

# **The Holy Spirit of God**

**A biblical perspective**

**© Chad Sychtysz**



2010 Spiritbuilding Publishing. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by  
Spiritbuilding Publishing  
15591 N. State Rd. 9  
Summitville, IN 46070

*Spiritual “equipment” for the contest of life.*

Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN:



Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE ®,  
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977,  
1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Author’s photo on back cover by **Todd Hobert**

Front cover photo by **Amar Ramesh**

---

---

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to offer a general expression of thanks toward all those who have encouraged me to write this book. Works like this take a great deal of time and energy, as anyone knows who has done something similar, but they are made worthwhile by the support and appreciation of fellow Christians.

More specifically, I wish to thank Mary Wellington and Rod MacArthur for their generous loaning of books and materials from their private libraries. Many more thanks go to Sandi Williams and David Spaun for their time-consuming reading and critical reviews of early versions of my manuscript. Their helpful analyses and comments have made this work better and stronger than it was in the beginning. Special thanks to Carl “Mac” McMurray and his staff at Spiritbuilding Publishing for all the work they put into turning this manuscript into an actual book. And finally, I want to acknowledge my “family” in Anchorage (those who were there from 1994 to 2003) and my present “family” in Kent. These people have not only been patient and encouraging, but have endured my earlier, more primitive forays into the subject of this book.

---

---

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
Chapter One: Who is This "Holy Spirit"?	5
Chapter Two: Fellowship with the Godhead	16
Chapter Three: Foreshadows of the Spirit	27
Chapter Four: Holy Spirit Baptism	37
Chapter Five: The Gift of the Holy Spirit	50
Chapter Six: The Indwelling of the Spirit	63
Chapter Seven: The Fruit of the Spirit	76
Chapter Eight: The Work of the Spirit in the Christian's Life	90
Chapter Nine: The Work of the Spirit in the Church	103
Chapter Ten: Miracles and the Holy Spirit	119
Chapter Eleven: Do Not Quench the Spirit	138
Chapter Twelve: Being Filled with the Spirit	148
Chapter Thirteen: A Critique of the "Bible Only" Position	164
Conclusion	179
<b>Endnotes / Bibliography</b>	



# Introduction

Why study about the Holy Spirit? This seems an appropriate question to ask in the beginning of a book *on* the Holy Spirit. Some Christians may *never* engage in such a study. Others may only do so superficially, perhaps to answer a nagging question or two. But *you*, dear reader, are apparently ready to launch into an entire *book* on this oft-neglected subject. Why would you do such a thing?

Better yet, why did I *write* such a thing?

Of course, I cannot answer why you chose to read this book. The reason I chose to *write* this, however, is quite straightforward: I have a personal passion to introduce Christians of any level of spiritual maturity to the Holy Spirit of God in a manner I had not seen before. There are a number of very good books on the Spirit; I have read a number of them and will quote from some of them myself. Yet none of these approached the subject the way in which you will read it here. This book is not designed as merely a clinical study *of* the Holy Spirit; instead, it is designed as a tribute *to* Him. I feel strongly that Christians—even those seeking to *become* Christians—should not just know *about* the Holy Spirit, but that they should enjoy a rewarding fellowship *with* Him.

The researching and writing of this book has been tremendously rewarding for me personally. Beyond this, I cannot stress enough how important a study of the Holy Spirit is to anyone seeking to “draw near to God” (cf. James 4:8). It stands to reason that if you truly wish to draw near to God, then you would *strongly desire* to learn as much as you can about Him. It also makes sense that no one in the world should be as interested in God as those who wish to be saved by Him. Furthermore, if one truly desires to “walk by the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16), then he ought to know who this Spirit is that he is to follow.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned over 200 times in the New Testament, and yet He may be foreign to many of our spiritual conversations. In part, this is because some think there is little to *know* about Him. There is a considerable amount of information and insight concerning Jehovah God<sup>1</sup> of the Old Testament. Likewise, we have four gospels and a healthy amount of exposition—both theological and practical—concerning Jesus, who is both Messiah (Christ) *and* the Son of God (John 20:31).

