

Holy Spirit

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I. Person of the Holy Spirit

A. Common Views about the Holy Spirit

1. Most evangelicals affirm the Trinity, yet many seem confused about the Holy Spirit. In 2022, 96% of US evangelicals strongly affirmed belief in “one true God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit” (i.e., the Trinity). In this doctrine, the Holy Spirit is a divine person who co-exists eternally with the Father and the Son. Yet 51% strongly agreed (and 9% somewhat agreed) that “the Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.”¹
2. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Unitarians deny the personhood of the Spirit.
 - a. Jehovah’s Witnesses commonly describe “holy spirit” (no capitals) as God’s “invisible, active force.”
 - b. Unitarians equate “the holy spirit” with God’s “power.”
3. Mormons regard “the Holy Ghost” as a third God.
 - a. Mormons prefer the title “Holy Ghost” (derived from the KJV) rather than “Holy Spirit.”
 - b. Mormons view the Holy Ghost as a third God in the “Godhead,” a triumvirate of Gods (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) who rule our world.
4. Oneness Pentecostals regard the Holy Spirit as another term for God. They generally view the Holy Spirit as referring to God in his imminent mode of activity. The Father and the Holy Spirit are the same being.

B. Answering Arguments against the Spirit’s Personhood

1. Neuter pronouns show that the Holy Spirit is not a person. See, e.g., “The Spirit *itself* beareth witness with our spirit,” Rom. 8:16 KJV.
 - a. Ancient Greek had three grammatical “genders” in its nouns, pronouns, and adjectives, which we label as masculine, feminine, and neuter. The endings of such words can vary to express these different genders, e.g., *autos* (“he,” masc.), *autē* (“she,” fem.), *auto* (“it,” neut.).
 - b. Nearly always, a pronoun’s gender conforms to the gender of the noun to which it refers, regardless of whether the noun denotes a person. Thus *ophthalmos* (“eye”) is masculine and takes masculine pronouns, while *zōē* (“life”) is feminine and takes feminine pronouns.
 - c. The noun translated “spirit” or “Spirit,” *pneuma*, is neuter, and therefore regularly takes neuter pronouns, as in Romans 8:16.
 - d. The rest of Romans 8:16 says, “that we are the children of God.” The Greek word for “children” here is *teknon*, which is neuter and which takes neuter pronouns,

¹ Ligonier Ministries and LifeWay Research, *The State of Theology* (Ligonier, 2022), <https://thestateoftheology.com/>.

although this isn't evident in English translations (Rom. 9:8; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 6:4; Phm. 10; 2 John 1).

- e. A synonymous noun meaning child, *paidion*, is also neuter, and it is used of Jesus eleven times in Matthew and Luke, both of whom use neuter pronouns to agree with the noun (Matt. 2:13; Luke 2:28, 40).
2. The Holy Spirit does not have a name.
 - a. This is one of many arguments from silence used by critics of the doctrine of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. Such arguments are normally fallacious.
 - b. Since the Holy Spirit did not become a human, he does not need a human name such as Jesus or John.
 - c. The Bible uses the word “name” (Greek, *onoma*) to refer to what we would call titles as well as proper names, e.g., “Father” (Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2; etc.), “Christ” (Matt. 24:5; 1 Peter 4:14, 16), “Son” (Heb. 1:4–5), and more.
 - d. In this sense of a title, “Holy Spirit” is a name, as is explicit in Matthew 28:19—“baptizing them in *the name* of the Father and of the Son and of *the Holy Spirit*.”
 3. The Holy Spirit is “missing” from places that refer to the Father and the Son.
 - a. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in Paul’s salutations (usually “Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”). However, he is mentioned in the salutation in 1 Peter 1:1–2: “according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, in the sanctification of *the Spirit*, for obedience to *Jesus Christ* and for sprinkling with his blood.” In Revelation, John’s salutation mentions “the seven spirits who are before his throne” between “him who is and who was and who is to come” (i.e., God the Father) and “Jesus Christ” as the source of “grace and peace” (Rev. 1:4–5), one of several reasons to view the “seven spirits” as a reference to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. There are passages that mention the Father and the Spirit but not the Son (e.g., Luke 11:13; 1 Thess. 4:8) and others that mention the Son and the Spirit but not the Father (e.g., Matt. 12:31–32; Acts 9:31; Gal. 3:13–14; 1 Peter 1:11–13). No theological deductions may be drawn from the “omissions” in such texts.
 - c. It is a fallacious argument from silence to infer that the Holy Spirit doesn’t exist because he isn’t mentioned in certain passages.
 4. Luke 1:35 defines the Holy Spirit as the power of God.

(“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”)

 - a. The Father is called “the Power of God” in the same book (Luke 22:69), and Paul calls Jesus “the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). These texts don’t mean that Jesus or the Father is an impersonal power. (Nor do they mean that the Father or Jesus is the Holy Spirit! The texts aren’t meant to be used together in that way.)
 - b. Paul also called the gospel “the power of God” (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18).

- c. Luke 1:35 is Hebrew parallelism, in which parallel elements may be closely related without being definitionally synonymous (e.g., “your seed . . . your throne,” Ps. 89:4; “my Spirit . . . my blessing,” Isa. 44:3).
5. The Hebrew and Greek words for spirit mean blowing air.
- a. The argument in detail
 - (1) The Hebrew word for “spirit,” *rûach*, expresses the idea of moving air, either as breath or wind, and is in fact used with those meanings frequently in the OT.
 - (2) Similarly, the Greek word for “spirit,” *pneuma*, is based on the verb *pneō*, “blow,” so that its root or basic meaning is wind or breath. In the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint, LXX), the Greek word *pneuma* often means “spirit” but also is used frequently to translate *rûach* in places where it most likely means wind or breath.
 - (3) These meanings also occur in the NT: “The **wind** [*pneuma*] blows [*pnei*] where it wishes” (John 3:8); “whom the Lord will kill with the **breath** [*pneumati*] of his mouth” (2 Thess. 2:8).
 - b. Words for spirit in the Old Testament
 - (1) The Hebrew *rûach* occurs about 377 times in the Hebrew OT, around 115 usually translated “wind(s)” and about 30 times as “breath” (together accounting for about 38% of occurrences). About 123 times it means a human “spirit,” with the actual nuance varying with context. About 18 times it refers to heavenly or other nonhuman spirits.
 - (2) As many as 87 times or so, *rûach* refers to the divine Spirit, and in the ESV and other English versions “Spirit” is capitalized in the OT about 75 times or so.
 - (3) The Greek *pneuma* occurs 287 times in the LXX. It means “wind” about 49 times. The LXX also uses *anemos*, which consistently means wind, 53 times. *Pneuma* means “breath” about 32 times. The LXX also uses *pnoē*, which means breath, 19 times. In short, the LXX uses *pneuma* to mean wind or breath only in about 28% of occurrences.
 - (4) Roughly 206 times in the LXX, *pneuma* is usually understood to mean “spirit” (either a human or angelic spirit or the divine Spirit).² Here again, *pneuma* refers to the divine Spirit about 87 times, as in the Hebrew OT.
 - (5) In all, roughly 20% of occurrences of *rûach* in the Hebrew OT and 30% of *pneuma* in the LXX refer to the divine Spirit.
 - (6) These numbers are all approximations because there are a fair number of texts where the correct translation is disputed, especially in the Hebrew text.

