

The Holy Spirit and the Gospel

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in Christ's life and ministry, and His presence and power are essential for believers to fulfill their ministry and live a life of obedience to God.

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "The Gospel of Jubilee"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the profound relationship between the Holy Spirit and the ministry of Jesus Christ, illustrating how Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel, heal the brokenhearted, and set captives free. He draws parallels between Christ's experience and that of believers, urging them to seek the same indwelling of the Holy Spirit for empowerment in their lives. Simpson highlights the gospel as a message of jubilee, offering forgiveness, restoration, and joy, and warns of the impending day of judgment that follows this current age of grace. He encourages listeners to embrace the Holy Spirit's work in their lives to fully realize the gospel's transformative power. The sermon concludes with a call to accept Christ as Savior before it is too late.

Transcript

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn." (Isa. 61: 1, 2.)

The New Testament quotation of this verse leaves no doubt of its Messianic meaning. To say that it was only the prophet's vision of his own inspiration is beneath its obvious meaning and the grandeur of its true application. In this verse the Lord Jesus is personified in anticipation of His future ministry and applies to Himself the language which He afterwards uttered with His own lips in the synagogue at Nazareth. There came a day when the Master went forth from Nazareth after thirty years of quiet, patient toil, to the banks of the Jordan and, offering up His life to the Father and the world in the beautiful, symbolical rite of baptism, received from the open heavens the visible baptism of the Holy Ghost and the distinct testimony of His Father's voice to His divine Sonship and Messiahship.

Then came forty days of testing and conflict in the wilderness and this led up to a deeper baptism of the Spirit and the commencement of His public ministry. Speaking of it in the context before us, Luke says, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee and there went out a fame of Him through the

regions round about, and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all."

It was eminently proper that the first public announcement of the objects of His ministry should be made at Nazareth, His former home. Therefore, with deliberate purpose, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and being recognized already as a Rabbi and public teacher, the leader of the services courteously offered to Him the scroll of the sacred Scriptures and invited Him to give some message in connection with the services of the day. Turning at once to this passage in Isaiah, He read the text, and then, stopping abruptly before reading the last clause about the "day of vengeance of our God," He closed the book or scroll, and sitting down began to offer, as was customary, a few words of exposition and application. His very first sentence awakened the astonished interest of all His audience as, applying the prophecy directly to Himself, He declared, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." There can therefore be no doubt about the meaning of the prophecy and its application to our Lord Himself.

The first lesson suggested by the text and its historical fulfilment is:

I. The Relation of the Holy Spirit to Christ.

This is a subject that is well worthy of the closest study, for it teaches us much practical truth not only in connection with the Master, but also with our own spiritual life. For if He was our Forerunner, and if it be true that "as He is, so are we also in this world," then the definite steps of our Lord's experience should be repeated and fulfilled in the lives of His followers. There is no doubt that in some sense the Lord Jesus had the Presence of the Holy Spirit in connection with His birth and His early life. The announcement of His birth stated explicitly, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you and the power of the highest shall overshadow you; therefore that Holy Thing that shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God." Christ therefore was born in His Divine and human Person through the Holy Ghost. Nor can we question whether the wonderful grace and wisdom which marked His childhood and youth were the result of the Holy Spirit's influence. And yet there came a day when in some entirely new and higher sense the Holy Spirit, like a dove, descended and abode upon Him. From that time there were two personalities connected with the life and work of our Lord Jesus; the Son of God was in direct union with the Spirit of God, and all His words and all His works were inspired by the Holy Ghost. He could truly say, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me for He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." Indeed, from this time He attributed all His works to the power of the Holy Ghost who dwelt in Him, and one of the very reasons why the sin of rejecting Him was so aggravated was just because it was a sin not only against Him, but against the Holy Spirit who dwelt in Him and spoke and worked through Him.

Now, if this be true of the Master, it should also be true of His followers. If our Lord did not venture to begin His public ministry until He had been baptized with power from on high, and if he attributed all His work to the power and anointing of the Holy Ghost, what folly and presumption it must be for us to try to serve Him by our own resources, gifts and wisdom. Is it applying the parallel too rigidly to say that just as He was born of the Spirit and yet afterwards baptized of the Spirit in the sense of a direct personal union and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, so likewise His people should not only experience a new birth through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, but should yield themselves, as He did in His baptism, for the indwelling and abiding of the Comforter in the very same sense in which the Spirit came to Him? There is no stronger argument for the scripturalness of this deeper experience which God is giving to so many of His children in these days than the example of the Master Himself.

