

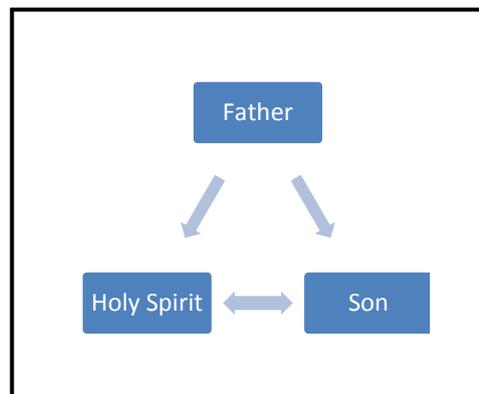
The Mystery of the Spirit

The Work of the Spirit in the New Testament

Lecture 5

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity – which means that He is fully God, and He is a person – a self-conscious and self-determining being. We have learned that the Holy Spirit was active in the Old Testament – in creation, in prophecy, in miracles, in anointing leaders for Israel. He was also active in the Gospels – impregnating Mary with the God-man, Jesus; anointing Jesus for ministry; leading Jesus to be tempted; empowering Jesus for teaching, miracles and ministry; and raising Jesus from the dead.

In this we see the intertwined relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. God the Holy Spirit was the agent behind the incarnation of God the Son, Jesus, yet God the Son is the agent who sends the Holy Spirit to the Church. So, the Father sent the Son (1 John 4.14), but through the agency of the Holy Spirit . . . and then the Father sent the Holy Spirit, through the agency of the Son.



The sending of the Holy Spirit signalled a radical change in how God works on earth . . . and who the people of God are.

How God works on earth

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon selected people, but only at selected times and for selected tasks. You may recall that Saul prophesied shortly after being accepted by God as king of Israel (1 Sam 10.11). At that moment, Saul had the aid of the Spirit – evidenced not only in his peculiar behaviour, but also in his extraordinary military and political success (1 Sam 11).

But when Saul disobeyed God, the Spirit departed from him (1 Sam 16.14). Not only did Saul become unsuccessful in battle and in politics from that point forward, he also was tormented in his soul.

This explains David’s fear that the Holy Spirit would leave him as a consequence of his adultery with Bathsheba (Ps 51.11). The work of the Holy Spirit was not perpetual in any one individual.

But the New Testament changes this mode of operation. Jesus declared the change:

John 14:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that **He may abide with you forever**— ¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for **He dwells with you and will be in you.**

The prepositions “with” and “in” make an enormous difference. For the first time, God would dwell indefinitely within people. The same action of birthing, anointing, guiding, empowering, and raising that the Spirit performed in Jesus would now be performed in every believer.

Birthing: Just as Jesus was conceived supernaturally by the Holy Spirit, so the new birth is a supernatural conception via the Holy Spirit.

John 3:3, 6 (NKJV)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and **that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

Anointing: Just as Jesus was commissioned into full-time service to God, so the Holy Spirit commissions every believer to be full-time servants – and guides us to know the truth.

1 John 2:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ But the **anointing** which you have received from Him **abides in you**, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same **anointing teaches you** concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Guiding: Just as Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for testing and then into the city for ministry, so the Spirit sovereignly sets the course of every believer’s life. He tests us to change us, and He places us to change others.

Romans 8:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For as many as are **led by the Spirit** of God, these are sons of God.

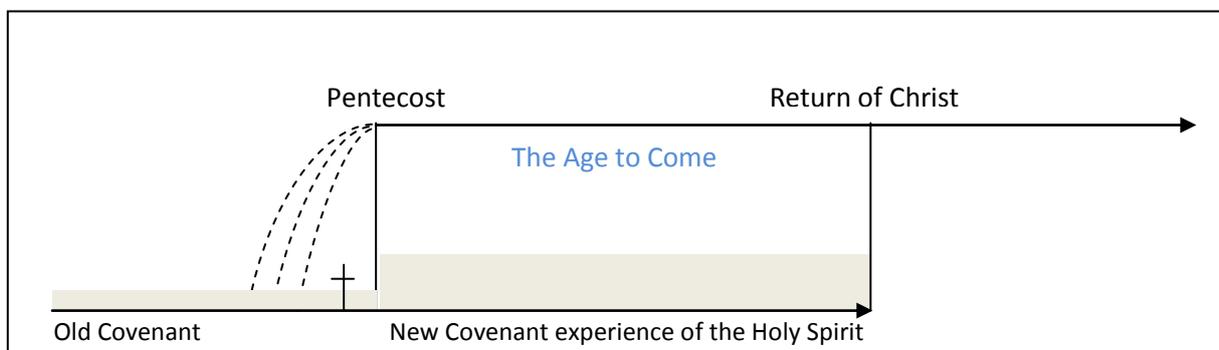
Empowering: Just as Jesus depended on the Holy Spirit to achieve personal transformation in people, so the Holy Spirit enables every believer to represent the gospel to the world as ambassadors of God, and to build up the body of Christ as essential members.

