



The Holy Spirit, Part 1

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This Bible study was first presented more than 20 years ago and is reproduced here in its original form.

Who He Is!

We come now to a mammoth undertaking: a study about The Holy Spirit of God! We will learn that He lives within the Christian; He guides, teaches, protects and coaches the Christian toward EXCELLENCE in our spiritual journey. We will see that the Holy Spirit is God; He deserves our worship, our obedience, our allegiance and loyalty. We will learn about His Power and Glory. We will see the important role He has played in human history through the ages. We will find out how He works on the human heart to bring God's chosen to Christ. We will see how The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ are inseparable in their salvation of souls. We'll learn how important He is to us every day of our lives. We introduced a study about God's Creation in 1995. We'll begin our new study about the Holy Spirit where we left off in Genesis 1:2. We've learned that God created the heavens and the earth in the beginning. We've seen that the earth was formless and empty and darkness was over the surface of the deep. "...and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Who is this Spirit of God? Is it a piece of God? Is it another God? Is it an "it"? A He? A She? We turn to the Hebrew language for answers.

The words "Spirit of God" are *Ruah Elohim*. *Ruah* is translated 180 times as spirit(s), 92 times as wind(s) and 32 times as breath(s). Keil and Delitzsch have expert insight to the usage of the word.

Ruah "denotes wind and spirit, like *pneuma* from *pnew*. *Ruach Elohim* is not a breath of wind caused by God (Theodoret, etc.), for the verb does

not suit this meaning, but the creative Spirit of God, the principle of all life (Ps. xxxiii. 6, civ. 30), which worked upon the formless, lifeless mass, separating, quickening, and preparing the living forms, which were called into being by the creative words that followed.” (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume I, C.F.Keil and F. Delitzsch, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Fifth Printing, June 1978)

I will make some statements about the Spirit of God now as fact. I'll present Biblical proof for these statements as we progress through the study.

God is the first Person we learn about in the Bible. The second Person is the Spirit of God. Moses stated that both were involved in creation. “God created the heavens and the earth.” The Spirit of God “was hovering over the waters.” What do those words mean? The word “hovering” is the Hebrew *rahapl*. It is used only three times in the Old Testament. The first time is Genesis 1:2. The second is Deuteronomy 32:11: “...like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.” The third usage is in Jeremiah 23:9: “My heart is broken within me; all my bones tremble...” The translators apparently did not think the word “hover” explained the meaning of *rahapl* in Jeremiah, so they chose something more akin to the context.

Why was the Spirit of God hovering over the waters? God began His creative acts with water. The earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and there was the Spirit of God hovering over those waters. The next verses tell us the order of God's creation following water.

- Light (vs. 3)
- Sky (vs. 6)
- Land (vs. 9)*
- Vegetation (vs. 11)
- Sun, moon, stars (vs. 14)
- Fish and birds (vs. 20)
- Animals and creatures that move along the ground (vs. 24)
- Man (vs. 27)*

God created dry land by gathering all the water to one place and then having dry ground appear. He called the dry ground “land” and the gathered waters “seas.” The water for the seas is the same water that the Spirit of God hovered over in verse 2. I believe God inspired Moses to mention the Spirit of God’s involvement in creation because He played a significant role in the beginning of all things. The Spirit of God was also extremely active during the first several thousand years of human history, as we will see in our study. The writers of the Old Testament spoke openly about the Spirit’s activities but hid details about God’s Son. It is in the New Testament that God reveals Jesus Christ and His Plan of Grace. Christ also was vitally involved in creating the heavens and earth, but that fact was withheld from the human race until thousands of years later. (See John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17)

Rahapl means “to brood over, to hover with a gentle wavering or fluttering motion, as of a bird over her young.” What a beautiful picture! God is about to bring into being every living thing and His Spirit hovers over the waters of creation as a mother cares for her children. C.F. Schultz wrote: “Over the lifeless and formless mass of the world-matter this Spirit broods like a bird on its nest, and thus transmits to it the seeds of life, so that afterwards by the word of God it can produce whatever God wills.” (C.F. Schultz, “Old Testament Theology”)

A mother bird hovers over her eggs until life hatches from them. After that, the mother bird continues to hover over the baby birds while the new life gains strength. That’s an excellent picture of what the Holy Spirit was doing during creation. He moved over the waters giving life and nourishment to all that He, the Father and the Son had created.

The Bible gives us other evidence for the Holy Spirit’s involvement in creation. Remember that the Hebrew word for Spirit is *ruah*.

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath [*ruah*] of his mouth.” Psalm 33:6 “The Spirit [*ruah*] of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Job 33:4

The Holy Spirit was not sitting by idly watching God create the heavens and earth and all that lives within it. The Spirit was also doing the creating. The Holy Spirit is God. When the Bible says “God created,” that includes the Spirit of God. God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit created. The Hebrew word for “God” in Genesis 1 and 2 is *elohim*. It

is the plural word for God in the Hebrew language. When *Elohim* created the human race, He said: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:26-27) Notice that God used the plural “us” and “our” when speaking about creating man. Only God can create, so He couldn’t have meant the angels or some other created beings. God also didn’t create man in any image other than Himself. I believe this is another evidence of the Triune Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All were equally involved in creation.

The Spirit is God

This is probably a good time to give you more evidence to support the belief that the Holy Spirit is God and not just a part or influence of God (as some teach today). I'll share several points of evidence with you. Consider them and see if you agree that the Spirit of God is God.

