

What does the Bible teach about.... The Holy Spirit ?

Introduction

Many people who claim to be Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is God Himself. They believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. They believe that the Holy Spirit literally comes into you, and that is how God can literally be in you it gives you eternal salvation come what may. They believe that the Holy Spirit moves them to make strange noises, and shouting, and be full of shaking, and that they have found Jesus. What is even more remarkable it seems, is that they can achieve all this, be a vessel of the Holy Spirit, be eternally saved, able to speak in tongues, and to truly know God, without even reading and understanding the Bible, the very book, - the only book that tells them about God in the first place

God's Spirit – same as His Word, His Power

As we read the Bible, right from the beginning, we quickly find that God's Spirit is in fact comparable to His Power. In Genesis 1:2,3: *the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.* By comparing scripture with scripture, we can see that often, His Spirit is interchangeable with His Word. For example, if we compare the passage in Genesis 1:2,3 just quoted, with Psalms 33:6: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.* Again, in Job 26:13: *By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand has formed the crooked serpent.* See how 'Spirit' and 'Word' are used interchangeably? So also is the word Power used to describe God's Spirit: Jeremiah 10:12: *He hath made the earth by his power...* (see also Jeremiah 51:15, 32:17) God has continued to use His Will, His Spirit, His

energy to look after, and sustain His Creation. In Psalms 104:30: *You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.* It is this power which radiates from God, it fills all space and it makes God's presence to be known and felt - see Psalms 139:7. God's Spirit then, His Power, can be felt everywhere, and seen everywhere in the evidence of all life which has come from him, from the cycle of nature which He set in motion from the beginning. Job recognised this and had to admit: Job 34:14,15: *If he (God) gathers unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.*

God's Spirit, we have clearly seen from the above passages is His breath, His power, His energy, bringing to pass His will. The Bible records that God's power was not just used in a distanced detached way to ensure the creation continues, but that God has used His power in a direct way to interact, and be directly involved with mankind: Jeremiah 27:5 *I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.*

Daniel 2:21 *And he changes the times and the seasons: he removes kings, and sets up kings: he gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:* See also Psalms 75:6-7: His Spirit Power or Strength, which is everywhere, and by which He maintains and sustains all life.

But what about the Holy Spirit?

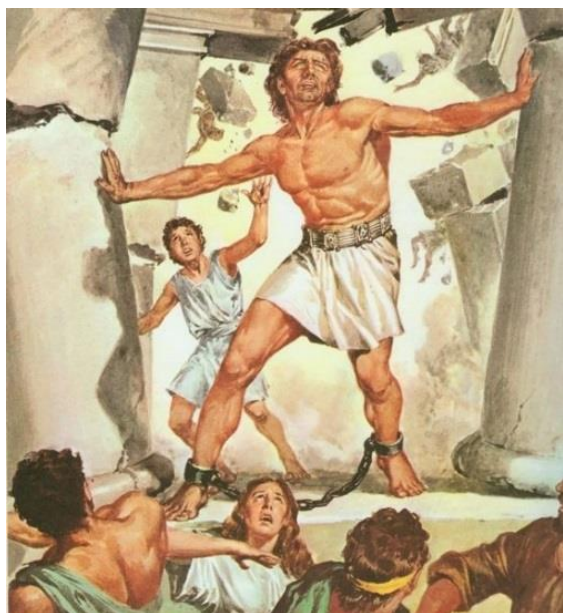
Holy in the Hebrew is *kodesh*, meaning dedicated, sanctified, set apart for a specific purpose. The Holy Spirit is still the Spirit of God, but it is where God has focussed His energy, channelled His power, to ensure that Will with mankind would surely come to pass, and that His promises given to humankind are fulfilled. We will see that where the Holy Spirit is used, it is always to promote His Good News of the Gospel, the message of salvation. It is true the term Holy Spirit is not used very often in the Old Testament.

