

Bay Roberts Seventh-day Adventist Church

Website: <http://www.bayrobertssda.org> | **E-mail:** bibleanswers@bayrobertssda.org

Post: P.O. Box 930 Bay Roberts NL A0A 1G0 | Tel: (709) 786-7516

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth.

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

Though the crucifixion had bewildered, anguished, and terrified Jesus' followers, the resurrection brought morning to their lives. When Christ broke the shackles of death, the kingdom of God dawned in their hearts. Now unquenchable fire burned within their souls. Differences that a few weeks earlier had erected nasty barriers among the disciples melted. They confessed their faults to one another and opened themselves more fully to receive Jesus, their ascended King.

The unity of this once-scattered flock grew as they spent day after day in prayer. One unforgettable day they were praising God when a noise like the roar of a tornado ripped through their midst. As though the burning in their hearts were becoming visible, fiery flames descended on each head. Like a rampaging fire, the Holy Spirit descended upon them.

Filled with the Spirit, the disciples could not contain their new ardent love and joy in Jesus. Publicly, and enthusiastically, they began to proclaim the good news of salvation. Alerted by the sound, a multitude of local citizens along with pilgrims from many nations flocked to the building. Filled with amazement and confusion, they heard—in their own language—powerful testimonies to God's mighty works spoken by unsophisticated Galileans.

"I don't understand," said some, "What does this mean?" Others tried to pass it off with, "They're drunk." "Not so," Peter cried above the noise of the crowd. "It's only nine o'clock in the morning. What you have heard and seen is taking place because the resurrected Jesus Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God and is giving us the Holy Spirit now" (Acts 2).

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

The Bible reveals that the Holy Spirit is a person, not an impersonal force. Statements such as "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us" (Acts 15:28) reveal that the early believers viewed Him as a person. Christ also spoke of Him as a person. Christ also spoke of Him as a distinct person. "He will glorify Me." He said, "for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). Scriptures referring to the triune God describe the Spirit as a person (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

The Holy Spirit has personality. He strives (Gen. 6:3), teaches (Luke 12:12), convicts (John 16:8), directs church affairs (Acts 13:2), helps and intercedes (Rom. 8:26), inspires (2 Peter 1:21), and sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2). These activities cannot be performed by a mere power, influence, or attribute of God. Only a person can do them.

The Holy Spirit Is Truly God

Scripture views the Holy Spirit as God. Peter told Ananias that, in lying to the Holy Spirit, He had lied not "to men but to God" (Acts 5:3,4). Jesus defined the unpardonable sin as "blasphemy against the Spirit," saying, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:31,32). This could be true only if the Holy Spirit is God.

Scripture associates divine attributes with the Holy Spirit. He is life. Paul referred to Him as the "Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2). He is truth. Christ called Him the "Spirit of truth" (John 16:13). The expressions "love of the Spirit" (Rom. 15:30) and "the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30) reveal that love and holiness are part of His nature.

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent. He distributes spiritual gifts "to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). He is omnipresent. He will "abide" with His people "forever" (John 14:16). None can escape His influence (Ps. 139:7-10). He also is omniscient, because "the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" and "no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:10,11).

The works of God are also associated with the Holy Spirit. Creation and resurrection both involve Him. Said Elihu, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). And the psalmist said, "You send forth Your Spirit, they are created" (Ps. 104:30). Paul claimed, "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).

Only an omnipresent personal God, not an impersonal influence, nor a created being, could perform the miracle of bringing the divine Christ to one individual, Mary. At Pentecost the Spirit made the one God-man, Jesus, universally present to all willing recipients.

The Holy Spirit is considered equal with the Father and the Son in the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19), the apostolic blessing (2 Cor. 13:14), and the spiritual-gifts discourse (1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The Holy Spirit and the Godhead

From eternity God and Holy Spirit lived within the Godhead as the third member. The Father, Son, and Spirit are equally self-existent. Though each is equal, an economy of function operates within the Trinity (see the tracts - The Godhead).

The truth about God the Holy Spirit is best understood as seen through Jesus. When the Spirit comes to believers, He comes as the "Spirit of Christ"—He does not come in His own right, carrying His own credentials. His activity in history centers in Christ's mission of salvation. The Holy Spirit was actively involved in Christ's birth (Luke 1:35), confirmed His public ministry at baptism (Matt. 3:16,17), and brought the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrection to humanity (Rom. 8:11).

In the Godhead, the Spirit seems to fulfill the role of executor. When the Father gave His Son to the world (John 3:16), He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-20). The Holy Spirit came to complete the plan, to make it a reality.

