

Lesson 9: *Attitudes Toward Holy Spirit*

Most would agree that the Holy Spirit is the most mysterious of the three persons of the Godhead. We see his presence in the Old Testament but are more deeply introduced to him through Christ's discussion with the apostles and his subsequent work among them. Calvinism holds that the Holy Spirit must directly influence the heart of a person, apart from the Bible, to convince him to accept Christ. Pentecostals believe that the Holy Spirit still works supernaturally through the inspiration of modern prophecies and so-called tongues speaking. The Bible shows us what the Spirit's true mission was as the Comforter who came to the apostles just after Christ's ascension and what his task is today.

The distinct person of the Holy Spirit is less evident in the Old Testament, although we see him from the beginning (Gen. 1:2). He is often referred to only as the Spirit or the Spirit of God. Several prophecies also point to his arrival on the day of Pentecost (Joel 2:28-32). We learn then that the Spirit had a hand in creation, in communicating God's will to mankind, and in the birth of the church.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit appears immediately again in the incarnation of Christ as Mary was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18). He is credited with part in the miraculous deeds of Christ and his apostles (Matt. 12:28). The Lord explained to Nicodemus that he needed to be born again, this time of water and the Spirit, in order enter the kingdom of God.

We learn of the Holy Spirit's mission from John's record of Christ's last conversation with the apostles in the night he was betrayed (John 14-16). After telling Thomas and the others that he was preparing to go away, he promises to send them another helper to abide with them for good, "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), who would call to remembrance all things Christ had taught them on Earth (John 14:26). Fallible human memories would not prevent the twelve from delivering Christ's teaching in purity.

The work of the Spirit would involve conviction, righteousness and judgment (16:7-11). He would add to the things Christ had taught the apostles. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13). The description of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth is very appropriate in that it indicates what his central mission will be, delivering God's message to mankind. Clearly, there were doctrines about the kingdom and other matters the apostles were not prepared to handle at this moment, but the Spirit of truth would deliver them when they were.

Many today equate the Holy Spirit's work with the exhibition of miracles like tongues speaking and healings, but those things were only tools by which he accomplished his central mission, delivering God's revelation. "And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). The miracles were to testify that the spoken word was divine and authentic (Heb. 2:4). We see this to be the case in both instances of "Holy Spirit baptism": tongues speaking testified that the apostles' word was from God (Acts 2) and that the Gentiles should be converted starting in Cornelius's house (Acts 10-11).

This function was eventually completed successfully when all God wanted man to know was communicated to him (Jude 3, 2 Peter 1:3). Paul predicted that when complete knowledge had come, miraculous abilities would cease (1 Cor. 13:8-13). This they obviously did.

The expression "filled the Spirit" is used in the New Testament to refer either to miraculous ability or simply a willingness to be guided by the Spirit's influence through his word (Acts 6:5, Eph. 5:18). The word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), showing that miracles were not the focus, but the revelation of truth was.

1. When do we first see the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament? In the New Testament?

2. How does the Holy Spirit effect conversions, by direct operation or through the agency of his word (Eph. 6:17, Rom. 10:17)?

3. Jesus uses two other designations to describe the Holy Spirit in John 14-16. What are they?
 - John 14:16:
 - John 14:17:

4. What would be his function, according to John 14:16?

5. What would be his function, according to John 16:12-13?

6. What was the purpose of miraculous abilities of the Holy Spirit, like tongues speaking and healing (Mark 16:20 and Heb. 2:4)?

7. List and describe the only two recorded occurrences of “Holy Spirit baptism.”

8. When were miraculous gifts to cease (1 Cor. 10:8-13)? Has this occurred (Jude 3, 1 Peter 1:3)?

9. What is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)? What should this tell us about the relative importance of the word versus miraculous signs and wonders?

10. What does it mean to be filled with Spirit in Ephesians 5:18-19?

11. How does the Holy Spirit dwell in us (Rom. 8:9, 13-17)?

12. How can we show that the Spirit indwells us (Gal. 5:16-25)?