Examples of The Holy Spirit active in the Old Testament

God dedicated His Spirit, and gave it to men, to ensure His purpose was fulfilled: Take for example the two men who were particularly set apart to make God's Holy tabernacle. They were called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and to assist them and ensure the tabernacle was constructed in the exact pattern God required, they were *filled with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship...* (see Exodus 31: 3-5). Moses also received God's Spirit: *And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated* (Deuteronomy 34:7). The power of God worked upon him giving him wisdom and patience to enable him to lead the people. He was able to foretell the future, and was regarded as a Prophet, (see Deuteronomy 18). Some of this Spirit was shared with others too as we can read: Numbers 11:17: *... and I will take of the spirit which is upon you, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you....* Likewise, the same Spirit was given to Joshua: *And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him:* In the period of the Judges: Othniel a leader of Israel: *And the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the Lord delivered ...Israel.* Gideon, another: *But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and ...the people were gathered after him*



Jephthah, another faithful leader of the specially chosen nation of Israel in the time of the Judges: 11:9 *Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah...*



Another judge: Samson - Judges 13:25: *And the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan ...*

God continued to send His Spirit to work upon chosen leaders of His people. We recall the first king of Israel, Saul who started off so well, but afterwards became consumed with jealousy. 1 Samuel 10:10 *and when they came to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the*

Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them. God selected another man to lead his people, and gave him His Spirit too, His power. King David 1 Samuel 16:13-14: *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, anointed him ... and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David... But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul....* The prophets too, who spoke the Word of God, were able to do so, because God gave them His Spirit: 2 Chron. 24:20 *The Spirit of God came upon Zechariah...and said unto them (the people), Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord...?* It was by having this possession of the Holy Spirit that other messengers were able to carry out miracles, such as raise the dead, heal the sick, make water come out of a rock, turn a jar into a virtual oil well, run faster than a chariot, and so on.

These examples among others show how God has always used His power in specific ways to influence and bring to pass His Will amongst people He has chosen. It was His Holy Spirit in action. The following passages prove it: David under Divine Inspiration showed that he had the Holy Spirit working within him: Psalms 51:10-11. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.* So too the Prophet Isaiah: 63:10-11: *But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit... Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the*

sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament

Is the Holy Spirit spoken of in the New Testament so differently to that of the Spirit of The Lord in the Old Testament? Does this power of God work in a different way in the New Testament than that of the Old? Of course not, the Bible is always consistent. It is true that the term Holy Spirit is used a lot more in the New Testament. In some translations we can read of Holy Ghost, instead of Holy Spirit. Either way, the word means breath. The words Holy Spirit in the New Testament we will quickly see, can be identified with the term Spirit of God, or Spirit of the Lord in the Old Testament, and we will see that there is consistency in the way God works in the New and Old Testaments. The Apostle Paul shows that it was the inspiration of God, that moved the prophets in the Old Testament: 2 Timothy 3:16: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*: The Apostle Peter is even more explicit that it was the Holy Spirit that inspired the prophets, and caused them to write the Words of God; 2 Peter 1:21: *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.

The disciples were commissioned to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Jesus promised that He would not leave them comfortless, but would send them a helper, (we talk about this later a bit more,) as we read in Acts 2: 3. *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*. Like so many prophets and messengers and preachers before, Jesus too, was given the power of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:16. *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him*:

Luke in his gospel record described it as the Holy Spirit.

Only in his case there was a difference. John the Baptist explains: John 3: 34,35 *For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit sparingly unto him. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.* Unlike all who went before, and unlike any who would come after, God sent his own Son to declare His own character, to demonstrate His love to all men- *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Jesus, though born of a woman was no ordinary man. He was also born through the Holy Spirit moving upon Mary. He was born from the Holy Spirit of God, as well as from Mary. God focussed His power and set apart His power, in the miracle of the virgin birth of His own Son. Jesus then was born under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He inherited characteristics from both parents. The nature of man from Mary, his mother, and the perception of the Divine from His Father. The prophet Isaiah was caused to prophecy through the Holy Spirit of the character of Jesus: *And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;*

This was fulfilled exactly in the person of Jesus. We can see clearly then how the Holy Spirit influenced Jesus to be the person he was. This, in no way detracts from the victory that Jesus obtained. True - he did grow up under the influence of the Holy Spirit. True - at age thirty, at his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and possessed the Holy Spirit in fullness, but it only served to enable him to preach with authority, to demonstrate with mighty signs and wonders the absolute Truth and veracity of the Word of God. He was to be God manifest in the flesh. To attain this, He had to reflect God's character in every aspect of His life. This did not mean that his work was made any easier. Like us, he had to drag a weak human nature, around with him everywhere.