But of the Spirit, we have comparatively little information. Even His name—“Holy Spirit”—is vague, even cryptic; it is more descriptive (of His essential nature) than it is personal. (This is evidenced by the fact that He is always called *the* Holy Spirit, and never just “Holy Spirit.”) The King James Version (1611) has not helped matters: by referring to Him as the “Holy Ghost” gives the impression of a disembodied specter, a phantom, a paranormal oddity. This immediately characterizes the Spirit as a mysterious and unapproachable entity, which only further makes Him more alien to us. It is easy for us to disconnect ourselves from those things—or Persons—which are unfamiliar to us. Because of this, we tend to downplay or altogether ignore the Spirit’s role in the church or the life of a Christian. We are much more comfortable and conversant in the redemptive work and mediatory role of Jesus Christ. Thus, we put our primary focus on Christ (which is what the gospel has taught us to do) but perhaps to the exclusion of the Spirit (which the gospel has *not* taught us to do).

We may also fail to learn more about the Spirit because it is a difficult thing to do (as you probably already know). A study like this takes time, dedicated concentration, prayer, and a healthy examination of the Bible—not just in *citations* of Scripture, but also in understanding the *context* of Scripture. Time is something a person is unlikely to devote to anything unless he anticipates a good return on his investment. Not every Christian is convinced that a better understanding of the Holy Spirit is even worth pursuing. A study of the Spirit does not seem to be as immediately rewarding or inspiring as, say, a study of the Beatitudes or the grandeur of heaven. Some feel that their present knowledge of the Word, or the direction of their walk with God, is already sufficient. They think (but may not put into words), “Since I already have a healthy relationship with the Lord *apart from* a deeper knowledge of the Holy Spirit, I really don’t see the benefit of this.”

Furthermore, many have been conditioned to think that God has provided the gospel for the “experts”—in this case, preachers and theologians. Yet God has provided the gospel for *every believer* to learn, not just the so-called “clergy.” It is disturbing that one’s knowledge of the Holy Spirit would be neglected only because we have deemed Him too difficult to understand—or too controversial to even try. God *expects* us to get beyond the “elementary teaching about the Christ” and “press on to maturity” in our faith (Hebrews 6:1).



The many references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament are there for a reason: there are things God wants us to know about Him. It is one thing to know that God *does* work in our lives; it is quite another thing to know *how* He works—at least, according to what He has revealed to us in His Word. A deeper, more accurate understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives leads to a deeper, more fulfilling relationship with God Himself. This also gives us a much greater appreciation for the Christ who *sent* the Spirit to us—and how He [Christ] is the Prime Mover behind all that the Spirit does for us. A better comprehension of our fellowship with God—the Father, Son, *and* Spirit—will give us an even greater understanding of our fellowship with one another.

Thankfully, there are those like you and me who are ready to jump into this study with both feet forward, unwilling to ignore it any longer. We are unconcerned with where this study will take us, as long as we are directed by God’s truth. Since we can “bear fruit” *for* God only through the truth *of* God (Colossians 1:5-6), we want the truth—not some pre-scripted, “safe” doctrine that ties God’s hands, holds the Holy Spirit hostage to human expectations, and doesn’t really do anything for *us*. Our Bibles are open; our minds are filled with hope and looking forward to gaining knowledge; our hearts are filled with prayer imploring God’s guidance in our study; we are poised and ready. The question as to whether or not we should learn about the Holy Spirit has already been answered: we cannot go any further *without* such learning.

So then, let’s get started.



## *Chapter One*

# Who Is This “Holy Spirit”?

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.*

Genesis 1:1-2

If someone asked you to describe the Holy Spirit, how would you respond? Would you simply re-state the obvious (“The Bible says that He is God’s Spirit”)? Or would you defer to some personal conception of Him in your mind (“This is what He is to *me*”)? Or would you appeal to the consensus of your own church or church leaders (“This is how *we* have come to describe Him” or “This is what *they* think He is”)?