The Spirit is Called God

“Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land...You have not lied to men but to God.’”Acts 5:3-4

The Spirit is United with the Father and Son

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”Matthew 28:19

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”2 Corinthians 13:14

The Spirit has Characteristics of God

- Eternal — “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:14)
- Everywhere present — “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” (Psalm 139:7-10)
- All-knowing — “...but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11)
- Gave Great power — “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)
- Raised Christ from the dead — “He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.” (1 Peter 3:8)

Peter had earlier taught that “God” raised Christ from the dead (Acts 2:24). Peter teaches that God raised Christ and the Spirit of God made Christ alive. It’s the same teaching. The Holy Spirit is God!

- Works miracles — “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28) “...by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.” (Romans 15:19)
- Gives spiritual life — “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:6-8)

The Spirit Does the Work of God

- He created — “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Genesis 1:2) “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (Job 33:4)
- He gave life to God’s creatures — “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.” (Psalm 104:30)
- He guided God’s people — “Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself an everlasting renown, who led them through the depths?” (Isaiah 63:11-12) “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them.” (Nehemiah

9:20) "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground." (Psalm 143:10) "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:10-11)

- He gave power to Israel's leaders — "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him." (Judges 6:34) "So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power." (1 Samuel 16:13)
- He inspired God's prophets — "But Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them.'" (Numbers 11:29) "But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin." (Micah 3:8) "They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry." (Zechariah 7:12) "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)

The Holy Spirit: Member of the Godhead

One of the arguments I've heard for decades about the Holy Spirit is whether He is a Person of the Godhead or simply an influence of the Godhead. If the Spirit of God is just an influence of God, the argument is made that the Spirit is not a Person; therefore, not a member of the Godhead. I believe the Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead: as much God as the Father and the Son. Look with me at the following Scriptural proof that the Holy Spirit is a Person.

- He teaches — “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26)
- He hears and speaks — “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me [Jesus Christ] by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.” (John 16:13-15)
- He testifies about Christ — “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” (John 15:26)
- He encourages — “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.” (Acts 9:31)

- He counsels — “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [Christ being the first Counselor to the disciples] to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)
- He convicts people of sin — “Unless I [Jesus Christ] go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned...But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:7-11, 13)
- He prays for us — “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.” (Romans 8:26-27)
- He sends people out on missions — “The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.” (Acts 13:4)
- He experiences grief — “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)

- He can be resisted — “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! (Acts 7:51)
- He can be tested — “Peter said to her, ‘How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord?’” (Acts 5:9)

These are the traits of a Person, not an influence. Also, notice how the Bible writers use the personal term “he” when speaking about the Holy Spirit. That’s no accident.

The Holy Spirit and Evil

The second time we find the Holy Spirit mentioned by name in the Bible is Genesis 6:3. “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.” God had become very angry with the human race. The reason is explained in verse 5: “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.” God is holy. His Spirit is holy. His Son is holy. He hates evil. The evils of mankind had become so overwhelming that God’s Spirit could no longer contend with man. God determined that He would shorten people’s lives from the standard 800-900 years to only 120 years. He also determined to wipe mankind from the face of the earth, but Noah found favor (grace) in the eyes of the Lord (verses 7-8). The Hebrew word for “contend” is *diyntl*. The word is used 24 times in the Old Testament. Translators chose the following English words to explain the meaning of *diyntl*: “judge, contend, govern, plead, vindicate, administer, defend, govern, provide justice, punish.” Keil and Delitzsch write, “The verb signifies to rule, and to judge, as the consequence of ruling...This His spirit God will withdraw from man, and thereby put an end to their life and conduct...Men, says God, have proved themselves by their erring and straying to be flesh, i.e. given up to the flesh, and incapable of being ruled by the Spirit of God and led back to the divine goal of their life.” (Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume I).

The human race doesn't even realize that they have life, breath and strength from God. We would cease to exist if God removed Himself from our lives. We owe every good thing to God. Yet, mankind continues to curse God or not believe in His existence. Every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time.

Fortunately for all of us, God showed special grace to the human race through one man and his family. God started over again through Noah. However, evil did not end with the Great Flood. Evil is inherent in the human race. Evil has its source and strength through Satan. The Holy Spirit has fought evil throughout the ages. He continues that battle to this day. That's one of the main things we'll learn about God's Spirit in this study. He does battle with evil all the time. He'll continue to fight that battle until He brings all things into perfection.

The Holy Spirit and Israel

The next time we see God's Spirit mentioned in the Bible is Genesis 41:38. The Pharaoh of Egypt responds to the wisdom of Joseph and says, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" The Holy Spirit was very involved in the life of Israel. That only makes sense since Israel was a nation God designed for Himself. God called out Abram to be the father of a special nation that would worship God. That nation became known as Israel. Here's a quick look at how the nation developed through the line of Abraham.

- Genesis 12 — God called out Abraham to become a great nation.
- Genesis 21 — God gave Abraham a son (Isaac) to carry on the nation's line.
- Genesis 25 — God gave Isaac a son (Jacob) to carry on the nation's line.
- Jacob was later called Israel.
- Genesis 30 — God gave Jacob 12 sons to carry on the nation's line. One of them, Joseph, would save the nation from starvation.
- Exodus 2 — God brought Moses into the world through the line of Levi to save Israel from slavery and death in Egypt and to take the nation into the promised land. (Levi was the third son of Jacob.)