Always, like us he had to contend with temptations and passions and the distractions of the flesh. In many ways, it would have been much harder for the Lord, for in having the Holy Spirit, he would have been tempted to misuse that power to make himself look good in front of others, or to misuse it to provide himself with all that this world offers, as when he was tempted in the wilderness. Never did Jesus misuse the Holy Spirit. He knew exactly



what it was for. If he ever used it for his own benefit, he knew it would have been a sin. Every time we read in the Gospels of Jesus performing a miracle, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, reading someone's mind even,

predicting the future, escaping unwelcome hero worship and attentions of the crowds, it was never for Himself, but always he used it for the promotion of the Gospel. What is noticeable is that when the ultimate moment of testing came, when the hour of agony and pain upon the cross, Jesus had to bear it like any other man, for the Holy Spirit was taken from him at that moment, and he cried *My God, My God why hath thou forsaken me.. Into thy hands I commend my spirit*. But God, through the power of His Holy Spirit, caused Jesus to be brought back to life again, released him from the grave, rolling back the stone. Shortly after, Jesus was blessed with immortality. We can see then how Jesus was a special case, in the way in which he used the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit given to The Apostles

Others also were also given the Holy Spirit, and it was given in much the same way as before the Lord Jesus. When he was alive Jesus promised his disciples that they would not be left alone, but that He would send them a Comforter, and that this Comforter would teach them all things. We can read of this promise in John 14:26: *But the Comforter, which is the Holy*

Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Unlike with the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples and apostles in a limited way, with restrictions. At first the immediate disciples were given the Holy Spirit in the form of gifts at the feast of Pentecost, when the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to them as promised, Acts 2: 3-4 *And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.* And we can read how that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

Why the Holy Spirit gifts were given?

Now the Holy Spirit was not given to the Apostles, just because that Jesus was worried that they might feel lonely because he had gone to heaven! but he gave the Holy Spirit gifts for a specific reason. To enable the good news of the Kingdom, and that the forgiveness of sins to be preached to all the world.

Yet what evidence did they have to convince the sceptical Jew? that the law of Moses they cherished and clung to fervently as part of their national identity, had now been fulfilled by the real thing - namely the life and teachings of one Jesus of Nazareth? Similarly, what evidence, what authority did they have to convince the superstitious Barbarians, fashionable Greeks and idolatrous Romans that everything they believed in was completely empty and false, and that they were simply wasting their time, and that instead this teaching of Jesus Christ is true?

They had no scripture or direct proof that these things were true. So the Holy Spirit was distributed in various forms to provide that authority; thus we can read Mark 16:20: *They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.* The reasons why the Holy Spirit gifts were given are clearly recorded: Ephesians

4:8,12 *When Jesus ascended up on high (to the right hand of God), he...gave (spirit) gifts unto men...for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the (preaching) ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ", i.e. the believers.*

The Holy Spirit in operation

It was through the preaching of the Gospel, by Apostles who were once 'unlearned men', now able to speak in many different languages, so that others could understand them.

Other Apostles could through the Holy Spirit heal, and cure people of diseases, others could prophecy. All aspects which could demonstrate that they were telling the Truth. Because of course, the early disciples did not have the scriptures in the form that we do now! The Christian message was new to the Gentiles. It was a new era. The Holy Spirit through the gift of prophecy gave guidance to the young ecclesias. As new converts came to an understanding, they too were blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This was carried out by the laying on of hands. There is no example where the giving of the Holy Spirit suddenly granted men and women with a full understanding of scripture, nor did it give them their faith, or their belief. It did not replace the Gospel, nor did it guarantee any one a right to salvation. Never could individuals just use the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they saw fit. It was not possible. We recall what happened when a couple lied against the Holy Spirit. Both died instantly (Acts 5:1-3). Saul was given the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy, did it guarantee him salvation? David prayed that the Holy Spirit be not taken from him, he recognised that the power was in God's hands. In the New Testament, the Apostle Peter was found to be in error and was reproved (Galatians 2:14). The Holy Spirit



gifts were no guarantee of salvation. Instead, it is the very words that the Holy Spirit inspired, the words of God directed through men, including Christ Jesus himself, that can provide salvation.