We can relate to the concept of a spiritual Father, since we all have fathers. Just as we can know, see, touch, and communicate with our earthly fathers, so we have at least a tangible form to associate with God the Father. So it is with God the Son: just as we are all children, and may have children of our own, so we can identify with that relationship. Just as Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), so us parents can see the transformation of a dream or the anticipation of a child into a flesh-and-blood reality. Even angels in Scripture have manifested themselves in the form of glorified men, so at least we have some level by which to identify with them.

But to what or whom shall we liken the Holy Spirit?

### **The Unseen Spirit**

Our perception of the Holy Spirit falls into the same category of other “spiritual” beings or concepts that we cannot quite wrap our minds around. Just as we struggle with eternity, God’s omnipresence, and saving grace, so we struggle with the Holy Spirit. In reality, we struggle with the “spirit” part of the Holy Spirit, since we really have no fixed point of reference by which to understand what a “spirit” is in the first place. Intuitively, if by no other means, we *know* our own existence includes both a body *and* a spirit, but which of us has ever seen our own spirit? We know

that the body *without* the spirit is dead, but which one of us has ever beheld one's spirit leave his body upon that person's death? We can observe a *living body* and know that it is animated by one's spirit; we can see a *dead body* and know that its spirit has departed. But that is where our earthly connection ends; the rest of what we know is by faith, not by sight.

This is why it is difficult for us to connect immediately with the Holy Spirit. Since He is *entirely* a Spirit, we are already at a loss as to what to do with Him. We have no earthly form or relationship by which to identify Him. Even those who have died once lived on earth and *had* a body. Even though they are now only a "spirit," they are still tethered to this life in earthly history or our past memories in a way that we can understand. The Holy Spirit, however, has never had a human-like body; He does not now have such a body. He is never represented in Scripture in any physical form except on one occasion: at the time of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. In that instance, "the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove" (Luke 3:22). This is the only tangible reference we have of the Holy Spirit: "like a dove." The connection still escapes us, simply because we cannot relate to the Holy Spirit as a bird any easier than we can relate to Him as an Eternal Spirit. At least we can say this much: the Holy Spirit *does exist*, because men have "seen" Him, even if He manifested Himself in a form no one ever expected.

Otherwise, the Holy Spirit remains what He is and has always been: God's *Spirit*. It stands to reason that God fashioned our body-and-spirit existence as a reflection of His own; indeed, this is at least part of what is meant by our having been made "in His image" (Genesis 1:27). Just as every person who has lived and who is now living *has* a spirit, so God has a Spirit. Just as our spirit is invisible to us while we are in this physical world, so God's Spirit is invisible to us here. Just as our spirit is what animates our physical bodies, so it is God's Spirit which *makes things happen* among God's physical creation; the Spirit "gives life" even in the spiritual world, though we see none of this (cf. John 6:63). Just as our spirit continues to exist beyond the death of our physical body, so God's Spirit continues to exist even after the death of the entire physical creation.<sup>2</sup>

While there are parallels between our spirit and God's Spirit, there are also critical differences. Our spirit had a "beginning" in time and existence: just as God breathed into Adam the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7)<sup>3</sup> so God breathes life into every person in order to make him a *living*

*being* (see Job 33:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7; and Isaiah 42:5; for example).<sup>4</sup> Yet we have nothing to do with bringing into existence or sustaining the Spirit of God; He exists independent of us. Not only this, but He has no beginning point, has no “birth,” and is not bound by “time.” No one has ever breathed life into the Holy Spirit, for He Himself is the “breath” of all life. Even in the spiritual context, no soul that has once sinned can be made “alive” to God—i.e., have fellowship with God—apart from the creative work of the Holy Spirit (to be discussed later).