We find God's Spirit throughout the Old Testament. He gave skill and knowledge to the craftsmen of Israel (Exodus 31:3; 35:31); He gave strength and wisdom to the leaders and prophets of Israel (Numbers 11:17,

25-29; 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9 Judges 3:9-10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13; 23:2; 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:9-15; 1 Chronicles 12:18; 28:12; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 20:14; 24:20); He taught and admonished Israel (Nehemiah 9:20, 30); He gave foreign prophets words of praise for Israel (24:2-14). God's Spirit was vitally involved at every point of Israel's life as God's nation. In my opinion, the greatest thing God's Spirit did for Israel was to bring the nation her Eternal King, Jesus Christ! Jesus would be the Messiah that God had long promised Israel. He would save them from all their enemies and place Israel in the position of being the most powerful and important country on the face of the earth. The Spirit of God will make it happen.

The Holy Spirit and The Messiah

Israel's prophet Isaiah made clear what the Holy Spirit would do in Messiah's life. "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—and he will delight in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:1-3) "Spirit of the Lord" is *ruach Yehovah*. We see His involvement with Messiah in three sets of pairs: (1) wisdom and understanding — this is the intellectual life, (2) counsel and power — this is the practical life, (3) knowledge and fear of the Lord — this is the spiritual life. "Wisdom" is *chocmath*: the power of discerning the nature of things through the appearance. "Understanding" is *binah*: the power of discerning the differences of things in their appearance. "Counsel" is *'etzah*: the gift of forming right conclusions. "Power" is *geburah*: the ability to carry them out with energy. "Knowledge" is *da'ath*: knowledge founded upon the fellowship of love. "Fear of the Lord" is *yir'ath Yehovah*: fear absorbed in reverence of Jehovah.

Isaiah writes that the Spirit of the Lord will "rest" on Messiah. The Hebrew word is *nuahl*. In this context, it means that the Spirit would "dwell" with Messiah. He would remain with Messiah. We see the beginning of that process in John 1:32: "Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.'" The Greek word for "remain" is *meno*. It means to "dwell, live, remain." This is similar to the meaning of the Hebrew *nuahl*.

As you continue to read Isaiah 11, you'll see that the prophet was speaking of the time when the Messiah would rule on earth in His millennial reign (verses 4-9). We see that from the evidence of Messiah striking the earth with the rod of his mouth, slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips, the wolf living with the lamb, the leopard lying down with the goat, the calf, lion and yearling living together, the little child leading them, the cow eating with the bear, the lion eating straw like the ox, the infant playing near the hole of the cobra, the young child putting his hand into the viper's nest and neither being harmed.

This prophecy began to have its fulfillment when the angel of God promised Mary she would become the mother of God's Son.

“Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.’ ‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Luke 1:29-35

The angel said that the Holy Spirit would “come upon” Mary. The Greek word is *epeleusetai*. The word is future tense, indicative mood. It’s a thing that will happen in the future for certain. The angel was making a statement of fact. The Spirit of God would “come upon” her. The word means that the Holy Spirit came upon her and operated in her. He did something to her. What He did was cause Mary to become pregnant. This was absolutely necessary in the plan of God. God’s Son could not become flesh through the seed of a man. The sin nature of man is passed on from man to his children through the seed. Paul wrote, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned...” (Romans 5:12) King David wrote, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” (Psalm 51:5) David had a human father, thus sin was in him from conception.

We’ve seen in past studies that Christ was the Eternal Son of God. His existence did not begin with His birth to Mary. His existence was eternal. However, Christ wanted to enter into the world as a sinless human being to shed pure blood for the sins of the world. How could He become human without having the stain of sin in his blood? He couldn’t be born of man. Sin is in the blood of man which has its beginning as sperm and is passed along to every child. Christ had to be born of woman. Paul made that clear in Galatians 4:4: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”

In addition to the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary, the angel told her that “the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” (Luke 1:35). The word “power” is *dunamis*. We get our English words “dynamite” and “dynamo” from that Greek word. It is the feminine noun from *dunamai*, which means “to be able”. The New Testament writers use *dunamis*, 119 times. Translators usually chose the words “power” or “powerful” to express its meaning, but they sometimes used “miracles” or “miraculous powers.” The Greek reader would have understood *dunamis*, to mean “inherent power.” That’s a power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. It is a power that gives the one with the power the ability to do whatever they wish. God is Almighty by Nature. Therefore, He has “power” residing within Himself by virtue of His Nature.

Luke calls God “the Most High.” It comes from the word *hypsistou*. The word is used 13 times in the New Testament. It was a word Greeks used for the highest rank, a superlative degree, loftiest, most elevated. The various writings present God as dwelling in the highest heavens and as far exalted above all other things. Here are several examples of its New Testament usage:

“When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’” Mark 5:6-7

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” Luke 6:35

“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men.” Acts 7:48

“These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.” Acts 16:17

The angel said that God would “overshadow” Mary. The Greek word is *episkiasei*. This is also future tense, indicative mood. It comes from the words *epi*, “over,” and *skia*, “a shadow.” It is similar to the word used for the bright cloud that overshadowed Christ at His transfiguration (*epeskiasen* — Matthew 17:5) and the Apostle Peter’s shadow upon the sick (*episkiase* — Acts 5:15). The meaning of the word was to envelop in shadow. It came from the Old Testament idea of a cloud symbolizing the immediate presence and power of God.