The Holy Spirit's intimate involvement in creation is seen in His presence at Creation (Gen. 1:2). Life's origin and maintenance depends on His operation; His departure means death. Said the Bible, "If God "should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust" (Job 34:14,15; cf. 33:4). We can see reflections of the Spirit's creative work in His re-creative work within each person who is open to God. God carries out His work within individuals through the Creator Spirit. So in incarnation, creation, and re-creation, the Spirit comes to bring God's intention to fulfillment.

The Promised Spirit

We were intended to be dwelling places of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. 3:16). Adam and Eve's sin separated them from both the Garden and the indwelling Spirit. That separation continues—the enormity of wickedness before the Flood led God to declare, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:3).

In Old Testament times the Spirit equipped certain individuals to perform special tasks (Num. 24:2; Judges 6:34; 1 Sam. 10:6). At times He is "in" persons (Ex. 31:3; Isa. 63:11). Undoubtedly genuine believers have always had an awareness of His presence, but prophecy predicted a pouring out of the Spirit "on all flesh" (Joel 2:28)—a time when a greater manifestation of the Spirit would usher in a new age.

While the world remained in the hands of the usurper, the pouring out of the fullness of the Spirit had to wait. Before the Spirit could be poured out upon all flesh Christ must carry out His earthly ministry and make the atoning sacrifice. Pointing to Christ's ministry as a Spirit ministry, John the Baptist said, "I indeed baptize you with water" but He "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 3:11). But the Gospels do not reveal Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Just hours before His death, Jesus promised His disciples, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16,17). Was the promised baptism of the Spirit received at the cross? No dove appeared on crucifixion Friday—only darkness and bolts of lightning.

Not until after His resurrection did Jesus breathe the Spirit on His disciples (John 20:22). He said, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). This power would be received "when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," making believers His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

John wrote, "The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). The Father's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice was the pre-requisite for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The new age broke in only when our victorious Lord was seated on heaven's throne. Only then could He send the Holy Spirit in His fullness. After "being exalted to the right hand of God," Peter said, He "poured out" the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33) upon His disciples, who, anxiously anticipating this event, had gathered "with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:5, 14). At Pentecost, fifty days after Calvary, the new age burst forth with all the power of the Spirit's presence. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they [the disciples] were sitting....And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2-4).

The missions of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit were totally interdependent. The fullness of the Holy Spirit could not be given until Jesus had completed His mission. And Jesus, in turn, was conceived of the Spirit (Matt. 1:8-21), baptized by the Spirit (Mark 1:9,10), led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1), performed His miracles through the Spirit (Matt. 12:24-32), offered Himself at Calvary through the Spirit (Heb. 9:14,15) and was, in part, resurrected by the Spirit (Rom. 8:11).

Jesus was the first person to experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit. The astounding truth is that our Lord is willing to pour out His Spirit on all who earnestly desire Him.

The Mission of the Holy Spirit

The evening before Christ's death His words about His impending departure greatly troubled His disciples. He immediately assured them that they would receive the Holy Spirit as His personal representative. They would not be left as orphans (John 14:18).

The Origin of the Mission

The New Testament reveals the Holy Spirit in a unique way. He is called the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7, NIV), "Spirit of His Son" (Gal. 4:6), "Spirit of God" (Rom. 8:9), the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11), and the "Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19). Who originated the Holy Spirit's mission—Jesus Christ or God the Father?

When Christ revealed the origin of the Holy Spirit's mission to a lost world, He mentioned two sources. First, He referred to the Father: "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper" (John 14:16; cf. 15:26, "from the Father"). The baptism with the Holy Spirit He called "the Promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). Second, Christ referred to Himself: "I will send Him [the Spirit] to you" (John 16:7). Thus the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

His Mission to the World

We can acknowledge Christ's Lordship only through the influence of the Holy Spirit. Said Paul, "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3).

We are given the assurance that, through the Holy Spirit, Christ, "the true Light," illuminates "every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9). His mission is to "convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

First, the Holy Spirit brings to us a deep conviction of sin, especially the sin of not accepting Christ (John 16:9). Second, the Spirit urges all to accept the righteousness of Christ. Third, the Spirit warns us of judgment, a powerful tool in stirring up sin-darkened minds to the need of repentance and conversion.

When we have repented we can be born again through the baptism of water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). Then ours is a new life, for we have become the dwelling place of the Spirit of Christ.

His Mission for Believers

The majority of texts concerning the Holy Spirit pertain to His relationship with God's people. His sanctifying influence leads to obedience (1 Peter 1:2), but no one continues to experience His abiding presence without meeting certain conditions. Peter said God has given the Spirit to those who continuously obey Him (Acts 5:32). Thus, believers are warned about resisting, grieving, and quenching the Spirit (Acts 7:51; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).

What does the Spirit do for believers?

