

Gleanings from the Symbols of the Holy Spirit

by Bob Allgood

God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and the Holy Spirit is a Spirit. According to John 1:18, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (see also I John 4:12). Likewise, no man has ever seen the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The world cannot see the Holy Spirit, and neither has any man ever seen the Holy Spirit. We can know Him and sense His presence and see the effects of His workings, but we cannot see Him. Just as the Scriptures speak of God having a face (Gen. 33:10), a hand (I Sam. 5:11, Job 2:10, an arm (John 12:38), eyes (Gen 6:8), a mouth (Deut 8:3), and so forth, in order that we as humans can understand His characteristics, so does the Scriptures give us SYMBOLS of the Holy Spirit.

There is no particular order for these symbols, but since the first mention of the Spirit of God is in Genesis 1:2 where it says, “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” – I will start with Water, which is one of the necessities for life.

WATER

John clearly records the words of Jesus which tell us that one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit is water. In John 7:37-39 we read, “In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) The “living water” under consideration here is the Holy Spirit.

Water a substance composed of the chemical elements hydrogen and oxygen known as H₂O. It exists in gaseous, liquid, and solid forms. Water is one of the most plentiful and essential of compounds known to man. It is vital to life, and plays a part in virtually every process that occurs in the human body, in plants and animals. Without water, eventually all life dies. Thus the Holy Spirit is called the Living Water.

Water is used for cleansing. In Ezekiel 16 we find a description of how God saw Israel (the Jews) in bondage in Egypt and compared them to a new born baby covered with blood. God saw them “polluted”, trodden under foot, in bondage in the world, and he said, “Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil”. Water is used for cleansing. In Titus 3:5 we read, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost”. Water, i.e. the Holy Spirit, is for cleansing. In Eph. 5:25-27 we read, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” In Hebrews 10:22 we read, “Let us draw near

with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water”.

Water aids in growth. In Psalms 1:3 we read, “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”. The children of God are compared to being the Vineyard of the Lord. A Vineyard needs water. In Isaiah 27:3 we read, “I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”. Again in Isaiah 44:2-6 we read, “Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the LORD’S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

Water is refreshing. Have you ever been so thirsty that you “spit cotton” as we used to say on the football field? I have. The Psalmist wrote about this refreshing water in Psalms 46:4-5, “There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.” In Isaiah 41:17-18 we read of this refreshing water. “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”

This Living Water is freely given. In Isaiah 55:1 we read, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price”. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” and again “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”. Is it any wonder that the woman saith unto him, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” Finally, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

WIND

Another symbol of the Holy Spirit is WIND. Jesus told Nicodemus “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind (pneuma) bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit (pneuma).” The Greek word “pneuma” is translated both WIND and SPIRIT in this passage. In the New Testament we find this word “pneuma” translated Spirit 111 times, {Holy} Ghost 89 times, Spirit {of God} 13 times, Spirit {of the Lord} 5 times, Spirit {of truth} 3times, and Spirit {of Christ} 2 times. Thus we can understand why Jesus used the wind (pneuma) as a symbol of the Holy Spirit (pneuma).

In the Old Testament David wrote, “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears” (II Sam 2:7). David went on to say, “And he rode

upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind” (II Sam 2:11). The word “wind” here is the Hebrew word “ruwach”, pronounced >> roo’-akh <<. It is translated Spirit or spirit 232 times, wind 92 times and breath 27 times in the Old Testament. This is the same word used for the “Spirit of God” in Genesis 1:2, “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”

In the New Testament we are told, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Notice the “sound from heaven AS OF a rushing mighty wind” filled all the house where they were sitting – “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”.

Wind is independent of man. Jesus said, “The wind bloweth where it listeth (will), and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth”. Man has learned to use wind for many things, such as to generate electricity, but man has never been able to control the wind of God and nature. Man thinks he can dictate to the Spirit of God and cause Him to quicken a dead sinner upon man’s request, but such is pure folly. Jesus said, “For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will” (John 5:21). He then went on to say, “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Some men think they can take upon themselves the “gifts of the Spirit” but that too is pure folly. Paul wrote, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same

Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (I Cor. 12:6-11). Man often tries to accomplish spiritual deeds in their own strength and in their own ways. But the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel was “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts”.