The Holy Spirit – the Word of God

Peter made this clear to believers, it was through words, *whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved* (Acts 11:14) Paul to Timothy wrote: 1 Timothy 4:16: Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. Jesus himself taught: *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* And again: *He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be condemned.* Paul to the Corinthians: *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.* It was not necessary for a man to receive or have the Holy Spirit in order to understand the Scriptures in the first place either, either at the time of the Apostles and most certainly not now. We read in Acts 8 how that those at Samaria had believed and had been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, and then afterwards they received the Holy Spirit. Never do we find that Holy Spirit gifts replaced the Word of God, they merely reinforced the spoken word, Paul makes it clear to the Romans 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* The Holy Spirit is itself the Inspired Word of God. It is this Word, this revealed will of God operating on the mind of an individual that presents a choice to him. Having knowledge is nothing, if action does not follow. The power of the Holy Spirit, through the Word is such that it compels the sincere believer into obeying the Word. This is how the Holy Spirit operates, and always has operated in men and women. It transforms individuals from worldly thinking, to a spiritual and heavenly. All of this is possible through the Holy Scriptures.

No Holy Spirit Gifts today

Now there are no Holy Spirit gifts. We are unable to receive direct guidance through revelation, prophecy or through open vision. Everything we need

for salvation has been recorded by the Lord Jesus, by the Apostles and prophets. Indeed Paul spoke of when the gifts would be withdrawn: 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 *Charity never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* The spirit gifts possessed in the first century were to be withdrawn "when that which is perfect is come". This cannot be referring to the second coming of Christ, seeing that at that time the gifts will be given again. The Greek word translated "perfect" strictly means 'that which is full or complete'. What complete thing would replace the partial knowledge which the early Christians had as a result of the gift of prophecy? Surely it is the inspired words of God; **the Bible**. Indeed Paul told Timothy which we have already referred to: 2 Tim. 3:16,17 *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect or complete.* That which makes perfect or complete is all scripture. Once all scripture ordained and inspired by God to the Apostles had been written down and recorded for posterity, then 'that which is perfect had come', and there being no more need for the Holy Spirit gifts, they were withdrawn. Significantly in Jesus' exhortations to the last ecclesias in Asia, recorded in the last book of the Bible, over and again Jesus said: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* Not one reference to any of the gifts, or outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit, but to hear the Word. Now we are in the same situation today. The Holy Spirit is still here, in the form of the Holy Scriptures.

How the Holy Spirit can be in us Today

Now Paul explains how the Spirit of Christ, which is the Holy Spirit in action can be in each one of us. Let us turn to Romans 8:11,13-14 *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also enliven your mortal bodies by his Spirit that*

dwells in you. For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you through the Spirit do kill the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Endless claims of possessing the Holy Spirit are nothing, it is this simple formula that must be followed. Paul says: *take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* Jesus said: *It is the spirit that quicken [makes us alive]; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.*

It is through putting the Word into practice that we are influenced by the Holy Spirit of God today.

Holy Spirit used by God and His Son Jesus Christ

God also continues to use His Holy Spirit to move the nations, as we learned by referring to Daniel and other prophets earlier. God also hears our prayers through the intercession of the Lord Jesus, via His Holy Spirit. He also works in our lives through the ways of Providence, in the same way as he moves the nations, God uses His Holy Spirit to lead us from temptation, not to lay upon us more temptations than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Not just in our lives individually but also collectively, through the Holy Spirit operating through men and women in fellowship, through obedience to the Word, a decision is made, and it can be said to be the mind of Christ, (see Philippians 1:27) in this way the Spirit of Christ not only is present in individuals but also should pervade the whole ecclesia. (1 Corinthians 1:10) Still, even though the Spirit of Christ can be working through an ecclesia, it does not mean that the ecclesia is infallible, because quite simply, the Holy Spirit does not operate directly, and there is always the ever present danger of the mere opinions of man creeping in. Yet despite the Holy Spirit not working directly in our lives, we can still become like Christ. 2 Peter 1:3,4: *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

Finally friends we would leave you with the words of the Apostle showing the evidence of the end result of the Holy Spirit working in each one of us, if we let it: Galatians 5:22-25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*



**The gospel of Christ...is the
Power of God to salvation for
everyone who believes...**

Romans 1:16