² The word *spirit* occurs 223 times in Brenton’s English translation of the LXX, most of which are renderings of *pneuma*. The NETS version of the LXX has *spirit* 221 times, suggesting that there is at least general agreement about the number of such occurrences. The word *wind* occurs 82 times in Brenton’s LXX and 80 times in the NETS, while the word *breath* occurs 41 times in Brenton and 44 times in the NETS.

c. Words for spirit in the New Testament

- (1) The Greek word *pneuma* exhibits a far narrower range of usage in the NT than it does in the LXX, and much more than does *rûach* in the Hebrew OT. The word *pneuma* occurs 379 times in the Greek NT, and it is translated there as “spirit” or “Spirit” in the ESV 343 times³ (i.e., 90.5% of the time) and “spirits” 32 times (about 8.5%).⁴ About 239 of these occurrences, or 63% of all uses of *pneuma* in the NT, are capitalized (“Spirit”). Only in 4 places in the NT (1%) does the ESV use a different word, either “wind” (John 3:8) or “breath” (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 11:11; 13:15), and probably in all four places it is used in connection with an evil spirit (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 13:15) or God’s Spirit (John 3:8; Rev. 11:11).⁵
- (2) Notice that the NT refers to God’s “Spirit” *much* more often than the OT. There are slightly more than three times as many occurrences of “Spirit” in the NT than in the OT, even though the OT is about three times the length of the NT! What this disparity reflects is that the Holy Spirit, though active in the OT era, does work in the NT era that is more prominent and that reveals much more about him than was known prior to the coming of Christ.

d. Why these usages do not disprove the personhood of the Spirit

- (1) Arguments defining a word based on its etymology or supposed “root” or “basic” meaning are exegetically fallacious.⁶ For example, the English word *nice* derives etymologically from the Latin word *nescio*, which meant “ignorant,” but this tells us nothing about the meaning of the word *nice*!
- (2) The derivation of the Hebrew word *’el*, “God” (e.g., Isa. 9:6) is uncertain, but “one may conjecture that its basic meaning expressed power.”⁷ Of course, this doesn’t mean that God is an impersonal power.
- (3) The NT rarely if ever uses the word *pneuma* with the sense of “breath”⁸ and never to mean “wind,” except in symbolic imagery in reference to the Spirit of God (“wind,” John 3:8a; “breath,” 2 Thess. 2:8). The usual words with these meanings are *pnoē* (Acts 2:2, where the “sound like a mighty rushing wind” is a manifestation of the Spirit; see also “breath,” 17:25) and *anemos*, “wind” (31 times in the NT, e.g., Mark 4:37–41). In short, the NT exhibits a far narrower range of usage for *pneuma* than the OT does for either *rûach* in Hebrew or *pneuma* in Greek. This narrower semantic range is consistent with the progressive revelation of the person of the Holy Spirit (see next point).

³ The ESV also adds the word “spirit” in its second occurrence in 1 John 4:3.

⁴ The ESV also uses “elemental spirits” to translate *stoicheia* (Col. 2:8, 20).

⁵ Some commentators argue that the “breath of life” in Rev. 11:11 refers to the Spirit of God (cf. Ezek. 37:14) and that the “breath” given to the image of the beast in Rev. 13:15 is either trickery or a demonic spirit.

⁶ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 28–33.

⁷ W. H. Schmidt, “’el God,” in *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 107.

⁸ See note above regarding Rev. 11:11; 13:15.

- (4) Christian theologians have generally conceded that there is little if any clear indications in the OT of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. This lack is roughly parallel to the lack of any distinct revelation in the OT of the preexistent divine Son as a distinct person. Note that the OT does not teach that the divine Spirit is *impersonal*, either. Rather, in general the OT speaks of the Spirit as an expression of God's power and presence without offering any theological explanation. Scripture reflects the progressive character of God's revelation in history that climaxes with the Incarnation (Heb. 1:1–2). The distinct persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit are clearly revealed in the New Testament in the embodied coming of the Son and in the empowering coming of the Spirit.
- (5) In a few places in the OT, some hints or anticipatory indications may be seen of the person of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most striking is in Isaiah 48:

I, even I, have spoken and called him;
I have brought him, and he will prosper in his way.
Draw near to me, hear this:
from the beginning I have not spoken in secret,
from the time it came to be I have been there.”
And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit. (Isa. 48:15–16)

The speaker in verse 15 and the first three lines of verse 16 is clearly God. There is much debate about the speaker in the last line of verse 16. The best interpretation seems to be that the speaker in that line is the Servant, already introduced in 42:1–4, and who will appear just a few verses later in chapter 49. Although it would go beyond what the text actually says to infer a doctrine of the Trinity from it, we do see here a dual sending of the Servant and of the Spirit of God, which is explicated in the NT as God the Father sending of Jesus as the Messianic Son/Servant and of the Holy Spirit (e.g., John 14–16; Gal. 4:4–6).

6. One should distinguish between *pneuma* with and without the article. Supposedly, “the (holy) spirit” means one thing and “(holy) spirit” without the article means something else. (How this distinction would eliminate personhood for the Spirit is variously explained.)