Another critical difference between our spirit and the Holy Spirit lies in the realm of *ability*. Our spirit is limited to whatever context in which God has placed it; we cannot exceed the parameters imposed upon us by Him. Our spirit cannot be everywhere all at once; we are not even certain where our spirit *is* right now. We cannot peer into the hearts of other men; we struggle with coming to terms with what is in our *own* heart. Our spirit is bound by the decisions that we ourselves make while we are alive in the body; the results of these decisions are the only impact we make on the unseen spiritual world. We cannot direct the tide of history to accommodate the will of God; we have so little control even over our own life. We cannot impart spiritual life to a single soul of man; we cannot cause the death of any soul besides our own.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, can do all of these things. He can exceed all the limitations and restrictions that we attempt to impose upon Him. The Spirit is *not* bound by man-made decisions or circumstances. He *can* be everywhere all at once: just as God the Father is omnipresent (Ephesians 4:6), so is His Spirit. He *can* “judge the thoughts and intentions” of men’s hearts (Hebrews 4:12).<sup>5</sup> He *does* have the ability to influence both heaven and earth. He *does* move human history to fulfill the will of God. He *does* bring souls to life, and He *does* convict men of their souls’ condemnation (John 16:8-11).

A third critical difference lies in the realm of *holiness*. Once our soul has been corrupted with sin, our innocence is lost and we no longer enjoy fellowship with God. Our transgression of God’s law severs our relationship with God, requiring that our relationship with Him is in need of reconciliation.<sup>6</sup> If we are never reconciled to God, then this separation will be made permanent: our spirit will “die.” The holiness factor becomes, in essence, the ultimate distinction between who survives into eternity with God and who is destroyed: whoever is “holy and blameless” (Ephesians 1:3-6) is fit to dwell with God forever; whoever is “dead” in sin (Ephesians

2:1-3) is destined for destruction. Holiness is a state of being which only God can impart; our spirit is unable to confer holiness upon anything, even ourselves. Our spirit is made holy through the consecration of the “Spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4). While it is *Christ’s* sacrifice that makes our holiness possible, and it is He who mediates for us (1 Timothy 2:5), it is in reality the *Father* who anoints us with His Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21). (We will discuss this in more detail later.)

## The Holiness of the Spirit

As mentioned before, the name “Holy Spirit” seems more practical than personal. “Holy Spirit” is the name by which *we* know Him; it is hardly the name by which He is known in heaven. This name is adequate for us, however, given the inherent difficulties we have with His identity. He is indeed “Holy”: He has not been *made* holy, as is the case of we who are “in Christ,” but He is *intrinsically* holy. Just as the Father is holy, so His Spirit is holy; just as there was never a point in His existence when God was *not* holy—since this is impossible and inconceivable—so there was never a point when God’s Spirit was not holy. “Holy,” then, is not just a *characteristic* of the Spirit, but defines His essential *nature*. Since He is holy (or sacred), He possesses all the same qualities as any member of the Godhead. Thus, the Holy Spirit is:

- ❑ **A Living Being** (more discussion on this below).
- ❑ **Self-sufficient:** His existence or survival does not depend upon people or any external energy outside of Himself (as with God; Acts 17:24-25).
- ❑ **Sovereign:** He acts with supreme, unilateral authority (Isaiah 40:13).<sup>7</sup> (It is true that the Spirit carries out the will of the Father, but it is also true that no member of the Godhead consults with or answers to anyone else for decisions He renders.)
- ❑ **Spirit:** Just as “God is spirit” in nature (John 4:23-24), so the Holy Spirit is—by virtue of His name *and* divine essence—a “spirit.” This means He cannot be defined, fully described, or contained in any earthly context, since He is already otherworldly and supernatural. His existence cannot be compared to our earthly existence, nor can His activity be limited to earthly activity. He is not of the Creation; He is *above* all that is created.
- ❑ **Omniscient:** Whatever God knows, the Spirit knows (1 Corinthians 2:11); since God knows all things, therefore the Spirit also knows all things. Just as nothing can be hidden from God, so nothing can

be hidden from His Spirit.

