THE EQUIP INSTITUTE Theme: Christian Belief Topic: The Holy Spirit Spring 2024 Introduction The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and His Word for the sake of living rightly before God in His world. This week's topic is the Holy Spirit. What's the Big Idea? Christians believe the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity, meaning that He is divine in the same way the Father and the Son are divine. As with the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is developed progressively throughout the canon of Scripture—what is expressed in shadow form in the OT is made clear in the NT. The biblical words translated as spirit in English (Heb = ruach; Gk = pneuma) can also be translated as wind or breath. Context determines which translation to use. What Does the Bible Say? The Spirit was present at creation (Gen. 1:1-2). Human life began when the Spirit was given to mankind (Gen. 2:7). The Spirit of God sovereignly granted particular gifts to particular individuals (Exod. 30:30-35) and empowered godly men for leadership within Israel (Num. 11:16-17; 27:15-23; Deut. 34:9). Moses hoped for a day when the Spirit will come upon all of God's covenant people and cause them to be prophets (Num. 11:29; cf. Joel 2:28-32). Before the kingship was established in Israel, the Spirit empowered particular individuals to act as judges who delivered and led the people (Judges 3:7-10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25). Once the kingship was established, the Spirit came upon Israel's kings and empowered them in a similar way (1 Sam. 10:1, 9-10; 16:13). The Spirit empowered the prophets in their ministry of speaking God's words to his people (Isa. 59:21; Zech. 7:12). The Spirit withdrew his protection from Israel when they grieved Him through



their Sin, though he recalled the days when Moses faithfully led them and the Spirit gave them rest in the

Promised Land (Isa. 63:10-14).

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 then 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

to turn to Christ in faith so that they might receive the blessings promised in the final two chapters (Rev. 22:17). We should avail ourselves of the means of grace that are commanded in Scripture or are consistent with biblical principles.

What Has the Church Said?

In the early church, the primary debate was over the deity of the Holy Spirit and his place within the Trinity. Basil of Caesarea argued for the full divinity of the Spirit and His spiritual equality with the Father and Son. He claimed the Bible, the best of the Christian tradition, and even the church's liturgy all pointed to the Spirit's deity. Basil's views were codified in the Nicene Creed.

Augustine of Hippo agreed with Basil, but he also argued that the Holy Spirit is as much the Spirit of Christ in particular as he is the Spirit of God in general. Augustine claimed the Spirit "proceeded" from the Father and the Son, an idea that Latin-speaking Catholics incorporated into the Nicene Creed by adding the "filioque clause" at the Council of Toledo in 589. This difference played a key role in the Great Schism that divided Christendom into Catholic and Orthodox camps in 1054.

The major Medieval development related to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit had to do with the Spirit's relationship to the church's tradition. After 1000, Catholics became convinced the Spirit inspired unwritten tradition in the same way he inspired the Holy Scriptures, resulting in a "dual authority" view of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. John Wycliffe and John Huss countered that supreme authority rested in the Scriptures and not tradition, though both men appreciated tradition.

The reformers agreed the Spirit had uniquely inspired Scripture and that tradition was a secondary authority at best. John Calvin made an important contribution by arguing that the Word and Spirit work in tandem to bring about God's purposes. Negatively, the Socinians were an Arian movement that denied the Trinity, including the deity of the Holy Spirit. The English Quakers rejected all

structured worship and preaching, relying on the Holy Spirit to come upon them and lead them in their worship gatherings.

During the First Great Awakening in the mid-1700s, John Wesley argued the baptism of the Holy Spirit was a separate event from regeneration. He also entertained the idea of Christian Perfection. In the mid-1800s, Charles Finney and others involved in what came to be called the Holiness movement later echoed Wesley's views in the Second Great Awakening. In the late 1800s, some non-Wesleyan evangelicals countered the Holiness movement with what was called Keswick theology. According to Keswick theology, there are multiple fillings of the Holy Spirit that come and go over time. These fillings empower Christians for evangelism and other ministry and help believers experience victory over particular sins (but not sinless perfection).

Around the turn of the 20th century, the miraculous gits movement became prominent (and controversial) among evangelicals. The movement began with Holiness Christians who argued that speaking in tongues was a sign one had received the second baptism and sinless perfection. In 1901 and (more famously) 1906, outbursts of speaking in tongues made national news.

The Asuza Street Revival of 1906 is often considered the birth of the Pentecostal movement. As a general rule, early Pentecostals formed new denominations and argued that the second baptism was always accompanied by tongues and should be sought by all Christians. The Church of God, Assembly of God, and Church of God of Prophecy are all Pentecostal denominations.

In the late 1950s, a second phase of the miraculous gifts movement began when Christians in mainstream denominations began practicing Pentecostal-like gifts. These "Charismatics" tended to form renewal movements within existing denominations rather than forming new denominations. They also disagreed as to whether every Christian should speak in tongues or whether it was like other spiritual gifts.

In the early 1980s, the "Third Wave" of the miraculous gifts movement began at Fuller Theological Seminary. Third Wave Christians mostly rejected a second baptism in favor of multiple fillings of the Spirit. They also argued speaking in tongues and prophecy were not intended to

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).

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Gregg R. Allison and Andreas Köstenberger, <i>The Holy Spirit</i> (B&H Academic, 2020).
Graham A. Cole, He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Crossway, 2007).

Sinclair Ferguson, The Holy Spirit

(IVP Academic, 1997).