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

⁸ **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

Raising: Just as Jesus was raised from the dead in the power of the Spirit, so believers will be raised from the dead by the same power (Romans 8.11).

Wayne Grudem illustrates the change from Old Testament to New Testament with this helpful diagram:



What a privilege it is to live in the age of the New Testament – an age that can accurately be called the age of the Spirit. His ministry in and through us is vastly superior to the ministry he had with Old Testament believers. Jesus used John the Baptist as an example to provide a clear contrast between the two:

Matthew 11:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but **he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

John the Baptist was the final Old Testament prophet – he was remarkable for his boldness and effectiveness. But in the New Testament, every believer has a fuller measure of the Spirit than John.

In a moment, we will take an overview of the work of the Spirit in the New Testament. First, however, we must identify the second radical change that occurs in the New Testament. It is a change in the identity of the people of God.

Who the People of God are

In the Old Testament, the people of God were defined nationally – Israel. This is not to suggest that all ethnic Israelites were saved – they were not. Salvation was by faith alone then just as it is now. Nevertheless, God revealed Himself in a special sense only to Israel and called only Israel to enter into covenant with Him, thus being identified as His people.

The only chance a Gentile had of being saved was if Israel distributed the Word of God that had been entrusted to them. This was in fact God’s intention – that Israel would be a communal ‘priest’ to the world. In this mode, conversion would entail faith followed by naturalisation as a Jew. This did not mean naturalisation was the means for salvation, but rather, just as baptism today is a public declaration of an internal change, so, too, naturalisation achieved the same purpose – once for all declaring a new identity as a child of God. Circumcision was the sign.

In the New Testament, however, the ‘people of God’ is no longer defined exclusively by the Jewish nation. Now all people from every tongue, tribe and nation are invited to embrace Christ and be born into God’s family.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV)

⁹ But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; ¹⁰ who **once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.**

Paul makes the point bluntly:

Ephesians 3:1-6 (NKJV)

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— ² if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you . . . ⁵ which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit** to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶ **that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise** in Christ through the gospel,

So the 'people of God' is no longer exclusively nationalistic in its definition or composition. It is now multi-ethnic – with no stipulation that Gentile believers be nationalised as Jews.

This does not mean, however, that God has done away with national Israel. They remain his chosen nation – as Romans 9-11 declares and as history demonstrates (in that the Jews against all probability have not only survived holocausts, but have also retained their national identity). God still has a plan for national Israel that will be fulfilled in the Tribulation and the Millennium.

Let me attempt to illustrate the relationship between Israel and the great host of Gentile believers. When the original settlers were transported to Australia, they built their dwellings around Sydney Cove (Circular Quay). This was the town of Sydney. But not everyone stayed in Sydney because the soil was not good for farming. Soon the community of Parramatta was founded, and then Toongabbie, and, eventually, the Macquarie towns of Windsor and Richmond.

Back then, these were separate settlements, and Sydney was the chief – the chosen one. But as time went along, and as these settlements grew, the vacant land between them disappeared. Ultimately, Parramatta, Toongabbie, Windsor and Richmond were annexed into Sydney . . . and yet Sydney proper never ceased to exist.

Therefore, someone living in Erskine Park is not wrong to say "I live in Sydney". But we all know that a street address with the 2000 postcode means something different to a street address with the 2759 postcode.

In a similar manner, God selected a family of people and transported them to a new land – the Promised Land. This became the country of Israel, and God revealed Himself to these people.

There were, of course, other settlements of people – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and more. These were separate, and Israel was the chief – the chosen one. When these other countries threatened Israel (and when Israel was faithful to her God), they were always defeated – a powerful demonstration of the existence and power of Israel's God.

Some people, having witnessed the wonders of Israel's God, converted to Him. In Old Testament times, this meant migrating to Israel (like Egyptians in the Exodus, and Rahab and Ruth in the conquest. The New Testament, however, brought mass conversions among the Gentiles so that believers now live in nearly every corner of the world.

These settlements or communities of believers have been annexed by God into the singular 'people of God'. But this doesn't mean Israel has ceased to hold its unique identity or its central place. Just as Sydney still exists as that small developed area around Sydney Cove, so Israel exists now and forever more as the central place of God's revelation and occupation.

Thus, Gentile believers can accurately say, "I am a child of God" – with full entitlement to all the rights and privileges of that status. But we must not forget that the original and central family of believers will always be those who descended from Abraham's race.

The Holy Spirit, from Pentecost onward, annexes believers into Israel, the people of God . . . but without compromising or confusing Israel proper – about whom God still has an uncompleted plan.

Romans 11:1 (NKJV)

¹ I say then, **has God cast away His people? Certainly not!** For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, *of* the tribe of Benjamin.

Nevertheless, distinct nations will join believing Israel in God's everlasting kingdom – not as rivals or replacements, but as annexations to the original which will become the seat of the King's world government.

The determining factor is faith – just as it always has been.

