into the Bible.

Gore took his time to sort out what he believed, praying that God would help him know what was the truth. He realized that he had to follow his conscience. He called his congregations together for a meeting.

"My children," he said, "I have discovered that our church does not teach everything the Bible teaches. We have always worshiped on Sunday, but the Bible clearly states that God's true Sabbath has never changed. I have baptized people by sprinkling them with water, but the Bible says we should baptize by immersion."

The church members sat stunned as he explained other differences in beliefs. Then he asked the members to pray and decide what they would do. He returned to his home. Gore hoped that some of the members would follow him, but the next day the leaders came to his house and took everything. "You bought this with money we paid you," they said as they carried away his furniture and clothes, even his food. In the end only four of his former members asked to study the Bible with him. All four eventually were baptized.

Gore's wife, in spite of threats by church members, decided to follow her husband into the Adventist Church.

Gore found himself without a job. After his baptism, the Adventist Church assigned him to work with a senior pastor and continue studying the Bible with him. Then he spent a year holding evangelistic meetings in which 177 were baptized. Today he is a Gospel Outreach volunteer raising up a church in Morobo, southern Sudan. Already he has gathered a small congregation of believers, including another Protestant pastor.

"The people of southern Sudan have been forced to move from place to place over the past 30 or more years. They have heard of Adventists, and they want to know what Adventists believe. These people need a strong faith to hold on to. I am happy that I have found the truth, so I can give them the truth."

Jacob Gore is a gospel evangelist serving in Morobo, southern Sudan. Charlotte Ishkanian is editor of Mission.

This quarter's study will be *The Gospel, 1844, and Judgment*, by Clifford Goldstein. As the title suggests, we're going to look at the judgment in the context of the gospel. It is our hope that you will come away with a greater understanding of Jesus, of the Cross, and of His ministry in heaven for us.

Lesson 1—"Principalities and Powers"

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: "When the Morning Stars Sang" (*Job 1:6; 38:7, 8; Dan. 9:21; Acts 12:7; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; Heb. 13:2*)

MONDAY: The Devil's Wrath (*Rev. 12:7-9; see also vss. 10-13*)

TUESDAY: "The Accuser of Our Brethren" (*Rev. 12:10*)

WEDNESDAY: "The Lord Rebuke Thee, O Satan" (*Isa. 61:10; Matt. 22:11, 12; Rev. 3:18*)

THURSDAY: The "Justification" of God (*Rom. 3:25, 26, NIV*)

Memory Text—*1 Corinthians 4:9, NIV*

Sabbath Gem: This week we'll go where the greatest telescopes can't: into the heart of the great moral issues facing not only humanity but all of God's creation.

Lesson 2—Judgment Must Begin

The Week at a Glance:

SUNDAY: Hour of His Judgment (*Read Rom. 2:16 and Rev. 14:6-8*)

MONDAY: Life or Damnation? (*Matt. 25:31-33*)

TUESDAY: House of God (*See Isa. 53:4-6, Matt. 20:28, Rom. 5:8, 2 Cor. 4:14, Eph. 5:2, 1 Thess. 5:10*)

WEDNESDAY: "Every Secret Thing" (*Eccles. 12:14*)

THURSDAY: Reward Is With Him (*Matt. 22:1-13*)

Memory Text—*Romans 2:16*.

Sabbath Gem: This week we will look at what the Bible says about the following questions: How are judgment and the gospel linked? What are the final results of judgment? Are Christians judged? What role do works play in judgment? When is the judgment?

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