Gordon Fee has stated: “The noun πνεύματος lacks the definite article, thus indicating that the presence or absence of the article with πνεῦμα does not determine whether Paul intends *the* Spirit in any given instance. Otherwise N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh, 1965), 17–22. The clue to this usage, both in Paul and in Luke-Acts, is probably related to various constructions with certain cases and has nothing to do with the Spirit's personality. Cf. the usage of the article with personal names in the Gospel of John (G. D. Fee, *NTS* 17 [1970/71], 168–83).”⁹

7. The Holy Spirit is often described in impersonal language.

⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 122 n. 294.

(We will look at several examples and offer responses for each.)

- a. The Spirit can be **“given” to and “received”** by people (Luke 11:13; John 3:34; 7:39; 14:17; 20:22; Acts 2:33, 38; 5:32; 8:15–19; 10:45, 47; 15:8; 19:2; Rom. 5:5; 8:15; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Gal. 3:2, 14; 1 Thess. 4:8; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). On the other hand, God “gave” his Son (John 3:16; Rom. 8:32). Christ’s own people did not “receive” him, but those who did “receive” him became God’s children (John 1:11–12; see also 5:43). The Son of God gave himself (Gal. 2:20). Believers “received Christ Jesus the Lord” (Col. 2:6). The Lord “receives” his sons (Heb. 12:6). People who “receive” the disciples or a child in Jesus’ name also “receive” him (Matt. 10:40; 18:5; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:5, 48, 53; 10:8, 10; John 13:20). When Jesus ascended, heaven “received” him (Acts 3:21). A prophet can also be “received” (Matt. 10:41). Jesus was accused of “receiving” sinners (Luke 15:2, cf. 15:27). The idea of “receiving” people occurs in various contexts (e.g., Luke 16:4, 9; 19:6; Acts 21:17; 28:7; Gal. 4:14; Phil. 2:29; Phm. 17; Heb. 11:19, 35; James 2:25; 2 John 10). God “gave” Israel Saul as their king (Acts 13:21).
- b. The Holy Spirit can be **“in you”** (John 14:17; Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16), but so can Christ (John 14:20; 15:4; 17:21; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:15; Col. 1:27; 1 John 4:4 [God/Christ]).
- c. People can be **“baptized in/with”** the Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13) and “filled with” the Spirit (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Micah 3:8; Luke 1:15, 41, 67; 4:1; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; 13:9, 52; Eph. 5:18). On the other hand, Satan “filled” Ananias’s “heart” (Acts 5:3). God “fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23), and believers are to “be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). Christ ascended “that he might fill all things” (Eph. 4:10, cf. 4:13, “the fullness of Christ”). The NT does not speak of being baptized in/with Christ because he is the one who baptizes believers in/with the Spirit (see above references).
- d. The Spirit can be **“poured out”** (Acts 2:17, 18, 33; 10:45; Titus 3:5–6; Isa. 32:15; 44:3; cf. Rom. 5:5, “God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us”). However, a human being can also be “poured out” (of Paul, Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6). David said, “I am poured out like water” (Ps. 22:14).
- e. Several of these expressions reflect the motif of the Spirit as being **like “water”** (John 7:37–39, cf. 4:10–15). On the other hand, Jeremiah 17:13 says that the Lord is “the fountain of living water.” Human beings can (and should!) “thirst” for God (Ps. 42:2; 63:1; 143:6). And the metaphors of the Spirit likened to water are incompatible with the views of the Spirit as a force or energy.
- f. The Spirit is described as being **like fire** (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 2:3–4). On the other hand, God is said to be “like” fire (Deut. 9:3; Mal. 3:2) or even to *be* fire (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29; cf. Exod. 3:2–4), as well as being “light” (Ps. 27:1; Isa. 60:19; Micah 7:8; 1 John 1:5; Rev. 22:5) and “love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

C. The Names of the Holy Spirit

1. Spirit (general information)

a. What is a spirit?

- (1) In general, a “spirit” (*pneuma*) is an entity or being that is normally invisible to human perception. Thus God is (a) spirit (John 4:24), angels are spirits (Heb. 1:7, 14), the resurrected Christ is called “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45), and demons are spirits (some 54 times in the NT, both singular and plural). Hebrews 12 apparently refers to departed human beings as “spirits” (Heb. 12:9, 23). It is therefore consistent with NT usage to understand the Holy Spirit to be personal.
- (2) A closely related sense is that the “spirit” is the inner aspect of a human being, however this might be understood. In several places, the NT speaks of a person’s “spirit” as going to God at death or returning to the body when being made alive (Matt 27:50; Luke 8:55; 23:46; John 19:30; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 5:5; James 2:26).
- (3) Other uses of *pneuma* in the NT appear to be idiomatic or more broadly figurative uses related to the meaning of a human’s inner aspect. This includes references, mostly in Paul, to the “spirit” or attitude a person or group exhibits (1 Cor. 4:21; 6:17; 2 Cor. 4:13; Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 1:7; 1 Peter 3:4).

2. Variations on the name of the divine “Spirit”

- a. “The Spirit of the Lord” (Luke 4:18, quoting Isa. 61:1; Acts 5:9; 8:39; 2 Cor. 3:17; 23 times in the OT)
- b. “The Spirit of God” (Matt. 3:16; 12:28; Rom. 8:9, 14; 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:11, 14; 7:40; 12:3; Eph. 4:30; Phil. 3:3; 1 John 4:2; 14x in the OT); similarly, “the Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3); “the Spirit of glory and of God” (1 Peter 4:14)
- c. References to the Father’s Spirit: “the Spirit of your Father” (Matt. 10:20); “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom. 8:11a); “his” (i.e., God the Father’s) Spirit (Rom. 8:11b; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 3:16; 1 John 4:13)
- d. References to Christ’s “Spirit”: the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19); the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11 [in the OT!]); the Spirit of his Son (Gal. 4:6 [cf. Ps. 103:30 LXX (104:30)])
- e. “the Spirit” (about 121 times in the NT)
- f. “the Holy Spirit” (about 91 times in the NT, including all four Gospels, Acts, and 11 of the epistles; also in Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10–11); see also “the Spirit of holiness” (Rom. 1:4)
- g. “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6); cf. John 4:23–24; 1 John 5:6
- h. “the seven spirits” (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), probably an apocalyptic symbol of the sevenfold Spirit fully manifested in the Messiah, cf. Isa. 11:1–2.