Think about that for a moment. The Holy Spirit of God came upon the Virgin Mary in a miraculous way. What an amazing thing to happen to a human being! It had never happened before and would never happen again. It was a once-in-human-history event. God spiritually surrounded a virgin and placed within her womb the seed that would grow into the body that would become the human container of the Eternal Son of God! Mary’s reaction to it was quite beautiful:

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.” Luke 1:47-49

The Apostle John spoke about this great event in his gospel account of Christ’s life and ministry.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:1-2, 14

Believing that the Eternal God became flesh is a primary way of recognizing the Holy Spirit:

“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” 1 John 4:2

The opposite is also true:

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” 2 John 7

Why was it important that God become flesh? Why did the Holy Spirit come upon Mary? Why did the power of the Most High overshadow her?

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Jesus Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.” Hebrews 2:14-15

Paul explains the purpose beautifully in his letter to the Philippians:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Philippians 2:5-8

God became flesh for our sakes! He became flesh so that He could die in our place; shed His precious blood for our salvation. The Holy Spirit coming upon Mary is not just an interesting historic event some 2,000 years ago. It's not just a verse in the Bible. It is the very CENTER of our faith and hope! Mary was the conduit for God's blessings upon the human race. Mary was correct when she said all generations would call her blessed. God blessed us through her. Even as Eve was the mother of the first man, Mary was the mother of The Man—God in human form. The Holy Spirit was the One Who “came upon” Mary. It was from Him and God the Father that the power of the Most High “overshadowed” Mary and caused her to

become pregnant with Messiah's body. And the Holy Spirit did it for the purpose of fighting evil! It was all part of God's holy plan to redeem the human race and "destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil. "

The Holy Spirit and Christ

Placing Messiah's seed into the virgin Mary's womb was just the beginning of the Holy Spirit's involvement in Christ's life. The Spirit also chose the one who would go before Christ and announce His coming to Israel. Here are the words of the angel of God to Zechariah, the soon-to-become father of John the Baptist.

“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1:12-17

John the Baptist had a primary duty in life: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. He would have the same Spirit upon him that Elijah had hundreds of years before: the Spirit of God. In fact, John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb! The word for “birth” here is *koilias*. The meaning is “womb.” The word for “filled” is *plesthesetai*. It means “to fill, be full, controlled by another.” It is future tense, indicative mood, passive voice in this verse. It is a statement of fact with certainty that

someone would do something to the baby in the future. That something would be that the Holy Spirit would fill him from the womb.

We find an interesting proof of the angel's statement in Luke 1:41-45 when Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist.

“When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.’”

This is simply amazing! The sound of Mary's voice reaches the ears of Elizabeth and the baby in her womb leaped for joy and Elizabeth was also filled with the Holy Spirit. We see how completely God's Spirit is in control of these events. He made it possible for a virgin to be pregnant with the body of God's Eternal Son. He made it possible for an old woman who had no children because she was barren (Elizabeth — Luke 1:7) to become pregnant. The Holy Spirit filled the baby from the womb, caused that child to experience joy at the sound of the voice of the mother of his Savior and filled Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit to the point she prophesied about the coming of Messiah. This is not a natural occurrence here. Powerful, supernatural events are occurring.

Let me share briefly a thought about being filled with the Holy Spirit. One of the most interesting studies I've found about this subject was written by Dr. Kenneth Wuest in 1942. It's in a book titled "Untranslatable Riches." The study itself is titled "The Fullness of the Spirit." He is writing about how the Holy Spirit "fills" a believer.

"In the expression, 'filled with the Holy Spirit,' we have the verb 'filled' in the passive voice, the subject in this case being inactive and being acted upon by an outside agent, and the noun 'Spirit' in the genitive case, the genitive of description, indicating what the 'filling' consisted of. The 'filling' in this case refers to a certain control exerted over the believer. The word 'Spirit' thus indicates who is exerting this control. The expression 'full of the Holy Spirit' is from a noun 'full' and another noun 'Spirit,' the latter in the genitive case. The noun, 'full,' meaning here 'control,' is a noun of action. We have here a Greek construction called the subjective genitive, in which the noun in the genitive case, here 'Spirit,' produces the action in the noun of action, 'full.' Thus, the Holy Spirit is the One who exerts control over the believer said to be filled with Him."

We'll study the filling of the Holy Spirit in more depth when we look at how God's Spirit works in a Christian, but we can see here that "filling" carries the idea of "controlling." The Holy Spirit is not some passive little god who waits for someone else to ask his involvement in matters of importance. The Holy Spirit is the Almighty, All-Knowing, All-Seeing, Everywhere-Present God Who takes action and makes things happen. He is Powerful and In Control!

The next time we see the Holy Spirit's involvement in Christ's life is Luke 2. As was the custom of the Jews, Mary and her husband Joseph named their baby and took Him to the temple for circumcision on the eighth day after the birth. This was in keeping with God's Covenant of Circumcision that He made with Abraham: "For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised." (Genesis 17:12)

Mary and Joseph took their baby to the priest in the temple 40 days after their baby's birth. This was in keeping with the Law of Moses: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites: 'A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over...When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the Lord to make atonement for her and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.'" (Leviticus 12:1-7)

Mary and Joseph did journey to Jerusalem on the 40th day in obedience to the Law. This set the stage for the next event for the Holy Spirit. Read Luke 2:25-35.

"Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel,

and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'"

Mary and Joseph returned home to Nazareth after this event. Luke 2:40 tells us that "the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." When Jesus was 12, Luke tells us that Messiah "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) Remember that the Holy Spirit was in Messiah filling Him with power and grace during His early years on earth.

We find the Holy Spirit in Scripture many years later when John the Baptist was preaching to the people of Israel.