- ❑ **Omnipotent:** As God, the Spirit is more powerful than any other entity, authority, or spirit. While it is not the Spirit's *role* to exercise this power on His own, nonetheless it becomes evident through His Word that God's unlimited, unfathomable power is carried out through His unlimited, unfathomable Spirit.
- ❑ **Omnipresent:** As a divine being, the Holy Spirit is not limited to any one place at a time—"place" and "time" being earthly references which the Spirit inherently transcends. Just as God is everywhere all at once (Ephesians 4:6), so His Spirit is ever-present.<sup>8</sup>
- ❑ **Eternal:** Just as God did not have a beginning and cannot die, so the Spirit's existence is not bound by time or duration. The Spirit *is*, has always *been*, and will forever *be*; He is "the eternal Spirit" (Hebrews 9:14). On this point, R. C. Sproul writes: "Whatever God creates is by definition a creature. Whatever is created can be neither eternal nor self-sufficient. God could create an immortal creature, but not an eternal creature."<sup>9</sup>
- ❑ **Immutable:** Just as the divine nature of God the Father and God the Son are unchangeable (Hebrews 6:17-18; 13:8), so the divine nature of God the Spirit is unchangeable. He is already perfect in every way; therefore He cannot be anything more or less than what He is now. Again, Sproul writes: "Our [human] being is not *pure* being. Our being is mixed with becoming. We are both actual and potential. We are always changing. But God does not change. He has no [unrealized] potential. He is pure actuality. He is eternally what He is. As He said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'"<sup>10</sup>
- ❑ **Infinite:** Just as God is infinite—since He is *eternal* and *unlimited* in power, knowledge, and presence—so the Holy Spirit is infinite.
- ❑ **Indestructible:** This world is "passing away" (1 John 2:17), but God is not. He has the power to create and destroy all things (except Himself), but no one has the ability or authority to destroy Him. For God the Father to exist apart from God the Spirit—that is, to imagine the *Spirit* being destroyed, but not the *Father*—is impossible and inconceivable. Just as a living body cannot be separated from its living soul except upon death (cf. James 2:26), so the Living God cannot be separated from His Living Spirit.
- ❑ **Separated from sinful men:** Just as God cannot have communion with those who are outside of His fellowship (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), so His Spirit cannot indwell those who are not "in Christ"—that is, in Christ's body, His church (Colossians 1:18). The Spirit

has performed miracles *upon* or *through* men, but the supernatural imposition of power *over* men (or the Creation) is not the same thing as having fellowship *with* men. God can perform a miracle anywhere or in any manner He chooses; but He cannot enter into agreement with sin, nor can He become “one” with the person who is not “joined” to Him through Christ (Isaiah 59:1-2; John 8:24; 14:6).

The Holy Spirit is not a human being, a ghost, or an angel. He is a Divine Personage who is only comparable to another Divine Personage (God the Father or God the Son). He is never portrayed as an abstract thought, a theological concept, or a nebulous and impersonal “presence.” Instead, He is always described (directly or indirectly) as a very real Personage of the Godhead.<sup>11</sup> H. Leo Boles writes: “The fundamental meaning of ‘Godhead’ is the same as that of ‘Godhood’; these terms express the state, dignity, condition, [and] quality of Jehovah.”<sup>12</sup> Just as the Spirit searches the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:11), so God searches the mind of the Spirit (Romans 8:27): in other words, the Spirit has a separate and distinct “mind” and personality of His own.