3. Some reflections on the uses of the title “Spirit”

- a. The Spirit is clearly not *separable* from God, nor specifically from the Father. He is the Spirit of God/the Lord, the Spirit of the Father. Somewhat understandably, then, some readers of the Bible have understood the Spirit to be simply an aspect of God's being. Certainly the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is a separate deity, as in Mormonism, is utterly out of sync with Scripture.
 - b. Yet the Spirit is also the Spirit of Jesus Christ the Son. We find this idea expressed in Acts, in Paul, and in 1 Peter. That the Spirit is not just the Spirit of God the Father but is also the Spirit of Jesus Christ makes it unworkable to view the Spirit as nothing more than an aspect of God's being.
 - c. These connections of the Spirit to both the Father and the Son are not conflicting views from different biblical writings. Both sorts of connections are made in Acts, in Paul, and in 1 Peter, and they are tightly expressed together in Romans 8:9–11: “the Spirit . . . the Spirit of God . . . the Spirit of Christ . . . the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead . . . his Spirit.”
 - d. The frequent *unqualified* references to “the Spirit” or “the Holy Spirit” acting (speaking, directing, regenerating, sanctifying, etc.), which overwhelmingly dominate NT references (some 213 out of 239 references to the divine Spirit), also make it problematic to view the Spirit as merely a power shared by the Father with the Son.
4. Paraclete (*paraklētos*), “Helper,” “Comforter,” “Advocate”
- a. The Greek word *paraklētos* occurs in the Bible only in John's writings (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).
 - b. Various translations of the word
 - (1) The traditional renderings of this word in the Gospel of John are “Comforter” (KJV, ASV, etc.) and “Helper” (NASB, NKJV, ESV).
 - (2) Older Catholic versions of the Gospel of John sometimes simply transliterated the word, beginning with the Vulgate (*paracletus*), in English “Paraclete” (Douay-Rheims; NJB). This choice is comparable to translations using the transliterations “baptize” and “baptism.”
 - (3) For about a generation now, the trend has been to translate the word as “Advocate” in the Gospel of John (NEB/REB, NIV, NRSV, NET, NLT, NABRE), as virtually all English versions throughout history have done in 1 John 2:1 (even the Latin Vulgate there, *advocatus*).
 - c. Two main theories of the word's meaning
 - (1) **Advocate**: As noted above, everyone agrees on this meaning in 1 John 2:1. Outside the Bible, this meaning seems to have been dominant during the NT era, and it was even used in this sense by the Jewish writer Philo.¹⁰ It also fits the juridical (legal) context and language in John, including the idea that the Holy Spirit “will bear witness” (John 15:26) and his role in convicting the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (16:7–11).

¹⁰ Lochlan Shelfer, “The Legal Precision of the Term ‘Paraklētos,’” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 32 (2009): 131–50.

- (2) **Mediator:** Broadly speaking, an advocate is a mediator or intercessor, someone who speaks on behalf of his “client” before a judge. Some scholars have argued that the primary sense of *paraklētos* in John might be that of an agent or “broker” who functions as an intermediary between his client (here, the believer) and a “patron” or benefactor (here, God). This usage would also fit both John 14–16 and 1 John 2:1. On this view, the Spirit’s role is primarily to give believers access to eternal life and other spiritual blessings from God secured by Christ.¹¹ The idea would be at least somewhat related to Paul’s teaching about the Spirit who “intercedes” for us (Rom. 8:26–27).
- (3) We probably don’t need to choose between these two nuances of meaning. Both of them recognize the Holy Spirit as someone acting on our behalf in our relationship with the Father and the Son. The main takeaway here is that the Holy Spirit is a divine person (not an impersonal force) who works in and among believers on behalf of the Father and the Son.

D. The Holy Spirit and Other Persons

1. The Holy Spirit is contrasted with demonic spirits.
 - a. Jesus warns against blaspheming “the Holy Spirit” by calling him “an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:29–30).
 - b. Paul states that “the Spirit expressly says” that some will follow “deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1).
 - c. Immediately after referring to “the Spirit whom he [God] has given us” (1 John 3:24), John warns, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits” (4:1). He goes on to contrast “the Spirit of God” with “the spirit of the antichrist,” and “the Spirit of truth” with “the spirit of error” (4:2–3, 6).
 - d. These passages teach us that the Spirit is personal, just as the demonic spirits are, and that there is a spiritual conflict between the divine Spirit and the demonic spirits at the root of false prophecy and false doctrine.
2. The Gospel of John presents a sustained comparison of the Holy Spirit to Jesus. An astonishingly long list of specific comparisons can be found. Raymond Brown, a Roman Catholic biblical scholar, rightly commented, “As *another Paraclete*, the Paraclete is, as it were, another Jesus.”¹²
 - a. The Son is a “Paraclete” (14:16, implied by “another”; cf. 1 John 2:1); the Holy Spirit is *another* “Paraclete” (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).
 - b. God “gave” the Son (3:16); the Father “will give” the Holy Spirit (14:16).
 - c. The Son was “with” his disciples (3:22; 6:3; 7:33; 11:54; 13:33; 14:9; 15:27; 16:4; 17:12; 18:2); after the Son left, the Holy Spirit was going to be “with” the disciples (14:16).

¹¹ Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-scientific Perspective*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 253 (London: T&T Clark International, 2003).

¹² Raymond E. Brown, “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel,” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966-67): 124.

