



Holy Spirit



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THE HOLY SPIRIT

God is one God but He has made Himself known in three persons - God the Father, Jesus - God's Son our Lord and Saviour and the Holy Spirit - God with us at work within us and around us. Many people will have their idea of God and can understand something of who He is when expressed as Father. They can also have an idea of who Jesus was and is, but often can struggle with the idea of God as Holy Spirit.

Much of this struggle comes with the name 'Holy Spirit'. Our world is alive with expressions of 'spirituality' and many people equate spirituality and spirit with the idea of some sort of 'force' or 'entity' or 'being' or 'energy' - unseen but there. This can cloud our thinking in relation to the Holy Spirit. The difference between these ideas and the expression of God as Holy Spirit is that the Holy Spirit is not a force but a person, the third person of God. The Bible does not talk about the Holy Spirit as some sort of inanimate object but as a 'He'. This is a concept that is, admittedly, difficult to understand.

Looking at the Bible it can be seen that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a person. The Holy Spirit:

Thinks (Romans 8 vs 27, Acts 15 vs 28)

Speaks (Acts 1 vs 16, Psalm 41 vs 9)

Acts (Acts 8 vs 39, Romans 8 vs 14)

Feels (Romans 15 vs 30, Galatians 4 vs 6)

SYMBOLS

The Bible sometimes resorts to use of symbols when referring to the Holy Spirit to give us a better idea of what He is like and what He does:

- Wind (John 3 vs 8) giving the idea of freshness and invigoration
- Fire (Acts 2 vs 3) a symbol of God's presence and assurance
- Water (John 4 vs 10 to 15) renewal and regenerating cleansing power
- Dove (John 1 vs 32 & 33) a sign of purity and peace
- Oil (Romans 15 vs 18 & 19) anointing and healing activity

OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Spirit can be found at work from the very beginning of creation, in Genesis 1 vs 2:

"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".

Throughout the Old Testament God often worked in and through people by the Holy Spirit, but the power of the Holy Spirit came upon certain people for a certain task at a certain time. In some churches the Holy Spirit is referred to as the 'Holy Ghost' and the root of this is actually 'Holy Guest'. This can be a useful way of describing the work of the Holy Spirit in a person's life in the Old Testament, as it was like that of a guest - here for a while then gone. For example the Holy Spirit gave:

- Artistic skills (Exodus 31 vs 1-5)
- Power to lead (Judges 6 vs 34)
- Power to rule (1 Samuel 16 vs 13)
- Ability to prophesy (Nehemiah 9 vs 30)
- Wisdom (Isaiah 11 vs 2)

JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus was born through the activity of the Holy Spirit in Mary. He was born the Son of God through a human mother (Luke 1 vs 26 to 38) and throughout His life He ministered in and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- At His baptism the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus to equip Him for Ministry. Until then He had not taught, healed, delivered, challenged or called His disciples (Luke 3 vs 21 to 23).

- He began His public ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4 vs 14).
- He fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah who said that the Messiah would be anointed with the Spirit (Luke 4 vs 16 to 21).
- Jesus healed people and cast out demons by the power of the Spirit (Luke 11 vs 20)
- He promised His disciples that they would be filled and equipped by the Holy Spirit for service and mission (Luke 24 vs 29, Acts 1 vs 4&5).
- It was Jesus who poured out the Spirit at Pentecost as His disciples waited in Jerusalem as He had asked (Acts 2 vs 33).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND TODAY

There is one big difference between the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and today. Whereas in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was given to certain people at certain times for certain tasks in the New Testament, at Pentecost and from then on, the Holy Spirit is given to all Christians for the duration of their life to help them both live the life they are called to lead in Jesus and to minister to others just as Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was not just given to the disciples in Jerusalem but is given to all followers of Jesus right to the present day.

The New Testament shows the following key facts about this new work of the Holy Spirit:

- The Spirit lives in every believer, He is a sign that they are a Christian (Romans 8 vs 9, John 14 vs 16&17).
- The Spirit works to transform us from within so that we become more like Jesus (Galatians 5 vs 22 to 25).
- The Bible talks of being filled with the Spirit as something different from having the Spirit live within us (Acts 2 vs 4, Ephesians 5 vs 18 to 20). Rather than a one off act literal translation point to the fact that we are to 'go on being' filled by the Spirit.
- The work of the Spirit is to bring unity to those who believe (Ephesians 4 vs 1 to 6).
- Spiritual gifts are given by God to Christians for the good of all. These gifts are special abilities given by God (1 Corinthians 12 vs 7) and are to be used in love (1 Corinthians 13 vs 1 to 13).

Within Thornbury Baptist Church we encourage everyone to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives - after all this is God working in and with us. We encourage everyone to be filled and to go on being filled with His Spirit and to seek God for the gifts that He gives so that the Church can be built up and so that we can bless others. We long to see the Holy Spirit at work both in our lives as individuals and in our corporate life as a Church and so we seek to allow time and space for the work of the Holy Spirit to be expressed as we meet together in our small groups and main meetings.