

“QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS”

Session Eight – The Holy Spirit

Hebrew – “Ruach”; Greek – “Pneuma” – Breath, Wind, Spirit

In the Bible the word for “spirit” is “ruach” in Hebrew and “pneuma” in Greek. Both words can refer to spirit, wind or breath. The idea is the same: ruach and pneuma express energy, motion, life, activity. The Holy Spirit is God’s power and presence among his people.

When speaking to Nicodemus (John 3), Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as being like the wind, which you cannot see apart from its effects, and which you cannot control but can experience. If we can imagine the wind as not just a meteorological effect but as possessing will and personality – a powerful force which impacts our world, our lives, our direction - we can begin to imagine the Holy Spirit.

While the Holy Spirit can be described as the manifestation of the power of God and the presence of Christ, the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit not as a force, but a person. The Holy Spirit grieves (Eph. 4:30); intercedes (Rom. 8:26–27); testifies (John 16:12–15); speaks (Mark 13:11); creates (Gen. 1:2; Luke 1:35); has a mind (Rom. 8:27); and can be blasphemed (Mark 3:28–29).

In the “Farewell Discourse” (John 14–16), Jesus promises to send “another *parakletos* (“helper,” “counselor,” “advocate”),” namely, the Holy Spirit, who is Jesus’ successor in earthly ministry and in some respects Jesus’ replacement. This is in contrast to the Devil, whom Jesus refers to as “Satan” (which means, “The Accuser”).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit was present at creation, hovering over the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2). The Holy Spirit was instrumental in the Exodus (Isa. 64:7–14). The Spirit gifted God’s people for service (Ex. 35:30–35). The Spirit in the Old Testament rested on individuals for special acts of speaking or acting (Num. 24:2; Judges 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; 2 Chron. 15:1). The Spirit could also come on people for a time and then depart, as Saul experienced (1 Sam. 16:14) and David feared (Ps. 51:11).

The Old Testament looks forward to a coming age of the Spirit. Joel 2:28–32 looks forward to the Spirit’s coming upon all God’s people. Ezekiel 36:22–37:14 awaits the day when the Spirit will dwell within God’s people personally and permanently. And Isaiah 11:1–5 promises a Spirit-anointed Branch from the root of Jesse who will usher in the day of salvation for Israel. The New Testament is the story of those prophecies being fulfilled.

(Genesis 1:1-3) In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 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. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.

(Genesis 1:1-2 NRSV) In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

(Psalms 33:6) By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

The Spirit of God gives supernatural strength, wisdom or ability:

(Judges 14:5-6) Samson went down to Timnah together with his father and mother. As they approached the vineyards of Timnah, suddenly a young lion came roaring toward him. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power so that he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat.

(Exodus 31:1-5) Then the LORD said to Moses, "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.

(Isaiah 11:1-4) 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 of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

The Spirit of God inspires some with prophetic ability:

(Numbers 24:2-4) When Balaam looked out and saw Israel encamped tribe by tribe, the Spirit of God came upon him and he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly, the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, who falls prostrate, and whose eyes are opened:"

(1 Samuel 19:23-24) So Saul went to Naioth at Ramah. But the Spirit of God came even upon him, and he walked along prophesying until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his robes and also prophesied in Samuel's presence. He lay that way all that day and night. This is why people say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

The presence of the Spirit is a sign of God's blessing, now and in the future:

(1 Samuel 16:13) 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. Samuel then went to Ramah.

(Isaiah 44:2-4) This is what the LORD says-- he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.

(Joel 2:28-29) 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.'

(Psalms 51:10-12) 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. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus

From conception to birth through life, ministry, death, and resurrection, the Spirit was at work upon and through Christ:

- The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary in the virginal conception (Matt. 1:18, 20).
- The Spirit was upon Simeon when he spoke about Jesus in the temple (Luke 2:25).
- The Spirit rested on Jesus at his baptism (Matt. 3:16).
- Then the Spirit led Jesus, who Luke says was full of the Holy Spirit, into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1).
- Jesus preached in Galilee in the power of the Spirit (4:14) and announced that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to proclaim the good news to the poor (4:18).
- It was by the Spirit of God that Jesus cast out demons (Matt. 12:28).
- Hebrews 9:14 says it was through the Spirit that Christ offered himself as a sacrifice.
- According to Romans 1:4, Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead through the Spirit of holiness.

