

Between these were the rains of January. Early rains Prepared the soil for the seed and latter rains matured and filled out the crops for Harvest. The importance of these rains cannot be overstated.

IV. The Holy Spirit and The Early Rain

God promised rain for the land, but His greater promise is the Holy Spirit as a means for producing Spiritual fertility:

- Isa. 32:15-17 - When the Spirit is poured out, there will be “fertile fields”: justice, righteousness, and peace (also 44:1-5)
- Joel 2:28-32 - The pouring of the Spirit animates prophecy, dreams, and visions
- Luke 11:13 - God is eager to give His Spirit to those who ask
- Luke 24:49; Jn. 15:26 - Jesus promised the Holy Spirit

A. The Holy Spirit at Pentecost

The promised Holy Spirit in the OT was especially realized at the feast of Pentecost after Jesus’ ascension and launched the NT Church. The Spirit was given as a result of a 10-day “Prayer - A - Thon” (Acts 1:12-14).

The results of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit were:

<u>Conviction</u> (Acts 2:37)	<u>Love & Sharing</u> (2:44-47)
<u>Repentance</u> (2:38, 40)	<u>Healing</u> (3:1, 2, 6-8)
<u>Baptism</u> (2:38, 41)	<u>Witnessing</u> (4:8-13)
<u>Study</u> (2:42)	

B. Pentecost was Only the Start

Peter stated that Joel’s prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). The apostles received the gift of the Spirit and 3,000 convicted and penitent people were baptized in a single day as a result (Acts 2:41). The new believers, baptized by the Spirit, began their new life in Jesus, studying, sharing, worshiping, witnessing. *But this was only the start.* This “early rain” experience was the spark that empowered the believers to share Jesus throughout the world, raise churches, and grow in personal godliness. The book of Acts is that story. In reality, **Pentecost** was only one day, while **practice** lasts a lifetime. *The start the Holy Spirit triggered is important, but to finish the course is the goal.*

- REFER TO SUPPLEMENT -

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Scripture quotes taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated



WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT & WITH FIRE

S E R M O N S E R I E S

STUDY GUIDE 6

THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE “EARLY RAIN”

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Ancient Near Eastern society was heavily agrarian, dependent on rainfall for prosperity. Rain or its absence was also associated with religious integrity. In lessons 6 and 7, we'll look at the early and latter rains, respectively, of Palestine and their spiritual application.

God is the Maker and Giver of Rain

Today's meteorologists can predict precipitation; but behind earth's natural forces is a God who created the elements—and gives rain: Job 5:10; 38:25-27; Ps. 147:8; Jer. 5:24; Mat. 5:45; Acts 14:16, 17.

I. Rain As A Metaphor for God

Because Canaanites were heavily dictated by seasonal changes and harvests, the rain motif was used as an epithet for their gods; Baal's title was "Rider on the Clouds." But God's prophets used that familiar imagery and applied it to God to emphasize that He alone is central to life:

- Isa. 45:8 - "Let the clouds pour down **Righteousness**."
- Isa 55:10, 11 - "So will my **Word** be." [i.e., God's Word poured down like rain from heaven]
- Hos. 6:1-3 - "He [God] will **Come To Us** like the rain."



In the Bible, tying Yahweh (God) to the rains displaced Baal's popularly perceived role as the rain and fertility god. The creator God is to all peoples as rain is to vegetation.

II. Rain And Covenant Faithfulness

God made a contractual agreement with the Israelites, promising extensive prosperity in exchange for exclusive worship and obedience. This was the covenant. Hence, God gave or withheld rain depending on their faithfulness to that covenant.

A. Faithfulness = Wetlands (rich crops)

- Lev. 26:3, 4 - "If you **Walk** in My statutes and keep My commandments...then I shall give you **Rains** in their seasons."
- Deu. 11:13, 14 - "...to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart...He will give the rain for your land in its season, the **Early** and **Late** rain..." (also Deu. 28:9-12; Zec. 10:1)

B. Unfaithfulness = Badlands (drought)

- Jer. 3:2, 3 - "You have polluted a land with your harlotry...Therefore the showers have been **Withheld**."
- Isa. 5:5-7 (Israel is depicted as God's vineyard) - "I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."
- Amos 4:6, 7 - "You have not returned to Me...Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you." (also Deu. 11:16, 17; 28:15, 23, 24; 1 Ki. 8:35; 17:1, 7, 14; Jer. 5:23-25; Zec. 14:17, 18; Luke 4:25)

C. Important Stipulations

1. God returns the rains if His people **Repent**:
 - 2 Chr. 7:13, 14: "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain... and My people...humble themselves and pray...then I will hear from heaven...and will heal their land." (also 1 Ki. 8:33-36)
 - Isa. 30:22, 23: "And you will defile your graven images...and say to them, 'Be gone!' Then He will give you rain for the seed."
2. Rain can also be a **Curse**:
 - Gen. 7:11, 12, 23 - God sent rain as a global catastrophic flood
 - 1 Sam. 12:17, 18 - By Samuel's request, God sent rain at wheat harvest (summer) when rain would actually ruin a healthy crop



Perhaps rain was critical to the ancient Israelites as electricity is to us. What if our home electricity (affecting WiFi, phone chargers, gadgets, appliances, A/C) were dependent upon our fidelity to our relationship with God? How would we live?

III. Rainfall Patterns in Palestine

The pattern of rainfall dictated the way a season would develop. A farmer had to contend with a six-month rainless summer (May to October). There were two main seasonal rainfalls:

- **Early Rain** - The first showers of autumn (November)
- **Latter Rain** - The last showers of spring (April)



Nov

Dec

Jan

Feb

Mar

Apr

May

Jun

Jul

Aug

Sep

Oct



See Deuteronomy 11:14