

# THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN OUR LORD'S LIFE

Theme: We learn about the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives by His work in our Lord's life. (All Scripture is taken from The New King James Version, unless otherwise indicated.)

We have been considering the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. But it's not just us who enjoy His ministry. Even our Lord Himself was blessed by the Spirit's work in His own life. The Holy Spirit's work in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus ought to be of great personal interest to us; because the same Spirit now lives in us to unite us forever to Jesus' incarnation, righteous life, atoning death, resurrection and glory. And though the Spirit does not work in us in the same ways as He worked in our Lord (because our Lord is unique in His Person and ministry), the Spirit is nevertheless every bit as much present and at work in us as He was in our Lord during His days of walking this earth.

In our last two sessions, we considered the things that the Lord Jesus specifically taught concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit on earth toward us. And now, in this lesson, we consider how the Holy Spirit ministered in the life of our Lord as He Himself walked upon earth. As we consider these truths, may we praise God and marvel that the same Spirit that worked so mightily in Him also works mightily in us!

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We can see the Spirit's work in Jesus with respect to four major phases of His earthly ministry ...

## I. HIS CONCEPTION.

- A. Our Lord eternally existed as the Son of the Father. But it was the Holy Spirit who was the divine Agent of our Lord's human conception in the womb of the virgin Mary; and thus, of His incarnation. As the angel told Joseph, "that which is conceived [or "begotten"] in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). And as the same angel had told Mary—in words that cannot help but cause us to wonder at the mystery of it all—"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). It was the Father who "prepared" for our Lord a body (Hebrews 10:5); but it was through the Holy Spirit that His body was conceived in Mary's womb.
- B. This truth is vital to our salvation. As Dr. Charles Ryrie wrote, "[N]othing was missing from [Jesus'] humanity that is essential to perfect humanity and nothing was added that was nonhuman."<sup>1</sup> And yet, this was done without the agency of a man; and therefore did not involve or include the curse of Adam's sin. As the Son of God—fully divine—He was at the same time fully human, and composed of all the constituent elements of full humanity. Paul once blessed his readers by saying, "may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"

(1 Thessalonians 5:23). And Jesus had all these parts. He had a real, flesh-and-blood body as we do (just as Hebrews 2:14 tells us, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same ...”). He also possessed a human soul (for as He told His disciples while He suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane; “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death ...”; Matthew 26:38). And He also possessed a human spirit (just as it tells us in Mark 2:8 that He heard what the scribes were saying about Him, and He “perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves ...”). And this means that, because of the work of the Holy Spirit in His conception, our Lord was both fully human and fully sinless; and thus fully qualified to be the atoning Substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21), and the compassionate High Priest (Hebrews 4:15) of every member of the human family that trusts in Him.

## II. HIS MINISTRY.

- A. One way in which the Spirit’s work toward our Lord’s ministry is described is as an “anointing”. This would remind us of the way that, under the old covenant, the priests and the articles of the tabernacle were “anointed” with sacred oil for ministry; and thus ‘consecrated’ for God’s specific use (Exodus 40:9-16; Leviticus 8:30). The Scriptures promised that the Messiah’s ministry would be affirmed by ‘anointing’ (Daniel 9:24; Hebrews 1:9; see also Acts 4:27); and it was specifically with the Holy Spirit that it was said the Messiah would be anointed for the preaching of good tidings (Isaiah 61:1-2; see also Luke 4:16-21). Jesus was “anointed” by the Spirit as the Messiah. (Note that the noun “Christ” means “Anointed One”.) This official ‘anointing’ by the Spirit most likely occurred at Jesus’ baptism when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34), since His baptism was the event that marked the beginning of His public ministry. (This would probably be what Jesus meant when He said that the Father had “set His seal” on Him; see John 6:27). It was with the Holy Spirit that He was “anointed” for the ministry of healing and doing good; just as the apostle Peter, in his sermon to the household of the Roman centurion Cornelius, spoke of “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). Our Lord’s ministry toward fallen humanity was thus clearly marked out as “approved” by God; because, as He told the Pharisees who opposed Him, “if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28).
- B. The Spirit’s work toward our Lord’s ministry is also described as a “filling” (that is, an empowering and leading in a prevailing and pervasive way). This aspect of the Spirit’s work in our Lord is what is prophetically spoken of in Isaiah 11:2 where we’re told,

*The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,  
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The Spirit of counsel and might,  
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2);*

and in Isaiah 42:1 where the Father says,

*“Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,*

*My Elect One in whom My soul delights!  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:1).*

In Luke 4:1-2, after Jesus' baptism, we're told that—"being filled with the Holy Spirit"—He was "led by the Spirit into the wilderness" to be tempted by the devil. We're told that the Spirit's leading in His earthly ministry was such that Jesus always "taught" and "did" according to the Father's pleasure (John 8:28-29); and that He was characterized by a rejoicing in the Spirit (Luke 10:21). (It's good to keep in mind, by the way, that if even the Son of God in human flesh Himself walked on earth in such great dependency upon the Holy Spirit in His life and ministry, we must do no less in ours!)

### **III. HIS DEATH.**

- A. We're not told as much about the Spirit's ministry to our Lord in His death as we are of other aspects of Jesus' earthly walk; but if the Holy Spirit led the Son of God in His life and strengthen Him in His ministry, then it's perfectly reasonable to believe that He also led and strengthened Him in His great 'anointed' work of dying on the cross for us. In Hebrews 9:14, we're told that it was "through the eternal Spirit" that Jesus "offered Himself without spot to God".
- B. The sacrifice of Jesus was not an act that He performed on His own initiative; but was something done in perfect submission to the eternal agreement of all members of the triune Godhead. Thus, His death for our sins truly is a sacrifice that is completely acceptable to the Father—being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

### **IV. HIS RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION.**

- A. In Ephesians 1, we're told of the exceedingly great power of God that was exercised in raising Jesus from the dead. Paul wrote to his fellow believers and prayed that they would know

*what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come (Ephesians 1:19-21).*

That this "exceedingly great power" is the Holy Spirit is made clear from 3:16; where Paul prays that God would grant that his fellow Christians be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man". Thus, the Holy Spirit was the divine Agent by which God the Father raised His Son from the dead and seated Him in heavenly glory. He was "put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). The Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of holiness" by which Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4).

- B. And what a wonder!—This same Holy Spirit that raised the Son of God from the dead is also abiding in us and is at work in us! Paul confidently performed his ministry "according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His

power” (Ephesians 3:7); and declared with joy, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (v. 20). This same Spirit abides in us to secure us and guarantee to us our own future resurrection with Christ. As Paul wrote, “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11; see also 6:4-5).

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On His last night with His disciples, our Lord told them an amazing thing: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (John 14:12). This is not a promise just for the apostles. It is a promise also to us who also believe in Him because of their testimony.

How could it be that we would do greater works than He? It was because of the fact that when He went back to the Father in His ascension, He then sent the Holy Spirit to minister to us in His place. And the Spirit whom He sent is the very same Holy Spirit that ministered so marvelously and powerfully in Him—only now, He ministers through multiplied millions of our Lord's saints in the church throughout the world.

May He fruitfully carry on the work of our Lord on this earth through us, His people!

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<sup>1</sup>Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 60.