“I will baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Matthew 3:11

A short time later, Jesus came to John the Baptist for His own water baptism. It was then that we see the next step in the Holy Spirit’s involvement in Messiah’s ministry:

“When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.” Luke 3:21-23

The Holy Spirit can take bodily form. In this case, the Spirit came in the form of a dove. The dove was part of the family of doves and pigeons known as Columbidae. The Bible speaks of doves in the sense of peace, love and faithfulness. Doves were also a primary bird of sacrifice for Israel. Solomon used the dove repeatedly as a term of endearment in his “Song of Songs.” It’s no wonder that the Spirit would descend upon Messiah in the form of a dove at the time of His baptism and beginning of His ministry. Messiah was going to be Israel’s ultimate sacrifice, peace, love and

faithfulness. The Spirit's choice of bodily form was a statement for all who would open their minds and understand.

Jesus went straight from His baptism into the desert to face Satan's temptations. Notice how God's Spirit was involved.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.” Matthew 4:1

“At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals and the angels attended him.” Mark 1:12-13

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.” Luke 4:1-2

Notice that the Spirit of God “led” and “sent” Jesus into the desert. The word “led” in Matthew 4 is *anechthe*. It is third person, singular, aorist tense, indicative mood, passive voice. It is a statement of fact that someone else led Jesus into the desert at a past time from when the writer declared it. That someone was the Holy Spirit. *Anechthe* is from the word *anago*, which means “to lead up.” The idea of the word is “to bring, lead, carry, or take up.” “Led” in Luke 4 is *egeto*. It is the imperfect, passive of *ago*, “to lead.” The idea is the same: of someone bringing, leading, carrying, taking up.” The Holy Spirit was fully involved in leading Messiah through each step of His journey to the desert to face the tests of Satan.

The word “sent” in Mark 1 is *ekballei*. It is 3rd person, singular, present tense, indicative mood, active voice. It means “to thrust forth.” Someone thrust forth Jesus into the desert (active voice). That someone was the Holy Spirit. The study of all verses concerning this event helps us see that the Holy Spirit thrust forth and led Jesus to the desert. The Spirit was the agent of sending forth and going with. Messiah did not go into the desert alone or without purpose. God’s Spirit descended upon Messiah at His baptism, filled Him with Power, sent Him out to the desert and led Him to His appointed testing. Again, we see how deeply and vitally the Holy Spirit was involved with the life and ministry of Messiah.

The Holy Spirit continued with Messiah after the desert temptations. Luke 4:14 reads, “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.” The word “power” is *dunamei*. That “dynamic,” spiritual power continued with Christ throughout His ministry. Christ mentions the Holy Spirit again in Luke 4:18. He was in the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read from the prophet Isaiah and quoted this verse:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor...Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1, 2. The verses fall into a portion of Isaiah's prophecy that deals with the future Messianic Kingdom when Israel would be the greatest nation on earth. The people who heard Jesus claim the scripture was fulfilled in their hearing were astonished. They knew Jesus as the son of Joseph. They didn't realize He was God's Eternal Son, Israel's Messiah. Jesus then said that "no prophet is accepted in his hometown" and reminded them from Israel's history that God's prophets often did not do miracles in his homeland but went to outsiders. The people in the synagogue were so angry by these words that they pushed Jesus out of the synagogue and to the outer limits of town in order to throw Him down a cliff. They reacted to Messiah's words as if they were blasphemy. However, Jesus walked right through the crowd and went on His way (Luke 4:23-30).

Jesus said that "The Spirit of the Lord is on me." The word "on" is the Greek *ep*. It is a preposition with the root meaning of "upon." It is linked with the word *eme*, in Luke 4:18. *Eme* is in the accusative case. That gives the word *ep* the resultant meaning of emphasizing motion or direction. The Spirit of God was "upon" Messiah to give Him direction and emphasize specific motion. Jesus said the Spirit was "upon" Him because He [the Spirit] had "anointed" Him to perform several specific spiritual acts. Those acts were the "direction" the Spirit of God had purposed for Messiah. They included preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, releasing the oppressed, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor.

The word “anointed” is *echrisen*. Dr. A.T. Robertson explained that it was the “First aorist active indicative of the verb *chrio*, from which Christ (*Christos*) is derived, the Anointed One.” (Word Pictures In the New Testament, Vol. II, The Gospel According to Luke, Dr. A.T. Robertson, Broadman Press, 1930). Anointing is the act of daubing, smearing or rubbing oneself with oil. It had the significance of dedication and special consecration to God by His choice.

Christ quoted from Isaiah again in Matthew 12:18: “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”

Jesus claimed to minister through the Power of the Holy Spirit. A good example of this is in Matthew 12:22-28. Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute. The people who saw it were astonished and asked if Jesus could be the Son of David (the promised Messiah). However, the Pharisees said that Jesus drove out demons by the power of Satan. Here’s how Jesus responded to that:

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Christ “expelled” (*ekballo*) demons “by the” (*en*) “Spirit of God” (*pneumati theou*).

The Holy Spirit gave Messiah His joy: “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’” (Luke 10:21)

As we study the four Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) and the first chapter of Acts, we see that the Holy Spirit is connected to every aspect of Christ’s ministry. But in addition to seeing the Spirit at work, Jesus teaches us much about the Holy Spirit’s Life and Purpose. Jesus was the first to lay out a doctrine of the Spirit of God in detail. His disciples and the Apostle Paul finished building on that doctrinal foundation.