### **The Personhood of the Spirit**

The Spirit is never referred to in Scripture as an “It,” but always as a masculine Personage who is referenced by masculine pronouns (“He,” “Him,” “His”).<sup>13</sup> This is a critical point: if we reduce the Spirit to a mere “It,” then we reduce our *relationship* with Him to a mere abstraction; we will not see Him as anything but a mystical “energy” that somehow guides us to heaven. This reduces Him to a surreal “Force” that has no definition or explanation (as in, “May the Force be with you”); thus, our *spiritual life* will remain undefined and inexplicable. He will be a stranger to us, because we have estranged Him through our poor terminology and ignorance. To quote Boles again: “The Bible is not responsible for the vague mysticism which some ascribe to the Holy Spirit; the ignorance of the personality of the Holy Spirit belongs to religious teachers; they have not sought to present in a clear and definite way what God teaches on this subject.”<sup>14</sup> God does not give us a foreign concept which cannot have an appreciable and life-altering effect on our thinking and behavior. Instead, He gives *His Spirit* who abides in those who obey Him (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32; 1 John 4:13). Thus, we see the Spirit doing things that we would expect of a Personage, but that are impossible of a mere concept:



### *Who is this Holy Spirit?*

- ❑ He speaks to us (Revelation 2 – 3): “Hear what the Spirit says to the seven churches....”
- ❑ He testifies with us (Romans 8:16; 1 John 5:6).
- ❑ He leads us (Romans 8:14; Galatians 5:16).
- ❑ He teaches us (John 14:26).<sup>15</sup>
- ❑ He loves us (Romans 15:30).
- ❑ He can be lied to (Acts 5:3).
- ❑ He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).
- ❑ We have fellowship with Him (2 Corinthians 13:14; Hebrews 6:4).

These are things that a mere “concept” cannot do, but that a definable, personal Spirit most certainly *can* do.

### **The Spirit of Creative Activity**

Beyond all these references and explanations, however, we are still at a loss with how exactly to regard the Holy Spirit. He is first mentioned in Scripture in the same way that God is first mentioned—as transcendent (of this Creation) and without introduction (Genesis 1:1-2): “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ...And the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.”<sup>16</sup> The Holy Spirit, by necessary implication, is identified with the “Us” of Genesis 1:26: “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness....” We know now, because of fuller revelation given to us by Christ and His apostles *through* the Spirit, that Christ Himself was the One in charge of the actual Creation (see John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:15-17; and Hebrews 1:1-3). Nonetheless, this does not discount or nullify the role of the Spirit in either the creation of the world *or* a “new creation” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5).

God the Father is the cause of all good things (Romans 8:28; 11:36; James 1:17; et al) and “all things” exist by God the Son. It appears, however, that the Spirit is the One who actually carries out both the will of the Father and the Son (because the Son has been given “all authority,” Matthew 28:18). We might say that the Father *upholds* all things, and Christ *makes* and *sustains* all things, but the Spirit makes things *happen*. This is how we see His role repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments. The ancient prophets spoke from God but were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). Likewise, the apostles spoke by the authority of Christ (which was given to Him by His Father), but this authority was communicated through God’s Spirit (John 16:13).

Perhaps we can consider the Spirit's role in this way: He is the "mind of God" *personified*, that is, as a distinctly separate entity from but inseparable in His communion with the Father. When God speaks, it is the Spirit who brings into reality what is in the mind of God. Similarly, when your conscious mind "speaks," it is simply bringing into reality what is generated within your otherworldly soul. If we were to view these two things—your conscious mind and your soul—as two distinctly separate "persons" yet inextricably linked in fellowship, this would become much clearer to us. Consider the following examples from the Old Testament of how the will of God is brought to reality through the work of the Spirit (all bracketed words are mine):

- ❑ "See, I [God] have called by name Bezalel [an Israelite appointed to work on the tabernacle]... I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship" (Exodus 31:2-3).
- ❑ "Then I [God] will come down and speak with you [Moses] there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them [the seventy elders of Israel]; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone" (Numbers 11:17; see also verses 25 and 26).
- ❑ "'Woe to the rebellious children [Israel],' declares the LORD, 'Who execute a plan, but not Mine, And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit, In order to add sin to sin'" (Isaiah 30:1).
- ❑ "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1, in a prophecy of the Christ).
- ❑ "Then He [God] said to me, 'Son of man [Ezekiel], stand on your feet that I may speak with you!' As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me" (Ezekiel 2:1-2). (There are numerous references to the "Spirit of the LORD" in Ezekiel.)
- ❑ "Then he [the angel] said to me [Zechariah], 'This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts'" (Zechariah 4:6).