- d. The Son spoke to the disciples while he “remained” with them (14:25); the Holy Spirit will “remain” with the disciples after the Son is no longer physically with them (14:17).
- e. Unbelievers do not “receive” the Son (1:11; 5:43), but believers do “receive” him (John 1:12; 13:20); unbelievers also do not “receive” the Holy Spirit (14:17) but believers do “receive” him (John 7:39; 20:22).
- f. The world will not “see” the Son any longer, while believers will “see” him (14:19); the world does not “see” the Holy Spirit (14:17).
- g. The world did not “know” the Son (1:10; 16:3) while believers do “know” the Son (10:14; 17:3; 1 John 2:3-4); the world does not “know” the Holy Spirit, while believers do “know” the Holy Spirit (14:17).
- h. The Son is “the Truth” (14:6); the Holy Spirit is “the Truth” (1 John 5:6; cf. John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6).
- i. The Father “sent” the Son (e.g., 14:24; 15:21; 16:5); the Father “will send” the Holy Spirit (14:26, cf. 14:24); the Son “will send” the Holy Spirit (15:26, cf. 15:21; 16:7, cf. 16:5). Notice that in all three of the references to the “sending” of the Holy Spirit, there is in the immediate context a reference to the “sending” of the Son.
- j. The Son came in the Father’s name (5:43); the Holy Spirit will come in the Son’s name (14:26).
- k. The Son “taught” (6:59; 7:14, 28; 8:2, 20; 18:20); the Holy Spirit “will teach” (14:26).
- l. The Son told the disciples “all things” that the Father said (15:15); the Holy Spirit will remind the disciples of “all things” that the Son said (14:26).
- m. The Son came “from the Father” (16:28); the Holy Spirit came “from the Father” (15:26).
- n. The Son “testifies” to the truth and to himself (3:11; 4:44; 5:31; 7:7; 8:14, 18; 13:21; 18:37); the Holy Spirit “testifies” to the Son (15:26).
- o. The Son will execute “judgment” of all people (5:22, 27, 30; 8:16); the Holy Spirit will prepare people by convicting the world about “judgment” (16:8, 11).
- p. The Son “speaks” (e.g., 16:1, 4, 6, 33; *passim*); the Holy Spirit “will speak” (16:13).
- q. The Son does not act or speak “on his own” (*aph’ heautou*, 5:19; 7:18; cf. 7:17; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10); likewise, the Holy Spirit will not speak “on his own” (*aph’ heautou*, 16:13). The deference of the Son to the Father is matched by the deference of the Holy Spirit to the Son.
- r. The Son “speaks” what he “heard” from the Father (8:40); the Holy Spirit “will speak” what he “hears” from the Son (16:13).
- s. The Son came to glorify the Father (12:28; 14:13; 15:8; 17:1, 4); the Holy Spirit came to glorify the Son (16:14).
- t. The Son “will declare” all things (4:25); the Holy Spirit “will declare” the Son’s things (16:14-15).

E. The Holy Spirit and the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. Classic NT “triadic” texts

Several NT texts present the Holy Spirit as one of three divine persons in ways that clearly laid the groundwork for the doctrine of the Trinity.

- a. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Since the Father and the Son are divine persons, it is reasonably clear that the Holy Spirit is also. Moreover, all three persons are jointly the object of confession in the initiatory Christian rite of baptism.
- b. “But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14:26, lit. trans.). We have in this short statement three divine persons coordinated in a nutshell of the New Testament narrative: The Son came here from the Father, returned to heaven, and then the Holy Spirit came from the Father in the Son’s name.
- c. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, but the same God who works all things in all” (1 Cor. 12:4–6). The “same Lord” here is, of course, Jesus (v. 3). Paul uses recognizable Jewish monotheistic rhetoric but in such a way as to distinguish the three divine persons.
- d. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14 [13:13 in some versions]). This sentence closes the epistle and takes the familiar form of a benediction—a liturgical-style prayer for divine blessing on those who are hearing or reading the text. The three phrases all attribute spiritual blessings to the three persons: Grace comes from Christ, love from God, and fellowship from the Holy Spirit. Of course, grace comes from both the Father and the Son (2 Cor. 1:2), and God’s love for us is also Christ’s love for us (5:14).
- e. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal. 4:4–6). Although worded in a manner clearly independent of John (and vice versa), Paul’s statement here teaches the same doctrine we saw in John 14:26. God the Father sent the Son from heaven into the world for our redemption, then sent the Spirit to accomplish the interior work of redemption within us.

2. This “triadic” or implicitly trinitarian pattern appears about 85 times in the NT.

- a. Gospels (e.g., Matt. 1:18–23; Mark 1:8–12 and par.; Luke 1:35; John 16:7–15)
- b. Acts (e.g., Acts 2:33, 38–39)
- c. Paul (e.g., Rom. 8:9–11, 23–34; Eph. 1:3–14; 4:4–6; Titus 3:4–6)
- d. Other epistles (e.g., Heb. 2:3–4; 1 Peter 1:2; Jude 20–21)
- e. Revelation (e.g., Rev. 1:4–5)

II. Work of the Holy Spirit

A. Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to Human Beings

1. The Spirit enabled prophecy in the Old Testament era.
 - a. The OT states several times that “the Spirit of God” or “the Spirit of the LORD [YHWH]” “came upon” or “rested on” individuals who then prophesied (e.g., Num. 11:25–29; 24:2; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; 2 Chron. 15:1; 20:14).
 - b. Nehemiah confessed in prayer, “You gave your good Spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. . . . Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets” (Neh. 9:20, 30).
 - c. Ezekiel states, “The Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me” (Ezek. 2:2; similarly, 3:24; 11:1–5). In these and other texts, the Spirit speaking *is* God speaking.
2. The Spirit speaks in Scripture, in both the OT and the NT.
 - a. Jesus and the NT writers frequently attribute the words of the OT to the Holy Spirit: “It was necessary that the Scripture be fulfilled that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David foretold” (Acts 1:16; see also Matt. 22:43 // Mark 12:36; Acts 4:25; 28:25–27; Heb. 3:7–11; 10:15–17).
 - b. Ephesians 3:5 and 1 Peter 1:12, quoted above, clearly show that the Scriptures originating from the NT apostles and prophets preserve the revelation given in the Spirit.
 - c. “Knowing this first, that all prophecy of Scripture comes not from one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy ever was borne of human will, but humans carried along by [*hupo*] the Holy Spirit spoke from [*apo*] God” (2 Peter 1:20–21, lit. trans.). This classic (and debated) text probably means that prophecy does not originate from the prophet’s own interpretation of events but is the result of the Spirit moving him to speak for God. It is probably a mistake to understand this text to mean that individuals are not supposed to study Scripture with the intention of coming to an understanding of its teachings. While the individual Christian should read Scripture in fellowship with other believers, each person has a responsibility to seek and follow the truth as best he or she can (see Rom. 15:4; 1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16). We must also avoid being misled by untaught and unstable people who twist the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).
3. The Spirit revealed the gospel in an anticipatory way in the OT.

The Spirit revealed through the OT prophets anticipatory indications of the coming of Christ and the blessings of the gospel, but these things were not presented explicitly until Jesus came and his apostles proclaimed the message.