Christ's Teachings About the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit would speak through Messiah's disciples when they were arrested and faced difficult times in their ministry. (Matthew 10:20; Mark 13:11)
- Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven. (Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10)
- God would give His Holy Spirit to all who asked for Him and would give Him without limit. (Luke 11:13)
- The only people who could enter the kingdom of God were those born of the Spirit. (John 3:5-8)
- God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)
- The Spirit gives life. (John 6:63)
- Jesus would give His disciples the Holy Spirit and the Spirit would flow through them like streams of living water. (John 7:37-39; 20:22)
- Jesus gave His disciples the Spirit of truth to counsel them and be with them forever. (John 14:15-17)
- The Holy Spirit goes out from the Father and will testify about Jesus. (John 15:26)
- The Spirit will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. (John 16:5-11)
- The Spirit of truth will speak only what He hears and would tell the disciples what was yet to come. (John 16:12-13)
- The Spirit of truth will bring glory to Messiah. (John 16:14)
- Jesus instructed His disciples through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:2)

- Jesus baptized His disciples with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:5)
- The Holy Spirit would empower the disciples to witness for Messiah in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all the world. (Acts 1:8)

Jesus gave us the majority of His teaching about the Holy Spirit in one section of John's Gospel. He taught His disciples the same evening the Romans arrested Him. They had gathered for the evening meal, a meal we have come to know as The Last Supper. Jesus washed the disciples' feet to demonstrate the importance of service in their ministry. After washing their feet, Jesus predicted that one of the disciples would betray Him and that Peter would disown Him three times. This is all in John chapter 13. Jesus then taught the disciples (minus Judas Iscariot who had left the dinner group shortly after Jesus mentioned the betrayal) many things, including important truths about the Holy Spirit. We read about that in John chapters 14, 15 and 16. I'll quote here from all the sections concerning God's Spirit. Make notes on the margins beside the Scriptures below about the important truths you find concerning the Holy Spirit.

"If you love me, you will obey what I commanded. I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who

loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him...If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own, they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me...When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning...Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment; in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness,

because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”

The word “Counselor” is primary to our understanding of this teaching. It is the Greek *parakleton*. It means “summoned, called to one’s side.” It comes from the words *para* and *kaleo* (“to call”). The King James Bible translates the word as “Comforter.” That gives a good idea of the meaning of the word. The New International Bible translates the word four times as “counselor” and once as “one who speaks in defense.” The four translations of “counselor” are in our current study and used for the Holy Spirit. The other usage is in 1 John 2:1 when the Apostle wrote about Jesus Christ, “one who speaks to the Father in our defense.” The literal rendering of the verse is: “Little children of me, these things I write to you in order that you sin not. And if anyone sins, an advocate (*parakleton*) we have with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The Greeks understood the word to mean someone who brought aid, comfort and encouragement to another. It is a verbal adjective referring to an aid of any kind. Greek writers used the word for legal advisors, leaders, and advocates.

In John 14: 16, Jesus told the disciples He would ask the Father to give them “another” counselor. The word is *allos*. It means “another of equal quality.” The Holy Spirit would be equal to Messiah in His ministry of comforting and encouraging the disciples. He would take Messiah’s place with the disciples on earth after Jesus ascended into heaven. Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit “into” them before He ascended (John 20:22). The Holy Spirit came upon all the believers on the Day of Pentecost and gave them great power to be witnesses of Messiah’s death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins to all who would believe (Acts 1:8; 2:1-39).

We will see this marvelous work of the Holy Spirit acting as *paraklete*, to Messiah’s disciples and the early Christians in our next studies. However, here are some wonderful thoughts about the Holy Spirit as Comforter and Counselor.

“Christ came in the Name of the Father, as the first Paraclete, as His Representative; the Holy Spirit comes in the Name of Christ, as the second Paraclete, the Representative of Christ, Who is in the Father. As such the second Paraclete is sent by the Father in Name of the first Paraclete, and He would both complete in them, and recall to them, His Cause.”(The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, Eerdmans Publishing, 1971)

“Our Lord was about to return to heaven. The disciples were troubled because the One who had been their Guardian, Helper, Adviser, Strength-giver, was now leaving them. They thought that Jesus would leave them alone. But He told them that “another Comforter” would

come to their aid, even the Holy Spirit (John 14:16,17)...The word “comforter” is a good translation if rightly understood. It comes from the Latin and means “one who comes with strength.” To comfort in the sense of consoling one, is just one of the many ministries of the Holy Spirit to the believer. His many-sided work can be summed up in the phrase “one called in to stand by and give aid.” The idea “to stand by” comes from the preposition which is part of this Greek word. The word “another” is significant. There are two words in Greek which mean “another,” one referring to another of a different kind, and the other meaning “another of the same kind.” Jesus uses the latter word. The Holy Spirit is a Helper of the same kind as Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person just like our Lord and has the same attributes and qualities.”(Golden Nuggets from the Greek New Testament, Dr. Kenneth Wuest, Eerdman’s Publishing, 1940)

“The Holy Spirit is, therefore, by the word *paraklhtos*, of which Paraclete is a transcription, represented as our Advocate or Counsel, ‘who suggests true reasonings to our minds, and true courses of action for our lives, who convicts our adversary, the world, of wrong, and pleads our cause before God our Father.’ It is to be noted that Jesus as well as the Holy Spirit is represented as Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is to be another Paraclete, and this falls in with the statement in the First Epistle, ‘we have an advocate with God, even Jesus Christ .’”(Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume II, Dr. Marvin Vincent, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887)