Beloved reader, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed, and have you been endowed with power from on high for your life and work even as He?

But this truth has another side, not only affecting our individual privileges as believers, but the whole gospel dispensation. In one very remarkable passage, the Lord Jesus explained to His disciples the reason why He wrought His miracles by the power of the Holy Ghost. "If I by the Spirit of God cast out demons," He said, "then no doubt the kingdom of God is come near unto you." It was as if He had said, "If I perform My miracles and accomplish My work by virtue of My own inherent power and deity, and then withdraw from the world after My resurrection and ascension, it might be said that I had taken the power with Me; but if, on the other hand, these ministries and miracles are accomplished not by My own inherent power, but by the Spirit that dwells in Me, and is afterwards to dwell in you and perpetuate My ministry, then indeed the kingdom of God is come near to you. The gifts and powers of the kingdom are not withdrawn by My return to heaven, but they continue permanently through all the future generations of the Christian age, and the Holy Ghost still carries on My work just as truly as I have begun to carry it on during My earthly ministry." This gives perpetuity to all the supernatural features of Christ's life and work and the apostolic age and, as some one has said with great beauty and power, it makes the Lord Jesus our contemporary to the end of time. Then we should cease to talk about the apostolic age as though it were a privileged period, for there is but one age, the age of the Holy Ghost, and we are living in it just as truly as the apostles and immediate followers of the Lord Jesus were.

What a blessed reality all this gives to our Christian faith and hope! The kingdom of God has indeed come near to us. It is in our midst, and the promise of the departing Master is just as true as we will allow Him to make it. "Lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the age." "He that believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto My Father." When this fully dawns upon the conception of the church of God, she will arise to her heavenly birthright, and the promise of Joel will be fulfilled in a more glorious way than has been witnessed even in the past. "I will show signs and wonders in heaven above and on the earth beneath before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord."

II. The Holy Ghost and the gospel.

Not only does this glorious text give us the revelation of the Spirit in His relation to Christ, but an equally blessed revelation of the Spirit in His relation to the gospel, for the Holy Spirit came upon Christ to anoint Him for the publication of the gospel, and the same Holy Ghost still comes upon the church and ministry for the same purpose and with the same gospel.

What a glorious gospel it is, and what a glorious thing to think about it, not merely as the gospel of Jesus Christ, but as the gospel of the Holy Ghost; for it is not only a proclamation once made by lips that are dead, but it is a proclamation repeated afresh to every soul that will receive it by the very One who first breathed it from the lips of Christ, the Holy Comforter. Some one has well called it the gospel of the Jubilee, for the whole setting of this proclamation is just a figure and the frame of Israel's ancient year of Jubilee.

There was nothing more splendid in all the glorious ceremonial ritual of ancient Israel than the event of the fiftieth year, or the year of Jubilee. It was a great national festival a whole year long, and its one keynote was rejoicing and gladness. With the early dawn of the tenth day of the seventh month, the glad trumpets of the Jubilee were heard resounding from every mountain top throughout the land, and immediately the

whole nation set itself to keep the glad holiday for an entire year. Even the fields rested from their accustomed harvest, the workman laid aside the implements of his toil and the very cattle entered into the national rest and rejoicing. Then you could have seen the little family circles all over the land wending their way back to the little cottage, which years before they had been obliged to leave as it was mortgaged and sold over their heads; but on the year of Jubilee all debts were canceled, all mortgages were worthless, all lost estates were restored, and again with tears and songs of gladness they embraced each other on the threshold of their home and felt that they were back to their own again. And as they sat rejoicing under their vine and fig tree, here and there you might behold a son or a daughter welcomed home. They had been slaves in some distant town, or some wealthy family, and had to serve for weary years in payment of some debt or obligation, but now they were free. The year of Jubilee emancipated every slave, and fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, welcomed back the lost one to the family circle. There too, you could have seen the prisoner stepping out from his dungeon and hastening to his home and beginning life again with the assurance that all his liabilities, disabilities and reproaches were blotted out by this glad year of emancipation. It was just a little bit of heaven let down on earth and might well afford a splendid figure of that glorious age of happiness, hope and holy liberty which the Lord Jesus and the glorious gospel have brought to men and which His second coming in a little while will bring to grander consummation.