- a. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed’” (Gal. 3:8, cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18).
 - b. “Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:10–12; cf. Matt. 13:17 // Luke 10:24; Heb. 11:39–40).
4. The Spirit has fully revealed the gospel in the NT.
The gospel and associated truths were revealed through the Christian apostles and prophets on the basis of Christ’s own teachings and deeds (see Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11).
- a. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit’s ministry to and through the apostles (John 14–16). His ministry was to be teaching and reminding them of what Jesus said, testifying to Jesus, speaking what he hears from Jesus, and glorifying Jesus.
 - (1) Just as the Son “taught” (6:59; 7:14, 28; 8:2, 20; 18:20), the Holy Spirit who was to come “will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (14:26). This promise was directed specifically to the apostles who had been with Jesus. It does not apply directly to us, since the Holy Spirit does not “remind” us in that context. Of course, we are beneficiaries of this ministry of the Spirit, as are all believers, as we learn from the apostolic writings.
 - (2) Just as the Son “testified” to the truth and to himself (3:11; 4:44; 5:31; 7:7; 8:14, 18; 13:21; 18:37), the Holy Spirit “testifies” to the Son (15:26).
 - (3) Just as the Son spoke what he “heard” from the Father (8:40), the Holy Spirit “will speak” what he “hears” from the Son (16:13).
 - (4) Just as the Son came to glorify the Father (12:28; 14:13; 15:8; 17:1, 4), the Holy Spirit will come to glorify the Son (16:14).
 - b. What the apostles taught were things that “God has revealed to us through [*dia*] the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10). This reference to the Spirit comes in a sizable passage about the work of the Spirit in making the truth about Christ known (1 Cor. 2:1–16, esp. 2:10–16). Just a few comments on this important passage:
 - (1) The gospel is not something that humans could discover on their own, much less invent; it is something that the mind of humans could not imagine (2:9). As such, it could become known only by God revealing it, which he has done through the Spirit (2:10). This revelation is the key part of what Christian theology calls special revelation, the knowledge that God gives through such special means as prophets and apostles, but supremely in Christ’s coming.
 - (2) Paul distinguishes the *means* of revelation, the impartation of the gospel through the apostles (2:7, 13a), and the *recipients* of that revelation, which are we who have received “the Spirit who is from God” and who are in that sense “spiritual” (2:12, 13b, 15). It is an error to seek knowledge of the gospel apart from its revelation through the apostles and their associates, preserved for us in the NT.

- (3) 1 Corinthians 2:14 does not mean that unbelievers cannot have any cognitive grasp of the gospel truth, or it would entail the absurd conclusion that they must first believe the gospel before they understand it. Rather, the natural person (the unbeliever) does not *accept* the things of the Spirit and regards them as *folly* and so does not come to know them—to understand them as true. (*Knowledge* entails mental awareness and recognition of something that is actually true.) The implication is that a work of the Spirit is needed for such persons to perceive that the gospel is not foolish after all but is worthy of acceptance.
5. The Spirit spoke to establish the church in Acts.
The Spirit spoke to and through the apostles and other Christian leaders in the mission to establish the church as the new covenant gospel community.
 - a. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost to launch the Christian movement (2:4, 17–18, 33, 38).
 - b. He emboldened the apostles to maintain their witness in the face of opposition (4:8, 25, 31; 5:32; 20:22–23; 21:4, 11).
 - c. His presence emboldened Stephen as he became the first Christian witness to be martyred for his faith (7:51, 55).
 - d. He directed the taking of the gospel outside the Jewish people for the first time to the Samaritans (8:15, 17) and the Ethiopian (8:29, 39).
 - e. He filled the church’s former archenemy Saul as part of the process of turning him into the church’s greatest missionary (9:17).
 - f. He directed Peter to preach to Gentiles and supernaturally validated their faith (10:19, 44–47; 11:12, 15–16; 15:8).
 - g. He sent Barnabas and Saul (Paul) on their first evangelistic mission (13:2, 4).
 - h. He participated in the decision of the Jerusalem Council to admit Gentiles into Christian fellowship without requiring their submission to the Mosaic Law (15:28).
 - i. He directed Paul’s missionary travels, preventing him from staying in Eastern Europe to move him in the more strategic direction of Western Europe (16:6–10).
 6. There is continuity and discontinuity between the Spirit’s work in Acts and today.
 - a. The Spirit-promoted boldness that marked the apostles should also mark believers as they share the gospel today (e.g., Phil. 1:14).
 - b. We may accept well-sourced accounts of the Spirit giving extraordinary guidance to people in ministry today, but it was never an expected, normal experience (even for the apostles).
 - c. The Spirit continues to give gifts to believers, but these gifts do not include the ministries of apostles or prophets (an issue to be discussed elsewhere).
 7. The Spirit spoke to preserve the church for future generations.
 - a. The Spirit warned of future departures from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).
 - b. The Spirit warned churches to repent of their sins and to be faithful even to death (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

B. Creation: The Spirit Gives and Nurtures Physical Life

1. The Holy Spirit participated in the initial creation of the world.
“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2).
 - a. The key expression here, *rûach ’ēlōhîm*, is usually translated “the Spirit of God” (CSB, ESV, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, etc.), but also “a wind from God” (NRSV) or “a mighty wind” (NABRE).
 - b. The precise expression occurs 12 times in the OT (Gen. 1:2; 41:38; Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Chron. 15:1; 24:20; Ezek. 11:24), consistently meaning “Spirit of God.”
 - c. The verb “hovering” does not fit the meaning of a wind. The same verb is used in a similar metaphor toward the end of the Pentateuch, where God is pictured as an eagle hovering over its nest to care for its young (Deut. 32:11).¹³

2. Old Testament Wisdom literature affirms the Spirit’s role in creation.

“The Spirit of God has made me,
and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4).

“By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and by the breath [*rûach*] of his mouth all their host” (Ps. 33:6).

Note that here the “breath” of God’s mouth is clearly a metaphor based on the fact that *rûach* can mean both breath and spirit.

When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.

(Ps. 104:30)

Psalm 104:30 is suggestive not just of creation but also of providence and even implicitly redemption. Paul likely alludes to Psalm 104:30 when he says that “God sent forth the Spirit of his Son” (Gal. 4:6).