“In Jn 14:16 the Paraclete is promised as one who is to take the place of Jesus. It is declared elsewhere by Jesus that it is expedient that He go away, for unless He go away the Paraclete will not come (Jn 16:7). Is the Paraclete, then, the successor or the substitute for Christ as He is sometimes called? The answer is that He is both and neither. He is the successor of Christ historically, but not in the sense that Christ ceases to act in the church. He is the substitute for Christ’s physical presence, but only in order that He may make vital and actual Christ’s spiritual presence. As we have seen, the Paraclete moves only in the range of truths conveyed in and through Christ as the historical manifestation of God.”(The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Dr. James Orr, General Editor, 1915)

“In the third word of consolation, the leading thought is the promise of another Comforter, who should take the place of Him who was going away, and make the bereaved feel as if He were still with them . In the second word of comfort Jesus had said that He was going to provide a home for the little ones, and that then He would return and take them to it. In this third final word He virtually promises to be present with them by substitute, even when He is absent. ‘I will pray the Father,’ He says, ‘and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever’ (not for a season, as has been the case with me). Then He tells them who this wonderful Comforter is: His name is ‘the Spirit of Truth .’

Then, lastly, He gives them to understand that this Spirit of Truth will be a Comforter to them, by restoring, as it were, the consciousness of His own presence, so that the coming of this other Comforter will just be, in

a sense, His own spiritual return. 'I will not leave you comfortless,' He assures them: 'I will not leave you orphans , I will come to you;' promising thereby not a different thing, but the same thing which He had promised just before, in different terms. How the other Comforter would make Himself an alter ego of the departed one, He does not here distinctly explain. At a subsequent stage in His discourse He did inform His disciples how the wonder would be achieved. The Spirit would make the absent Jesus present to them again, by bringing to their remembrance all His words, by testifying of Him, and by guiding them into an intelligent apprehension of all Christian truth. All this, though not said here is, sufficiently hinted at by the name given to the new Paraclete. He is called the Spirit of Truth, by enlightening the minds of the disciples in the knowledge of Christ, so that they should see Him clearly by the spiritual eye, when He was no longer visible to the eye of the body."(The Training of the Twelve, Dr. A.B. Bruce, Kregel Publications, 1971)

The Holy Spirit and Christ's Disciples

For a few moments, place yourself inside the skin of one of the disciples. You have toiled day and night for three years to be a vital part of the promised Messianic Kingdom. You have watched the crowds grow. You have heard the powerful sermons from the Master's lips. You have heard His call for a national kingdom. You have listened to Him rebuke the Pharisees and other religious leaders of Israel. You have watched Jesus turn water to wine, walk on water, calm a ferocious storm, heal broken bodies, raise the dead, feed thousands with a little boy's lunch, cast demons out of torn minds and bodies, and provide payment for taxes from the mouth of a fish. You have seen Jesus transformed into His heavenly splendor, joined by the glorified bodies of dead prophets. You have experienced supernatural power flowing from your own body. You have been a witness to all this, but suddenly you hear the Master say He's leaving; He's going away. How would you feel? Threatened? Abandoned? Angry? Afraid? Unsure? Confused? Frustrated? Jesus understood exactly how this news would affect the disciples. He knew they might feel like orphans. That's why He explained His going and the Spirit's coming in such detail. Jesus was not leaving them. He was following God's plan to the letter. Remember what Jesus said: "...the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." God's plan has always met every need of every individual in His plan and it always will. God sent the Son to preach, die, rise from the grave, and ascend back to the Right Hand of God. The Son sent the Spirit from God to continue His ministry with the disciples and all who would follow the

commandments of God. The Holy Spirit would comfort, guide, encourage and strengthen the disciples. The Spirit would also continue Christ's preaching ministry to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. He would do it through the lives, voices and writings of the disciples.

Jesus was very honest with the disciples. He explained that their journey would be hard. People would misunderstand them, hate them, even try to kill them. Jesus told them, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy." (John 16:20) Jesus was speaking there about His death on the cross and how the disciples would grieve and then later rejoice when they learned about His resurrection. They would have many sorrows and difficulties years later to fulfill Christ's prophecy concerning their lives. Most were killed because of their ministries in the Name of Christ. But one thing they had during their entire journey was the Presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit did guide them into all truth. He did tell them what was to come. He did bring glory to Messiah by taking from what was His and making it known to the disciples. Here are some thoughts about the Spirit's involvement in the death and resurrection of Christ. The Bible teaches us that Messiah offered Himself as a worthy sacrifice "through" the Spirit of God.

"When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained

eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” Hebrews 9:11-14

“Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 1:1-4

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” Romans 8:11

God’s Spirit, once hovering knowingly and creatively over the surface of the deep, hovered over the beaten and lifeless body of Jesus Christ almost two-thousand years ago in a small rock tomb and brought Him back to life! The Spirit is life and gives life to all who believe. We have life through God’s Spirit. Hallelujah!

A “disciple” is a person who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another. That’s the English definition. The Greek word for disciple is *mathetes*. It translates as “a learner, pupil,” but has a much stronger meaning in the New Testament. A disciple was an adherent who accepted the instruction given to him and made it his rule of conduct. Jesus had disciples in the sense that they believed Him and made His teaching the basis of their lives. We usually think of the Twelve Apostles as Christ’s disciples, but Jesus had many more than that. We read about Christ calling His first disciples in Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:14-20, Luke 5:1-11, and John 1:35-51. He later designated twelve of them as apostles.

