

The prophets said the Spirit would come upon the Messiah-King (Isa. 11:1–3), that He would be God’s servant (Isa. 42:1), and that this anointed one would preach good news and comfort God’s people (Isa. 61:1–2). They prophesied that a new covenant would come wherein the Spirit would give the people a new heart and the Spirit would bring new spiritual life to God’s people (Ezek. 36:26–27; 37:1–14). The Spirit will be poured out on God’s people at the last day and that they will be restored (Ezek. 39:25–29; Hag. 2:3–5; Zech. 4:6; Mal. 2:15). The Spirit is omnipresent and all but equated the Spirit with God Himself (Isa. 40:13–18).

The Psalms claim that the Spirit was present at creation (33:6), renews life (104:30), is present everywhere (139:7–8), guides believers (143:10), and is taken away from those who perish in their sin (51:11). In the Proverbs, Wisdom is often personified, which the early church fathers identified with the Spirit (e.g. Prov. 1, 8).

In the Synoptic Gospels, the Holy Spirit came upon Mary in such a way that she was impregnated without having sexual intercourse with Joseph or any other man (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18–20). John the Baptist claimed that the one on whose behalf he was preparing the way would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16).

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove at Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:9–11; Matt. 3:13–17; Luke 3:21–22). Immediately afterwards, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12–13; Matt. 4:1). During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He is continually filled with the Spirit. This is demonstrated in His casting out demons and healing people, which points to the coming kingdom (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14–19). To attribute the clear work of God through the Holy Spirit to the work of demonic spirits is to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, which is a damnable offense (Matt. 12:22–32; Mark 3:28–30).

As with the Synoptic Gospels, in John’s Gospel the Spirit comes upon Jesus at his baptism and remains upon him throughout his ministry. Jesus is the one who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit (1:29–30). The Spirit sovereignly regenerates believers, which is necessary for them to see the kingdom (3:1–8; 6:63). Jesus claims He will leave the earth, but promises to send the Spirit, called the “helper” or “comforter” (Greek = *paracletos*), to dwell within and

empower the disciples (14:14–17, 26; 15:26; 16:7–15). When Jesus commissioned his disciples after His resurrection, He breathed the Spirit upon them. This pointed back to God bringing life and power through His breath/Spirit in the Old Testament. In this case, Jesus was empowering his disciples for ministry (John 20:21–23).

In Acts, Jesus promises to pour out His Spirit upon the apostles (1:4–8). This happens at Pentecost, when the Spirit comes upon them and they begin proclaiming the gospel in languages they had never learned (2:1–4, 14–21). Peter explicitly ties this event to the promise of Joel 2:28–29. Peter then promises that everyone who believes will also receive the Spirit (2:38), which echoes Moses’ hope in Numbers 11:29 and Ezekiel’s new covenant prophecy of Ezekiel 36:27. Gentile converts later receive the Spirit in the same way. The apostles and others are frequently filled with the Holy Spirit when they proclaim the gospel (4:8; 6:3–5; 7:55; 10:44–48)

Paul speaks more about the Holy Spirit than any other biblical author. For the sake of time, we will simply summarize the main points he makes and illustrate them with some key verses. The Spirit regenerates us (Tit. 3:5). We are to live in the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:1–17). He indwells believers, sealing us as God’s and thus guaranteeing our salvation (2 Cor. 1:21–22; 3:16; 5:5). He assures us of our salvation (Eph. 1:13). He can be grieved or quenched (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). He gives Christians wisdom for godly living and empowers them for gospel ministry (1 Cor. 2:6–16). The Spirit sovereignly bestows spiritual gifts to each Christian (1 Cor. 12:1–11). He brings about certain spiritual fruit that characterizes our life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–26).

In Hebrews and the General Epistles, God bears witness through the works of the Spirit (Heb. 2:4). Christ offered himself up as the final sacrifice for sin in the power of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 9:13–14). The Spirit also speaks through the Old Testament (Heb. 3:7; 10:15–17). The Holy Spirit is the one who inspired the prophets to speak God’s words (2 Pet. 1:21). The Spirit assures us God abides in us (1 John 3:24). He helps us discriminate spiritual truth from error (1 John 4:1–6). In Revelation, John is “in the Spirit” throughout the time God delivers the prophesy to John (Rev. 1:10a; cf. 4:2; 21:10). The Spirit speaks to the churches through John’s letters to them (Rev. 2:7; cf. 2:11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). The Spirit invites readers of Revelation

be practiced by all Christians. Third Wavers formed interdenominational networks, most notably the Vineyard and Sovereign Grace movements.

Despite the popularity of the miraculous gifts movement, especially in the Majority World, many Christians are cessationists who believe that prophecy and tongues ceased around the end of the apostolic era. A growing number of evangelicals are “open, but cautious” about prophecy and tongues.

What Should We Believe?

We should continue to affirm the historic Christian affirmation of the deity of the Holy Spirit and his place as the third member of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Spirit is developed over the biblical canon, moving from shadow in the OT to clarity in the NT. During the Patristic Era in particular, the church further clarified the person and work of the Spirit in response to various heresies. The Holy Spirit is God—he is worthy of our worship and the one who enables our worship. He regenerates believers, indwells us as he uses our bodies as his temple, seals us as God’s adopted children, empowers us with spiritual gifts, and preserves us in our faith until the end of our lives.

How Should We Then Live?

Be sensitive to the Spirit by listening to His voice in Scriptures, being attentive to His conviction in your heart, and being responsive to His work in the world

Pray that the Holy Spirit would move mightily in your life, your family, our church, and our nation

Keep in step with the Spirit by putting sin to death and cultivating godly virtues

Recommended Reading

J.D. Greear, *Jesus, Continued... Why the Spirit Inside You Is Better than Jesus Beside You* (Zondervan, 2014).

Gregg Allison, *God, Gift, and Guide: Knowing the Holy Spirit* (B&H, 2023).

Fred Sanders, *The Holy Spirit: An Introduction* (Crossway, 2023).

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (IVP Academic, 1997).

Gregg R. Allison and Andreas Köstenberger, *The Holy Spirit* (B&H Academic, 2020).

Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Crossway, 2007).