Romans 2:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but **he is a Jew who is one inwardly**; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

The Present Work of the Holy Spirit

What roles does the Holy Spirit play today? Essentially the same categories of roles as in the Old Testament and Gospels, but with wider distribution (all believers) and greater power.

Actions in relation to salvation

The Holy Spirit applies the predestination of the Father and the payment of the Son to people.

Convicts

He begins by convincing sinners of their desperate need for the Saviour.

John 16:8 (NKJV)

⁸ **And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement:**

Enables faith

The Holy Spirit then gifts the person with faith.

Galatians 3:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "*Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree*"), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that **we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**

Peter and the leaders of the early church were convinced that the gospel extended to Gentiles when they observed the gift of faith and repentance in them:

Acts 11:15-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ And as I began to speak, the **Holy Spirit fell upon them**, as upon us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, '**John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.**' ¹⁷ If therefore **God gave them the same gift** as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?" ¹⁸ When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then **God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance** to life."

Faith is indeed a special gifting from God.

1 Corinthians 12:4, 9 (NKJV)

⁴There are diversities of **gifts**, but the same Spirit . . . ⁹to another **faith by the same Spirit**, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

Regenerates

Jesus likened conversion to being born again, as we've already noted. The Holy Spirit is the agent of the new birth, giving new life to all who repent and believe.

Actions in relation to service

The Holy Spirit also performs a ministry for believers by qualifying and equipping us for God's service.

Baptises

Baptism is the identification rite, by which God places a mark of ownership on all believers.

Matthew 3:11 (NKJV)

¹¹I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will **baptize** you **with the Holy Spirit** and fire.

Acts 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be **baptized with the Holy Spirit** not many days from now."

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)

¹³For by **one Spirit** we were all **baptized into one body**— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

In a future session, we will talk more about what baptism in the Holy Spirit means.

Indwells

Jesus promised that when he ascended, the Holy Spirit would come to live in believers. This is the indwelling – the fact of God's residence within believers, whereby our bodies are called temples.

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is the **temple of the Holy Spirit** *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

Romans 8:9 (NKJV)

⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Calls

The Holy Spirit directs people in ministry . . . and sometimes calls certain people to specific roles – such as pastor or missionary.

Acts 13:2 (NKJV)

²As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said**, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the **work to which I have called them**."

Guides

The most important way in which the Holy Spirit guides believers is in knowing the truth. He gives discernment – especially in the area of understanding the Scriptures.

John 16:13 (NKJV)

¹³ However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

Gifts

The Holy Spirit also gives special enablement to each believer to serve the local church so that it is built up – healthy and growing.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NKJV)

⁴ There are **diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. ⁷ But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one **for the profit of all**:

We will talk more about spiritual gifts in a future session.

Actions in relation to sanctification

The Holy Spirit is intent on changing the believer to be like Christ. He does this by controlling and teaching.

Fills

To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be under His control.

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Fruits

When the Holy Spirit controls a person, the characteristics of godliness naturally shine through.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)

²² But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Illumines

Not only does the Holy Spirit help the believer to interpret the Word of God accurately, but He also assists the believer in applying the Word honestly.

1 Corinthians 2:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But God has **revealed them to us through His Spirit**. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Actions in relation to security

The Holy Spirit protects believers – guaranteeing the completion of our salvation.

Seals

A seal in ancient times was a symbol of authority and security. When Daniel was lowered into the lion's den, the covering to the den was sealed (Daniel 6.17). When Jesus was buried, His tomb was likewise sealed (Matthew 27.66). Because of the seal, any tampering would be immediately recognised.

The Holy Spirit is the tamper-proof mark of ownership and security of the believer.

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NKJV)

²² who also has **sealed us** and given us the **Spirit** in our hearts **as a guarantee**.

Ephesians 1:13 (NKJV)

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit** of promise,

Ephesians 4:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were **sealed for the day of redemption**.

Prays

It is reassuring that the Holy Spirit prays for a believer at those moments when the believer is too weak to pray for himself. We know the Holy Spirit's prayers are always granted – because He is God praying to Himself.

Romans 8:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the **Spirit** Himself **makes intercession** for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Testifies

How can we know we are saved? The evidence of a life changed by the Holy Spirit is how.

Romans 8:13-16 (NKJV)

¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The **Spirit** Himself **bears witness** with our spirit that **we are children of God**,

1 John 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has **given us of His Spirit**.

This has been only a quick overview of the work of the Spirit in the church. In the remaining sessions of this series, we will examine more closely those functions of the Spirit that have become controversial within Christianity. These include the baptism of the Holy Spirit – when does it occur? Can you be saved and not baptised? It also includes the gifts of the Spirit – are tongues, miracles and healings for today? Or have these signs ceased? If so, why?

We will also explore the most pressing issue of our time in relation to Spirit: prophecy. Does God speak through means other than the Bible today?

Because this is the age of the Spirit, it is vital that we understand who He is, and what He is and is not doing.