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Luke 6:12-16

Luke 6:17 speaks of Jesus’ disciples as being “a large crowd” (Luke 6:17). John 4:1 states that “Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John.” John the Baptist had baptized hundreds, possibly thousands, by that time. Mark 1:4 has this about John’s ministry: “The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.” We usually think of Christ’s disciples as being only men, but Jesus had many women who

believed His message and supported Him. They knew first-hand the power of God's forgiveness.

“Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.” Luke 8:1-3

More than a hundred of Christ's disciples waited for the promised Holy Spirit in the days after Christ ascended to heaven.

“In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, ‘Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus—he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.’ Acts 1:15-17

Some of Christ's disciples were quieter about their beliefs than people like Peter, James and John.. Nicodemus is an example. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night to ask Him questions (John 3:1-21). The other Pharisees who questioned Christ did it in front of crowds of people for the purpose of embarrassing Christ. However, Nicodemus came alone at night to speak with Christ. His purpose

was to learn, not to embarrass. Nicodemus later questioned his own group of Jewish leaders about the way they were treating Christ (John 7:45-52). It's interesting to note that the Pharisees asked if any of the rulers or Pharisees had believed in Christ just before Nicodemus questioned them about their treatment of Jesus. After Jesus died, Nicodemus accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus. The two men prepared the body for burial and placed it in a tomb (John 19:38-42). Nicodemus is never mentioned by name again in the Bible, but it's obvious from his actions that he was a disciple of Christ.

It was to Nicodemus that Christ shared profound truths about the Holy Spirit and His relationship to Christ's disciples. Read along in John 3. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied that "no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." You will probably hear the term "born again" often during your spiritual life. The Greek words are *gennethe anōthen*. The translation is "is born from above." The word *anōthen* comes from the words *ano* (above) and *then* (from). The word is used 13 times in the New Testament. Most of the translations are "from above" and "top." Some usages of the word (John 19:11; James 1:17; 3:15, 17) would seem to indicate that "above" means coming from God.

Let's first place Christ's statement in the correct context. He is speaking about entrance into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus and other Jews understood that to mean the earthly Messianic kingdom the Old Testament prophets had promised Israel for hundreds of years. They saw it as a

physical kingdom. Most seemed to miss the spiritual implications of the kingdom.

Nicodemus missed the point about being “born again” (born from above). He asked Jesus, “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Nicodemus viewed Christ’s comment as meaning only a natural rebirth. He did not grasp the supernatural aspects of what Jesus was saying. Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” Jesus now begins to define the meaning of being born from above. It is a birth of water and a birth of Spirit. What are these births? Some Bible students believe the water speaks of water baptism while the Spirit is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus explains exactly what he meant: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” I believe Jesus would have said “baptism” if he had meant baptism. Instead he speaks of flesh giving birth to flesh. That’s not part of the doctrine of baptism. Jesus is talking here about the physical birth and spiritual birth that a person must have in order to enter the kingdom of God. Flesh giving birth to flesh is a woman giving birth to a baby. The amniotic sac, a membrane containing water that envelops the baby inside it’s mother’s womb, breaks before or during labor. The water flows out through the vagina. That’s the water Jesus was speaking of in John 3. A person could not enter the kingdom of God until they had first been born physically. Then they had to be born from above, from God, spiritually. That’s the work of the Holy Spirit. Only He can give spiritual life.

Jesus went on to tell Nicodemus, “You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” Spiritual birth is not something anyone can see, but you can see its effects. As a journalist, I have covered many wind storms: tornadoes, hurricanes, microbursts. I couldn’t see the wind but I could see the impact of the unseen wind on people and property. The same is true with spiritual birth. We can’t see the Spirit, but we can see what it does to people. It changes them, makes them new inside and out. I have seen that change in my life and the lives of hundreds of other people through the years. The work of the Holy Spirit is just as real as the wind that moves upon the face of the earth.

Still, Nicodemus fails to understand Christ’s meaning: “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked.” Christ’s answer to this final question is one of the most famous and most quoted passages from the teachings of Jesus the Messiah.

“You are Israel’s teacher,’ said Jesus, ‘and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that

he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3: 9-21

Notice that Jesus began this discourse by reminding Nicodemus He was Israel's teacher. This is specifically a Jewish message What Jesus was telling Nicodemus was true for Jews and those who became Jews through the Law of Moses (proselyte). We'll have to search Paul's teachings to see if being "born again" is also true for Gentiles in the Age of Grace.

After reprimanding Nicodemus, Jesus tells him that He speaks of what He knows and what He's seen. The truths of Jesus are from the lips of the Eternal God Himself! This is not hearsay. This is not something to debate or question. It's absolute Truth! Jesus was a witness of these heavenly truths. He came from heaven. He was the Son of Man!

We find nine basic truths in this discourse:

1. Jesus would be lifted up in the same way that Moses had lifted up the snake in the desert.
2. Everyone who believed in Him would have eternal life.
3. God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believed in Him would not perish but would have eternal life.
4. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.
5. Whoever believed in Jesus would not be condemned.
6. Whoever did not believe in Jesus stood condemned already because he had not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
7. The verdict from God is that Light had come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.
8. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.
9. Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that what they have done through God is plainly seen.

John does not write about how Nicodemus reacted to Christ's teaching. The next verse states that Jesus and His disciples went out into the Judean countryside to spend time with them and to baptize new disciples. However, we know from John's Gospel that Nicodemus did become a disciple of Jesus. We are not told whether he became a believer the same night he visited Jesus in secret. These are truths Nicodemus may have had to consider for a time before accepting. That's the way it is with many

people. It took me many months of consideration before I was ready to give my life to Christ, but it was the best decision of my life! I know it was for Nicodemus, too.

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