

Th123 A Study of the Holy Spirit

Th123-7 The Holy Spirit Prepares the Way for Jesus

When we are expecting honored guests to come to our home, we move into action. In preparation for their coming, we sweep the floors, make ready the guest room, and begin to plan and prepare the meals. We want to do everything we can to ensure that our guests have a pleasant stay.

The Holy Spirit did a similar thing in preparing the world for the coming of Jesus. He made everything ready so that the promised Messiah would be well received. In this lesson, we will look at four ways the Holy Spirit prepared the world for the coming of Jesus. We will also look at how the Spirit works today, preparing people's hearts to receive Christ and be saved.

The first way the Spirit prepared the world for Christ's coming was to send and inspire prophets to talk about Him. Centuries before He came, these Spirit-inspired men revealed many intimate details about Jesus' life and ministry. They did this to ensure that, when Messiah did come, He could be easily identified. For instance, Micah declared, "I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord" (Micah 3:8). He then predicted that the Messiah would be born in the village of Bethlehem in the land of Judea (Micah 5:2).

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Isaiah prophesied that the Christ would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). Then, as an adult, He would minister in the Spirit's power (Isa. 61:1-2). He further predicted that the Messiah would be rejected, beaten, crucified, and raised from the dead (Isa. 53:3-11). These are but a few examples of the many details of Jesus' life that were foretold by the prophets. We can compare these Old Testament prophecies with the life of Christ, as recorded in the New Testament. We are convinced that Jesus is truly the Messiah, the Son of God, and Savior of the world.

A second way the Spirit prepared the way for the coming Messiah was to come upon the virgin Mary. He caused her to miraculously conceive the Christ child. The Bible says that before Mary and Joseph came together, "she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:18). An angel of the Lord explained to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The same angel later comforted Joseph. He told him, "Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:20-21).

A third way the Holy Spirit prepared the way for the arrival of the Messiah was to move on certain Judean saints and inspire them to rejoice at His coming. Soon after Mary conceived, she went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was pregnant with John, the child who would grow to be John the Baptist. When Elizabeth greeted Mary, the baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. She then began to exclaim in a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" (Luke 1:41-42). At that, Mary was also filled with the Spirit and began to glorify the Lord.

Weeks later, when John was about to be born, the Holy Spirit came upon Zechariah, his father (Luke 1:67). When people asked what the child's name would be, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. He announced that his child would be a prophet of the Most High, and that he would prepare the way for the Lord (Luke 1:67-76).

During those same days, the Holy Spirit came to an old man named Simeon. The Spirit revealed to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Soon, the day arrived when Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus to the priests in the temple to be circumcised. The Spirit led Simeon into the temple courts. There, he took Jesus in his arms and praised God, saying, "Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people" (Luke 2:29-31).

The fourth way the Holy Spirit prepared the way for Jesus' coming was to send John the Baptist to announce the Messiah's arrival. The Bible tells us that John was filled with the Spirit even before he was born (Luke 1:15). Many years later, when he began His ministry, he came in the "spirit and power of Elijah." The purpose of his coming was to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). John identified Jesus in two ways: as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" and the One "who will baptize with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:29, 33). He told the people, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Luke 3:16). So, the Holy Spirit was active, preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah.

The Holy Spirit is still active in the world today preparing people for the coming of Christ. He works in their hearts getting them ready to receive Him as Savior. In the Book of Acts, when Paul and his missionary team arrived in the city of Philippi, they met a woman named Lydia. Paul shared the gospel with her. As he did, "the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message" (Acts 16:14). Paul wrote, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him" (Phil 2:13, NLT). Nothing pleases God more than people opening their hearts to Christ and following Him as Lord and Savior. The Spirit prepares people's hearts by revealing Christ to them and convicting them of their sin. Then the Spirit imparts the faith they need to believe on Christ and be saved. We will discuss this work of the Spirit more in a later lesson.

This lesson is **important** because it explains how the Holy Spirit prepared the world for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus. We also learned that He still prepares people's hearts to receive Christ as Savior.

The **main truth** we learn from this lesson is that, as we go out to preach the gospel, we can ask the Holy Spirit to prepare people's hearts to receive the message and be saved.

Let's **review** some important truths from this lesson.

1. How did the Holy Spirit use the Old Testament prophets to help prepare the way for the coming Messiah?

- A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit revealed to the Old Testament prophets many details concerning the coming Messiah's life and ministry, which they spoke about in their writing, you are right.
2. How was the Holy Spirit involved in the conception of the Christ Child?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered, "The Holy Spirit came upon the virgin Mary, causing her to conceive the Christ child," you are right.
3. How do we know that John the Baptist was empowered by the Holy Spirit to announce the arrival of the Messiah?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Bible says that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit even before his birth and that he came in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, you answered correctly.
4. How does the Holy Spirit prepare people to receive the gospel today?
A. [PAUSE] If you answered that the Holy Spirit prepares people's hearts by revealing Christ to them, convicting them of their sin, and imparting the faith they need to believe on Christ and be saved, you are correct.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson several times until you understand it completely. Then, gather a group and begin to pray that the Holy Spirit will prepare people's hearts to receive the message you will share with them this week or as soon as you can speak with them.