

What does the Holy Spirit look like?

The Bible provides a rich source of imagery to help us visualize what the Spirit of God looks like. Take a moment to examine a variety of verses and discuss what pictures come to mind and perhaps the meaning behind the descriptions.

And John bore witness: "I saw **the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove**, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John 1:32-34, ESV; also Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22)

And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are **clothed with power from on high.**" (Luke 24:49, ESV)

But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8, ESV)

But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, "Friend, **how did you get in here without a wedding garment?**" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 22:11-13)

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly **there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind**, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And **divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them**. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4, ESV)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13-14, ESV)

And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and **given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee**. (2 Cor 1:21-22, ESV)

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has **given us the Spirit as a guarantee**. (2 Cor 5:5, ESV)

But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23, ESV)

while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will. (Heb 2:4, ESV)

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow **rivers of living water**.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39, ESV)

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Teacher Notes

The Bible provides a rich source of imagery to help us visualize what the Spirit of God looks like. Take a moment to examine a variety of verses and discuss what pictures come to mind and perhaps the meaning behind the descriptions.

Read each biblical passage to the student and encourage him to visualize the figurative language. What is happening? How is the Holy Spirit being described? What does it reveal about the Holy Spirit? How do you visualize this?

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Because this event was recorded in all the gospels, it is significant that a dove is seen. Turtle doves and pigeons were the only birds that God deemed as clean and suitable for sacrifice (Gen 15:9; Lev 5:7; 12:6-8; Luke 2:24). The image of the Holy Spirit as a dove confers on Jesus the image of purity and holiness for ultimately His sacrifice.



And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are **clothed with power from on high.**" (Luke 24:49, ESV)

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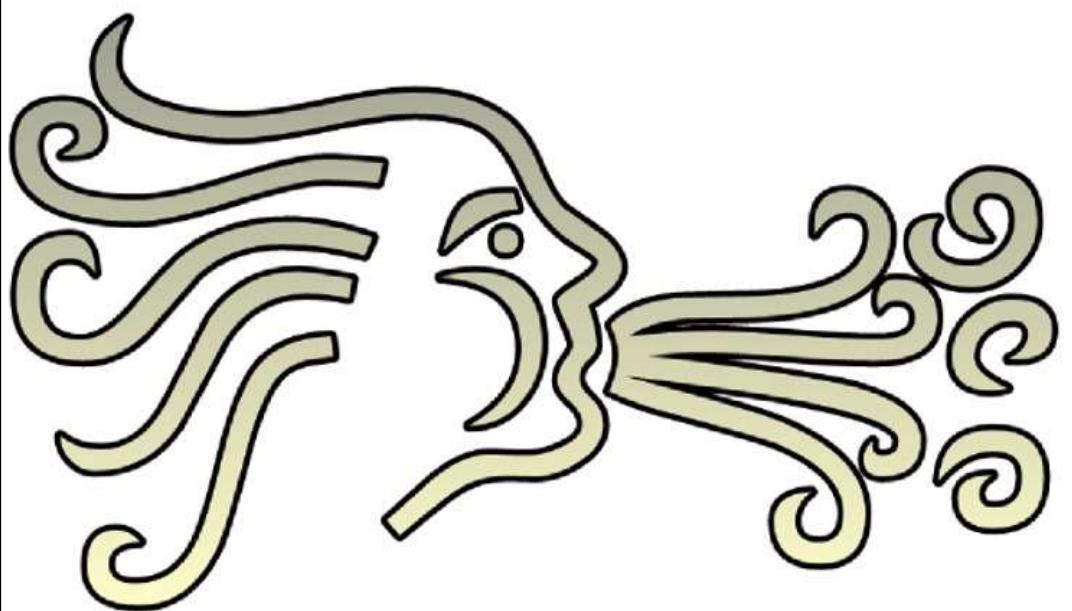
Just prior to the Ascension, Jesus tells the apostles that they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), and Luke records Jesus as describing this process with a verb "to clothe." With this verb, Jesus depicts the invisible Holy Spirit as clothing or as something that encompasses them.



The Parable of the Wedding Banquet show that clothing serves the purpose of identifying people. For the apostles, the Holy Spirit identified them as Jesus' witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8). Just as in the apostles, the Holy Spirit clothes and identifies who Believers are.

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The Holy Spirit is associated with the wind from heaven. Jesus speaks of this to Nicodemus in the context of New Believers, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8, ESV).



The Holy Spirit is also associated with a fire that doesn't burn. It is reminiscent of the burning bush that caught Moses' eye and signified holiness – something set apart for God. In like manner, Believers are set apart for God.

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. (Ex 3:2, ESV)



In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13-14, ESV)

In ancient times, clay was used to seal a scroll to preserve the authenticity of its contents. The author of the scroll would impress upon the clay the design of his signet ring. This would confirm and attest to the authenticity of the message.

The sealing of Believers appears to be a validation of a genuine Believer. The Holy Spirit attests to the authenticity of the Believer, because the "Lord knows who is His" (2 Tim 2:19).



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In the first century, a guarantee is used for business and trade and is an installment or advance payment by which contract becomes valid. This concept is explained in Ephesians 1:

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Eph 1:13-14, ESV)

The Holy Spirit was given as an advance payment of a Jesus' promise of eternal life and inheritance as a descendant of Abraham. This is New Covenant that replaced the Mosaic Covenant that was broken by the nation of Israel.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. (Ezek 36:25-28, ESV)



But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22-23, ESV)

The imagery with a fruit places an emphasis on the power and result of the Holy Spirit. It is a single fruit that encompasses love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control for all who cooperate with the Holy Spirit for the glory of God.



while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit** distributed according to his will. (Heb 2:4, ESV)

The Holy Spirit can be seen as a present; but, you need to open it to discover how the Spirit is manifest in you to be a blessing to others in church.



On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow **rivers of living water.**'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39, ESV)

Seen as essential for life, the Holy Spirit is necessary for spiritual growth before death and eternal life after death.