The creative force behind miraculous births:

(Luke 1:34-37) “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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”

The Spirit’s presence within John (the Baptist) and Jesus:

(Luke 1:13-15) But the angel said to him: “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.

(Luke 3:21-22) 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.”

Jesus’ Teaching on the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John:

(John 3:3-8) Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 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.”

Jesus goes away, but sends the Holy Spirit in his place:

(John 16:5-16) “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.

(John 20:19-23) On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you! ...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit...”

The Holy Spirit is Present With Us

The world-wide church is possible because Jesus is no longer physically here. Back in the first century one had to go to Israel in order to be with Jesus. But now, since Pentecost, Christ can be everywhere by his Spirit. He can dwell in us anywhere at any time. For the disciples, the presence of the Spirit was good news. He would be their Helper-Comforter-Advocate.

THE WORK (OR EFFECTS, OR EVIDENCES) OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Acts 2:1-4) When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

(Acts 10:45-47) The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”

Speaking in Tongues

While these “charismatic evidences” were prominent in the New Testament church, the Apostle Paul indicates that their time will come to an end (1 Corinthians 13:8 “*But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled.*”) In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul gives an extensive teaching on “speaking in tongues” during services of worship. Here is an excerpt:

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one

understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

- ...6 Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? ...9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. ...12 So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.
- ...18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.
- ...22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ...27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

The Holy Spirit Equips

The Holy Spirit not only empowers us for Christlike living, but for Christlike service. The Spirit fills with boldness, courage, wisdom, faith, and joy (Acts 6:3; 11:24; 13:52). The purpose of spiritual gifts is not to impress or even to provide a powerful personal experience. “The manifestation of the Spirit is for the common good and the edification of the church” (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:12, 26). The gifts are for service and ministry for the benefit of the body of Christ. Everyone is gifted by the Spirit for service. This means we can serve. It also means we must serve.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

- (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.
- (Romans 12:4-8) Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a person’s gift is prophesying, let them use it in proportion to their faith. If it is serving, let them serve; if it is teaching, let them teach; if it is encouraging, let them encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let them give generously; if it is leadership, let them govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let them do it cheerfully.

Fruit of the Spirit

The Apostle Paul outlines nine signs of the activity of the Holy Spirit in a person's life and in the life of the community of faith (Galatians 5:22-23): love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

When a believer or congregation allows the Holy Spirit to work in and through them, their life gives evidence of these attributes, just as a healthy tree bears fruit when it is mature.

“Living Faith – A Statement of Christian Belief” - God the Holy Spirit

4.1 The Holy Spirit is God with Us

4.1.1 The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the triune God and is One with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life, the Renewer and Helper of God's people. By the Spirit, God is present in the world, the source of all goodness and justice. By the Spirit, God convicts the world of sin and testifies to the truth of Christ. By the Spirit, Christ is with his church.

4.2 The Holy Spirit Enables People to Believe

4.2.1 The Spirit enables people to receive the good news of Christ, to repent of their sins, and to be adopted as children of God. As we hear and respond to the Gospel we freely turn to Christ. When we have turned and repented, we recognize that the Spirit enabled us to believe.

4.2.2 The Holy Spirit accompanies us on our journey of faith. We may not always be sure of this presence. Yet God's Spirit is with us, sometimes gently, sometimes powerfully, guiding us in the midst of life, our comfort and our help. Christian life is a pilgrimage: it begins, continues, and ends in God.

4.3 The Holy Spirit Forms and Equips the Church

4.3.1 By the Spirit, Christ calls the church into being and unites us to himself and to each other. The Holy Spirit is in all who know Christ.

4.3.2 The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. We pray as a church to be guided into truth knowing that such truth may disturb and judge us.

4.3.3 The presence of the Holy Spirit is seen in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, loyalty, gentleness, and self-control.

4.3.4 The Spirit blesses us with various gifts. We seek to discover those gifts and to use them for our Lord. Faithful loving service is a sign that the Spirit is present. The presence of the Spirit is evident where people are made whole, encouraged, and enabled to grow in Christ.

4.3.5 Come, Holy Spirit!