

Aim of lesson

This lesson is provided as an extra for those teachers who would like to use it. It is, of course, only an introduction to the subject, not an exhaustive study. It is included here because a study of the gospel of John would be incomplete without it, and there is often a lack of understanding of this subject. It may be that your class would not tackle such a long “investigation”, but if one or two in your class are interested, they could investigate on their own and discuss their conclusions with you.

Bible background

John 13

Outline of lesson

In John’s gospel

The first section on John’s gospel is to help the class discover for themselves that the Holy Spirit which Jesus promises that his Father will send is shown to be the presence of Jesus and his Father with them, not in the flesh as Jesus was then, but in the spirit.

In the Old Testament

The second section sets out to allow the class to discover that, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit refers to the presence of God himself, sometimes demonstrated by an angel – the angel of his presence.

In the Book of Acts and the letters

The third section looks at what having the Holy Spirit meant to the early disciples; in particular showing that not all disciples performed miracles even though all had the Spirit, and that the Spirit never brain-washed the disciples, or stopped them thinking decisions through for themselves on the basis of the teaching Jesus had given them.

Digging deeper

Bezalel and Aholiab

The example of Bezalel and Aholiab (Exodus 31:1-6) is instructive. The Almighty God wanted to dwell among his people, and so he commanded them to ‘make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst’ (Exodus 25:8). This demanded special skills, and God provided his people with those skills.

There is an obvious parallel with the first century, when God ‘visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name’ (Acts 15:14 ESV).

We can look at other times when the gifts of the spirit were provided in a dramatic way – the days of Elijah and Elisha are a good example – to see how at another time of great need God worked through men to save his people from idolatry.

Relevance to our lives

We do not have the miraculous powers today that were given to the apostles and prophets in the past. Yet we still believe that the Lord God works in his creation, that he gives us ‘life, and breath, and all things’. We still believe that he works in our lives, with the intention that we may be transformed into the image of his Son (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Prayer

The students may like to think about ways in which God is at work in the world today, and may like to compose a prayer asking him to guide our lives.

Other suggestions for activities

You may like to follow up the ideas of 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 1 Peter 2:5 to help your class understand John 14:2. Jesus was going to his death (see John 13:33,36) to prepare a place for each one of them in the house of his Father, the church, where God would live, that is, his home, where he has the company of those who love him and welcome his presence (by the Spirit).