FIRE

Another symbol of the Holy Spirit is FIRE. All mentions of fire, in the scriptures, do not refer to the Holy Spirit, any more than all mentions of Water and Wind in the scriptures refer to the Holy Spirit. One must distinguish between which word fire symbolizes the Holy Spirit and which one does not. I say “distinguish” and not “Extinguish”, since Paul said, “Quench not the Spirit”. Some mentions of Fire do symbolize the Holy Spirit, as it says in Acts 2:1-4, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them CLOVEN TONGUES LIKE AS OF FIRE, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

This seems to fulfill the words of John the Baptist who said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and (with) fire –“. The fire in this baptism speaks of the purity and power and judgment of the Holy Spirit of God. The fire in this baptism cannot be the fire of eternal damnation as it may be applied in the next verse where John says, “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly

purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:11-12). The Apostles were not, (nor are the children of God), baptized with the Holy Ghost and eternal damnation at the same time. There is an “unquenchable fire” awaiting the wicked who “go away into everlasting punishment”, to whom Jesus will say “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels”.

BUT there is also the **FIRE** of the Holy Spirit of God that judges the works of the children of God. Paul speaks of this in First Corinthians 3:11-15, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” Notice that the **FIRE** which tries “every man’s work” is also the **FIRE** (i.e. the Spirit) that saves the man, whose works are burned up.

Fire is used to judge. In Ezekiel 22:19-22 we read, “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

Fire is used to purify. Solomon wrote, “Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer” (Proverbs 25:4). In Zechariah 13:9 we read, “And

I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God. In Malachi 3:2-3 we read, “But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

Fire is used for light or illumination. In Exodus 13:21-22 we read, “And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.” David said it this way, “In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire” (Psalms 78:14). Isaiah said, “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD” (2:5). Jesus said the Holy Spirit will guide us in the LIGHT of truth. “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

OIL

It is generally understood that OIL is sometimes (but not always) a symbol of the Spirit of God in the Scriptures. I say “not always”. The first two mentions of OIL in the scriptures are in Genesis 28:18 and 35:14. Since we are talking only about Symbols, the reader can make up his own mind whether or not the OIL in these passages are symbolic of the Holy Spirit. First when Jacob POURED oil on a rock that he used for a pillow at Bethel in Genesis 28, where we read, “And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel” --- and Jacob said

“And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house -- Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven”. The second is when he returned there in Genesis 35 where we read, “And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him (God), even : and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.”

The first mention of ANOINTING OIL is in Exodus 25: 6 “Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense –“. The Lord had told Moses to “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering” and OIL was to be one of those offerings. The OIL was to be used to make ANOINTING OIL. “And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil” (Ex. 30:25). The ANOINTING OIL was to be used to anoint the High Priest. “Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head, and anoint him” (Ex. 29:7). Again “And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons’ garments with him” (Ex. 29:21). Again we read, “And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations” (Ex. 30:30-31).

When the nation of Israel wanted Saul as a King, “Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? (1 Sam. 10:1). “Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the

LORD” (1 Sam. 15:1). BUT when Saul rebelled against God’s word David was anointed King in his place. “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him” (1 Sam. 16:13-14).

Peter told Cornelius, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). Jesus our King of Kings and Lord of Lords said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). When Jesus ascended on high, God the Father said to God the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:8-0).

The “anointing oil” – the Holy Spirit – we have received is our teacher. John wrote, “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” -- “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:20,27).

The “anointing oil” – the Holy Spirit – we have received is for healing. James wrote, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be

forgiven him” (James 5:14-15).

The “anointing oil” – the Holy Spirit – we have received is our Comforter. Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (John 14:16-17). And, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). And, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” (John 15:26-27). And, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7).

A DOVE

There can be little doubt that a DOVE is also a symbol of the Holy Spirit. All four gospel writers confirm this fact. Matthew tells us, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending LIKE A DOVE, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (3:16-17). Mark uses similar language, “And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit LIKE A DOVE descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (1:10-11). Luke add even more description by saying, “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape LIKE A DOVE upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (3:22).

John the Beloved recorded the words of John the Baptist this way. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven LIKE A DOVE, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (1:29-34).

It was the DOVE, not the Raven that informed Noah the flood waters had receded from the face of the earth. For Noah “sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.” Then after seven more days Noah again “sent forth the dove out of the ark; And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth” (Gen. 8:8-11).

The Spirit of God is an INFORMER of Good News, and a guide into all truth. Jesus said, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). Isaiah foresaw this truth and said, “And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not”(58:11).

A DOVE is quite and gentle. Contrary to what goes on in the so called “Pentecostal world” by those who claim to be “filled with the Spirit” with all their shouting, clapping of hands, music and dancing, the DOVE (i.e. the Spirit of God) is quite and gentle. The Dove makes a soft “cooing noise” and not a loud crowing noise like a Rooster or a raucous call like Crow. Jesus said, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”. The FRUIT of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law”.

A DOVE does not co-mingle with Vultures. In all my days growing up in Florida where we had multitudes of Buzzards, I have never seen a Dove circling a dead carcass with the buzzards. Paul wrote, “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”. He then added, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (see Galatians 5).

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