It is to this our text refers when it says, "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." But indeed, every clause and every phrase has a note of the Jubilee in it; good tidings to the poor, liberty to the captive, joy to the broken hearted: all these are just fulfillments of the ancient type. Four points will sufficiently sum up this gospel of the Jubilee.

1. The payment of all debts. The Jubilee canceled every debt, and so the coming of the Lord has provided for our debt of sin and blotted out our condemnation, and given to us God's decree of righteousness and making us "accepted in the beloved" "even as He."
2. Liberty to the captives. Christ has brought us deliverance from the slavery of sin and Satan, and power to overcome our old hearts, our evil habits, and all our temptations and spiritual foes. Not only is this the Gospel of Christ, but it is the Gospel of the Holy Ghost. Not only was it proclaimed once, but it is made real ten thousand times as men receive Him and let Him work it out in their surrendered lives.
3. The restoration of our lost heritages. The Jubilee gave back the home that had been forfeited, and the inheritance that had been lost; and so Christ comes to us proclaiming:

"You that have sold for naught

Your heritage above,

Receive it back unbought,

The price of Jesus' love;

The year of Jubilee has come,

Return, you ransomed sinners, home."

Not only has Christ proclaimed it, but the Holy Ghost is constantly making it true. He comes to the discouraged life dragged down by its hopeless past and He says, "I will restore to you the years the

locusts have eaten." Oh this blessed Friend, that gives back the things that we have lost. No life is too blighted, no past is too discouraging, no case is too hard for His grace and power.

"Nothing is too hard for Jesus;

No man can work like Him."

But all this is as nothing compared with what awaits us in the days of restitution which His coming again is to bring back; our moldering body, our departed friends, our lost paradise, and it shall be true

"Our more than Egypt's shame

Exchanged for Canaan's glory,

And our lost heaven won."

4. Above all else the year of Jubilee was a year of joy and the gospel of the Holy Ghost is a gospel of gladness. The Holy Spirit is the messenger and the source of peace and lasting joy. We do not need to go to heaven to know its joys. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Now all this is not an old gospel merely, but a gospel ever new. The blessed Spirit is with us not only to whisper it to the troubled heart, but to make it real in our deepest life. Let us not attempt to preach that gospel without "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." Salvation is not a creed; it is a life, and the world is yet to realize all that is meant by the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Oh, that we might have in our hearts the joy that He brings to commend this gospel, and that we might so believe in Him that He will also work in the hearts of all who hear and make our gospel to be not in word only, but in power.

But there is one impressive fact in connection with this text that we must not pass by without a further reference. It was not without deep significance that the Lord Jesus paused and "closed the book" at the passage in the prophecy which He did. The book which He closed was the record of judgment, "the day of vengeance of our Lord." The time for that had not yet come. This is the day of grace, the day of mercy, the day of probation, but we read in the sacred volume of a day when the "books shall be opened." The Lord will take up the scroll again and turn to the place where He left off, and the heavens will echo with that last clause, "the day of vengeance of our God." The parenthesis of grace is almost over, the climax will come with His appearing. Dear reader, make haste to know Him as your Friend and Savior before you meet Him as your Judge. Make haste to take refuge in the gospel of the Jubilee before you shall be awakened by the trumpet of the judgment.

There is a story told of a lady who had a case at law that caused her much concern. She went to an attorney and asked him to take it up, and he was disposed to do so, although the case was a bad one, but he said, "If you will commit it to my hands, I can carry you through." Day after day she dallied and delayed, until at last the summons came to her that the case was coming on for hearing and she must at once decide upon her course of defense. She hastened to the attorney and said, "I am ready now to give you the case." His answer filled her with confusion and despair. "Madam," he said, "it is too late. I would have taken your case if you had come to me sooner, and I could have carried you through. I was willing to act as your attorney, but within the last few days I have been appointed to be your judge, and when the case comes up for hearing, I must sit upon it not as your friend, but as an impartial arbiter of your fate. You should have come to me before."

The illustration needs no application. This is the day of grace. Tomorrow will be the day of judgment. Oh, take the Savior as your Advocate before you have to meet Him as your Judge.

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