3. Understanding the role of the Spirit in creation (Old Testament)
 - a. While all three persons of the Trinity are active in all of the divine works, Scripture gives special emphasis or highlighting on the work of the Holy Spirit in giving and renewing life.
 - b. A foundational text is Genesis 2:7, “The Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath [Heb., *nešāmâ*; Gk., *pnoēn*] of life, and the man became a living creature.” Even though this text does not use the words

¹³ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Revised Edition), Vol. 1: Genesis–Leviticus*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 55.

rûach (Heb.) or *pneuma* (Gk.), the imagery is picked up later in texts that do use these words (e.g., Job 27:3; 32:8; 34:14–15; Ps. 33:6).

- c. Some OT texts speak rather clearly about the work of the Spirit in this regard. “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created” (Ps. 104:30).
- d. In a vision, the Lord revealed the work of the Spirit in recreating his people, anticipating the work of the Spirit in the new covenant. Ezekiel prophesies “to the breath” to make dead bones live (Ezek. 37:8–13), but then the Lord tells his people, “I will put my Spirit [*rûach*] within you, and you shall live” (Ezek. 37:14).
- e. In light of this recurring theme in the OT, it seems likely that the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (Gen. 1:2) reflects his role in fostering an environment for life and nurturing that life (see comment above on Deut. 32:11).

C. The Incarnation: The Beginning of the New Creation in the Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit brought about the virginal conception of Christ.

- a. “When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18 NASB). The expression translated “found to be with child by” is *ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ* (*en gastri echousa ek*). The expression *ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἐκ/ἐξ* (“by, from”) is an idiom in which the preposition *ἐκ/ἐξ* identifies the other parent of the child (Gen. 38:18, 25; Rom. 9:10). Matthew uses *ἐκ* or *ἐξ* five times in the immediately preceding genealogy to name mothers: “by Tamar” (Matt. 1:3), “by Rahab” and “by Ruth” (1:5), “by the wife of Uriah” (1:6), and “Mary, by whom was born Jesus who is called Christ” (1:16).
- b. “And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:35). Gabriel’s statement here combines two OT speech forms used in the Septuagint concerning God’s activity. The Spirit “came upon” people to inspire prophecy (Num. 11:25–29; 24:2; 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; 2 Chron. 15:1; 20:14), and the glorious cloud representing God’s presence overshadowed and filled the tabernacle (Exod. 40:35).
- c. Both Matthew and Luke report that the Holy Spirit supernaturally brought about Mary’s conception instead of that being produced by a male human being in the common act of human procreation. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is Christ’s “father,” an inference that assumes that the Spirit is a physical being.
- d. Thus, all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the incarnation:
 - (1) The Father sent the Son to become incarnate.
 - (2) The Son actually became the incarnate one.
 - (3) The Holy Spirit performed the miracle of the virginal conception with which the incarnation begins.

2. The Spirit is uniquely and fully active in the earthly life of the incarnate Christ.

- a. The coming of the Messiah (“anointed one”) as the preeminently Spirit-endowed figure is a recurring theme in the OT, beginning with descriptions of David as God’s anointed king (1 Sam. 16:13–14; 2 Sam. 23:1–2) and moving forward to herald the coming of the Davidic king par excellence (Isa. 11:1–2) and the Messianic Servant (Isa. 42:1; 48:16; 61:1).
 - b. Two of these OT texts (Isa. 42:1; 61:1) are applied to Jesus in the Gospels (Matt. 12:18; Luke 4:18–19).
 - c. The Spirit’s presence in Jesus is revealed at his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33).
3. The incarnation reveals the Holy Spirit’s war against demonic spirits. The earthly life of the incarnation Son is the zenith of the spiritual war between Christ and Satan, and between the Holy Spirit and the unholy, demonic spirits.
- a. Christ’s ministry was immediately preceded by his temptation by the devil—an ordeal he undertook with the Spirit’s presence (Matt. 4:1–11; Mark 1:12; Luke 4:1–14).
 - b. The Synoptic Gospels contain about 80 references to demons (or unclean spirits) and demon-possessed people, most concerning Jesus (and in limited references) the disciples casting demons out of people.
 - c. The Synoptics report that Christ’s Jewish critics accused him of being in league with the devil. Jesus responded to this accusation by asserting that in fact his miracles were signs of the Spirit of God present with him, bringing the kingdom of God and beginning to overthrow the devil (Matt. 12:22–32 // Mark 3:22–30 // Luke 11:14–23).
 - d. Jesus’ death on the cross decisively defeated the devil, laying the groundwork for the eventual complete elimination of evil (John 12:31; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

D. Salvation: The Spirit’s Ongoing Work of the New Creation

1. “The Spirit gives life.” He performs a life-giving role in the new creation.
 - a. “It is the Spirit who gives life [lit., “The Spirit is the life-giving one”]; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (John 6:63).
 - b. For the law of *the Spirit of life* has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. . . . ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set *the mind on the Spirit is life* and peace. . . . ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, *the Spirit is life* because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give *life* to your mortal bodies *through his Spirit* who dwells in you. (Rom. 8:2, 6, 10–11)
 - (1) All three divine persons work together in giving us life, but this passage accents the role of “the Spirit of life.”
 - (2) There is an already/not yet distinction throughout this passage: We “already” have the Spirit of life and have been set free from the law of sin and death, but

we are “not yet” immortal, awaiting the resurrection of our mortal bodies (see also 8:23). It is a major error of the “Word of Faith” movement to think that because we presently have the Spirit, we should be able to live in miraculous health and prosperity. Paul immediately goes on to speak of our present condition as one of “suffering” (8:17–18). We remain part of a creation subject for now to futility and corruption, awaiting our liberation in hope (8:19–25). Distress, famine, and other forms of deprivation are part of life, but “*in all these things* we are more than conquerors through him who loved us” (8:35–39, emphasis added).

