

# METAPHORS FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Definition of Metaphor

The Bible uses eight metaphors, or word pictures, that connect the Holy Spirit with His ministry to Christ and the saints. These metaphors are taken from the natural world (dove, fire, oil, water, and wind), the legal world (pledge and seal) and the domestic world (clothing).

### DOVE

Mat. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, John 1:32

The dove in all four passages is in reference to our Lord's baptism.

- The dove is symbolic of innocents and blamelessness. – Mat. 10:16
- Innocent (akeraios) = describes one who is without guile, cunning, or deceit; i.e. blameless, righteous.
  - Same Greek word translated innocent in Phil. 2:15
  - Doves were used as substitutes for the sacrificial lamb if one could not afford a lamb. – Lev. 1:14-17, 5:7-10, 12:6-8
    - Compare Lev. 12:6-8 with Luke 2:22-24

### Matthew 3:13-17

- Jesus came to John the Baptist for the purpose of fulfilling all righteousness – 3:13-15
- The Holy Spirit, seen as a dove picturing righteousness, inaugurates Jesus' ministry of righteousness. – 3:16
- The Father confirmed the righteousness of the Son. – 3:17
- Following the baptism the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan where He demonstrated His righteousness. Mat. 4:1-11

### FIRE

Acts 2:3

The presence of God is pictured by fire – Exodus 3:2-6, 13:21-22

- The use of fire in Acts 2:3 portrays the presence of God, the Holy Spirit.

### WIND

John 3:8, Acts 2:2

### Acts 2:1-3

The sound like a violent rushing wind accompanied the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- Wind (pneuma) is also translated spirit or breath.

### John 3:6-8

Wind pictures the Holy Spirit as the agent of regeneration.

**WATER**  
John 7:38-39

Here the Holy Spirit is pictured as the life giving water that is salvation

- See also Titus 3:5-6
  - Compare John 3:5 with Ezekiel 36:25-27

**OIL**  
2Cor. 1:21, 1John 2:18-27

Anointing with oil in both Old and New Testaments symbolizes appointment to an important position. Examples:

- Priests were anointed to the priesthood – Ex. 40:9-15
- David was anointed to be king – 1Samuel 16:13
- Paul, Silas, and Timothy were anointed by God to service for God. – 2Cor. 1:19-22
- All Believers are anointed by God to be His disciples. – 1John 2:18-27

**PLEDGE**  
2Cor. 1:22, 5:5, Eph. 1:14

Pledge = a guarantee; like a down payment, earnest.

- The indwelling Holy Spirit is God's pledge to His people that what He started in us He will finish. – Phil. 1:6

**SEAL**  
2Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13, 4:30

A seal placed on anything marks out ownership. The Holy Spirit is our seal identifying us as belonging to God. – Eph. 4:30

**CLOTHING**  
Luke 24:49

Sending forth the promise is referring to the soon coming of the Holy Spirit.

- See John 14:16-17 and Acts 1:1-5
- The “promise” received = Acts 2:1-8