1. He assists believers.

When introducing the Holy Spirit, Christ called Him "another Parakletos" (John 14:16). This Greek word has been translated as "Helper" (NKJV), "Comforter" (KJV), "Counselor" (RSV), and can mean also "Intercessor," "Mediator," or "Advocate."

The only other Parakletos mentioned in Scripture is Christ Himself. He is our Advocate or Intercessor before the Father. "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

As Intercessor, Mediator, and Helper, Christ presents us to God and reveals God to us. Similarly, the Spirit guides us to Christ and manifests Christ's grace to us. This explains why the Spirit is called the "Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29). One of His greatest contributions is the application of Christ's redeeming grace to people (see 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:14; James 4:5,6).

2. He brings the truth of Christ.

Christ called the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). His functions include bringing "to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26) and guiding "you into all truth" (John 16:13). His message testifies to Jesus Christ (John 15:26). "He will not speak on His own authority," Christ said, "but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13,14).

3. He brings the presence of Christ.

Not only does He bring the message about Christ, He brings the very presence of Christ. Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper [Holy Spirit, John 14:16,17] will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7).

Cumbered with humanity, the Man Jesus was not omnipresent, which was why it was expedient that He depart. Through the Spirit He could be everywhere all the time. Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth." He gave the assurance that the Spirit was to dwell "with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John

14:17,18). "The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof."

At the incarnation the Holy Spirit brought the presence of Christ to a person—Mary. At Pentecost, the Spirit brought the victorious Christ to the world. Christ's promises—"I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5) and "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20)--are realized through the Spirit. For this reason the New Testament gives the Spirit a title never used of Him in the Old Testament—"the Spirit of Jesus" (Phil. 1:19).

Just as it is through the Spirit that both the Father and the Son make believers Their home (John 14:23), so the only way believers can abide in Christ is through the Spirit.

4. He guides the operation of the church.

Since the Holy Spirit brings the very presence of Christ, He is the true Vicar of Christ on earth. As the abiding center of authority in matters of faith and doctrine the ways in which He leads the church accord fully with the Bible. "The distinctive feature of Protestantism—without which there would be no Protestantism—is that the Holy Spirit is the true vicar or successor of Christ on earth. To depend on organization, or leaders, or wisdom of men, is to put the human in place of the divine."

The Holy Spirit was intimately involved in administrating the apostolic church. In selecting missionaries the church obtained His guidance through prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1-4). The individuals selected were known for their openness to the Spirit's leading. The book of Acts describes them as "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:9, cf. 52). Their activities were under His control (Acts 16:6,7). Paul reminded church elders that they had been put into their position by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28).

The Holy Spirit played an important role in resolving serious difficulties that threatened the unity of the church. Indeed, Scripture introduces the decisions of the first church council with the words "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us..." (Acts 15:28).

5. He equips the church with special gifts.

The Holy Spirit has bestowed special gifts on God's people. In Old Testament times "the Spirit of the Lord" came "upon" individuals, giving them extraordinary powers to lead and deliver Israel (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; etc.) and the ability to prophesy (Num. 11:17,25,26; 2 Sam. 23:2). The Spirit came upon Saul and David when they were anointed as rulers of God's people (1 Sam. 10:6,10; 16:13). To some people, the infilling of the Spirit brought unique artistic skills (Ex. 28:3; 31:3; 35:30-35).

In the early church, as well, it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ bestowed His gifts on the church. The Spirit distributed these spiritual gifts to believers as He saw fit, thus benefiting the whole church (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor. 12:7-11). He provided the special power necessary for proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; see chapter 16 of this book).

6. He fills the heart of believers.

Paul's query to the disciples at Ephesus, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2), is a crucial question for every believer.

When Paul received a negative reply he laid hands on those disciples, and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:6).

This incident indicates that the conviction of sin brought about by the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's infilling of the life are two different experiences.

Jesus pointed out the necessity of being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5). Just before His ascension He commanded new believers to be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). In harmony with this command Peter preached that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is to be received at baptism (Acts 2:38). And Paul confirms the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit with an urgent appeal that believers "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

The infilling of the Holy Spirit, transforming us into the image of God, continues the work of sanctification begun at the new birth. God has saved us according to His mercy "through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5,6).

"It is the absence of the Spirit that makes the gospel ministry so powerless. Learning, talent, eloquence, every natural or acquired endowment may be possessed; but, without the presence of the Spirit of God, no heart will be touched, no sinner won to Christ. On the other hand, if they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts. God makes them channels for the outflowing of the highest influence in the universe."

The Spirit is vital. All of the changes Jesus Christ effects in us come through the ministry of the Spirit. As believers we should be constantly aware that without the Spirit we can accomplish nothing (John 15:5).

Today the Holy Spirit directs our attention to the greatest gift of love God proffers in His Son. He pleads that we not resist His appeals, but accept the only way whereby we can be reconciled to our loving and gracious Father.