

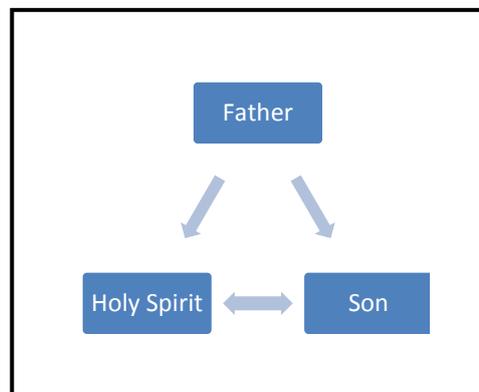
The Mystery of the Spirit

The Work of the Spirit in the New Testament

Lecture 6

The Holy Spirit, as God, has always been and always will be. We have noted his work in the Old Testament, in the Gospels and in the New Testament.

Last week we noted the differences between the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. One of these differences was that He is now in believers, not merely with believers. Another difference is that He makes all believers – whether circumcised or not in the flesh – citizens of the people of God.



In His ministry in believers, He replicates the ministry He had in Jesus. This included birthing, anointing, guiding, empowering and raising. We could also talk of sanctifying, but I am including that in anointing.

Who the People of God are

In the New Testament, the people of God includes Gentiles.

Ephesians 3:1-6 (NKJV)

¹For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles— ²if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you . . . ⁵which 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)

⁴ There are diversities of **gifts**, but the same Spirit . . . ⁹ to 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)

¹¹ I 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)

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

1 Corinthians 12:13 (NKJV)

¹³ For 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)

¹⁹ Or 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)

⁹ But 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)

² As 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.