- c. God “has made us [the apostles and their associates] sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6).
 - (1) The last part of this verse is often abused to mean that beliefs we think are of the Spirit take precedence over the teachings of Scripture. Such a claim is self-defeating since it uses Scripture to criticize the use of Scripture, and it has no way to determine who is really being guided by the Spirit.
 - (2) In context, Paul is contrasting the old covenant, in which the Law, though a reflection of God’s glory, brought condemnation, with the new covenant, in which the Spirit brings life by putting the truth in our hearts rather than just on tablets of stone (2 Cor. 3:3–14; see also Rom. 2:28–29; 7:6).
 - (3) It is a significant theme in the OT prophets that there will be a new covenant in which the Spirit will give life and blessings by his work in human minds or hearts (Isa. 59:20–21; 63:10–14; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 11:19–20; 36:24–28).
2. Conviction: The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin.
 - a. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would convict people in the world of their sin and persuade them that judgment is coming, and therefore make them aware of their need for God’s mercy to save them (John 16:8–11).
 - b. Such conviction of sin comes (at least normally) through believers who warn others about sin and judgment, as the Spirit-filled John the Baptist did (Luke 1:15–17).
3. Illumination: The Holy Spirit enables us to know that the gospel is true.
 - a. Paul teaches that the Spirit enables us to recognize the truth of the gospel and to accept it (1 Cor. 2:10–16, discussed above). This is what is known in Christian theology as *illumination*.
 - b. Paul prays that the Father may give Christians “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” (Eph. 1:17). Some versions say “a spirit” (NASB, NRSV), others “the Spirit” (CSB, ESV), which is probably correct.¹⁴ There is a likely allusion here to Isaiah 11:2, a prophecy about “the Spirit of the LORD” resting on the Messiah, “the Spirit of wisdom [LXX, *pneuma sophias*, as in Eph. 1:17] and understanding. . . the Spirit of knowledge.” Since Paul has just said that believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13–14), he is here praying

¹⁴ See Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 256–58.

that they will enjoy the illuminating work of the same Spirit who fully rested on Christ and whom they have received. “What Paul is referring to here is not new truths about salvation history, the nature of God, or other doctrine, but an illuminating work of the Spirit to impress already revealed truth about God into the conscious reflections and heartfelt convictions of the readers.”¹⁵ Thus, illumination is not just an initial event in coming to Christ but an ongoing experience of those who have the Spirit within them.

4. Regeneration: We are born again by the inner work of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Much of what has already been said about the work of the Spirit in giving life (e.g., John 6:63; Rom. 8:2–11; 2 Cor. 3:6) is directly relevant to, or even equivalent to, the aspect of salvation known as *regeneration*.
- b. The idea is explicit in at least two NT passages:
 - (1) “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:3, 5–8).
 - (2) “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4–7). Note the role of all three divine Persons, with the work of regeneration specifically credited to the Holy Spirit.
 - (3) Both of the above texts likely allude to the OT promise of God “sprinkling clean water” on his people, an image explained as the inner work of the Spirit within them (Ezek. 36:25–27). Thus, although baptism may be viewed as symbolizing the work of the Spirit in regeneration, baptism is not itself in view in the above passages (which might imply baptism as a necessary precondition of salvation).

5. Justification: We are made right with God.

- a. “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).
- b. Justification is also closely linked with regeneration in Titus 3:4–7 (see above).
- c. Justification is God’s declaration that we are right with him through the redemptive work of Christ, especially on the cross (see Rom. 3:21–5:21).

6. Adoption: We are granted the status of God’s children.

¹⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 105.

- a. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God” (Gal. 4:4–7).
 - b. “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Rom. 8:14–15).
 - c. Adoption as sons is a metaphor used specifically by Paul to express the new relationship with God that believers enjoy. The idea echoes Jesus’ teaching in the Beatitudes that those who humbly seek righteousness and mercy from God as Christ’s followers will be called God’s sons (Matt. 5:3–12).
7. Sealing: The Holy Spirit’s indwelling guarantees our eventual redemption.
- a. Key texts in Paul’s epistles
 - (1) “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:23).
 - (2) “And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal [σφραγίζω] on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee [ἀρραβών]” (2 Cor. 1:21–22; see also 5:5).
 - (3) “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee [ἀρραβών] of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13–14).
 - (4) “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed [σφραγίζω] for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).
 - b. The indwelling of the Spirit is like a “down payment,” an initial deposit that functions as a “guarantee” that the complete payment still to come.
 - c. The Spirit’s indwelling is also likened to a “seal” that identifies us as God’s possession or to the “first fruits” of a harvest in which much more is expected to be harvested.
 - d. Notice that while Paul speaks of our adoption as sons as something we have already received (Rom. 8:15, quoted earlier), later in the same passage he says that “we wait eagerly for adoption as sons” (8:23). This is not a contradiction but a classic example of the “already—not yet” tension in the NT doctrine of salvation.
8. Sanctification: The Holy Spirit makes God’s people holy.
- a. “To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:1b–2). Here sanctification is in some sense an accomplished fact in those who are God’s chosen (so also Acts 20:32; 26:18). The “saints” (lit., holy ones) are “those sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2). We “were sanctified . . . in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11; see also 2 Thess. 2:13).

- b. On the other hand, sanctification is also something believers need to pursue. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess. 4:3). We are to “cleanse ourselves . . . bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).
 - c. This “progressive” aspect of sanctification is a key work of the Holy Spirit: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).
 - d. The sanctifying work of the Spirit produces godly character as its “fruit”: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. . . . If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–25).
9. Fellowship: The Holy Spirit fosters unity of believers in the community of the church.
- a. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). “Fellowship” (*koinōnia*) refers to a communal experience of close relationships, a “sharing” of life with one another. Christian fellowship is not a mere club but a spiritual unity grounded in the redeeming work of the three persons of the Trinity.
 - b. Paul uses the same word when he writes: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation [*koinōnia*] in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Phil. 2:1–2). As this text illustrates, the fellowship, participation, or sharing in the Spirit is a reality that Christians must recognize and pursue.
10. Assurance: The Holy Spirit assures believers of God’s love.
- a. The Holy Spirit assures believers in Jesus Christ that God loves and accepts them as his adopted children (Rom. 8:14-17; 1 John 3:24; 4:13). Having confessed our sins and trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit assures believers that God loves *them* and accepts *them*.
 - b. “Assurance” does *not* mean that believers never experience any times of doubts or struggles in faith. As with all of the works of the Spirit, we must pay attention to the truth and seek to live according to it.
 - c. Christian assurance is not merely a doctrine to which we assent but something personally relevant and applicable to us. We move from believing “Jesus died to atone for sins” to believing that Jesus “loved *me* and gave himself *for me*” (Gal. 2:20).

For Further Study

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