This does not include the many references to those who carried out the will of God (by words or deeds) when "the Spirit of the LORD came upon" them (Judges 6:34; 11:29; 14:19; et al). In other words, we see an established pattern: God speaks, and the Holy Spirit brings into reality

God's spoken word (or revelation). Indeed, the oracles and prophecies of the Old Testament are in fact revelations of the Holy Spirit. For example, a lengthy quote from David (Psalms 95:7-11) is directly attributed to the Spirit (Hebrews 3:7-11). Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah's words are considered the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:15-17). Peter is much more general in his comments, but reaches the same conclusion (1 Peter 1:10-12):

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.<sup>17</sup>

In light of all that has been written and preserved for us, we realize that the Spirit has been drawing men near to God throughout all of history in whatever way He saw fit to do so. In some cases, this was done directly (as when He “came upon” men or spoke through them); in other cases, this was done indirectly (as when He orchestrated certain events in order to carry out the will of God, as in Acts 8:26-40).

### **What the Spirit Says to the Churches**

While many men—kings, prophets, priests, and others—have carried on conversations with God, we have no record of one's conversation with the Holy Spirit. It might be said that if one were talking to God, then certainly that person was also communicating with (or through) His Spirit. Even if we concede that point, the fact is that we know of no one *intentionally* speaking directly to the Holy Spirit.

Yet the Holy Spirit has certainly communicated with *us*. This has been done through both miraculous and non-miraculous means. While we will discuss this more thoroughly in a later chapter, suffice it for now to say that the Spirit has “spoken” to us through Moses, the ancient prophets, and more recently through Christ and His apostles (Hebrews 1:1-2). In this way, the Spirit both confirms what has already been declared (as in Ephesians 3:4-5) as well as prophesies of that which is yet to come (as in

1 Timothy 4:1 or Hebrews 9:8-10). The words of those who are genuinely “inspired”<sup>18</sup> are to be regarded as messengers of God. Thus Paul served as a “priest [of] the gospel of God” having been “set apart” by the Spirit (see Acts 13:2 and Romans 15:15-16). Thus, to reject those through whom the Holy Spirit has spoken is to reject God—and, by necessary implication, His Spirit (as in 1 Thessalonians 4:8).

This communication is perhaps nowhere as vividly clear in Scripture as in the book of Revelation. Despite the numerous interpretations ascribed to this book, we cannot deny the obvious: the Spirit is very much the guiding influence of the events described in it. Indeed, the revelation is from Jesus Christ, God the Father, and the “seven Spirits who are before His throne” (Revelation 1:4-5).<sup>19</sup> The entire book is the record of what John saw while “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2). It is a message of “what the Spirit says to the [seven] churches” (chapters 2 – 3), which includes a visionary behind-the-scenes account of the spiritual realm. John was “carried away in the Spirit” (17:3; 21:10) to see those things which would be of immediate benefit to the Christians of Asia [modern-day Western Turkey] who were facing enormous pressure to recant their faith. Certainly the message is beneficial to Christians of all time, in the same way that what the Spirit says to one Christian is beneficial for all. The Spirit Himself offered His brief but consoling encouragement: “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’” This is joined with Jesus’ own encouragement: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (2:10). This is the theme of Revelation, and it is the Spirit’s proclamation to all who will accept it (22:17).

### **Summary Thoughts**

The Bible opens with “the Spirit of God . . . moving over the surface of the waters” (Genesis 1:2), and closes with the Spirit of God “moving,” in essence, over the “waters” of the world—its multitudes of people and nations (cf. Revelation 17:15). Just as the Spirit was intimately involved in the creation of the physical world, so He is the creative (yet hidden) activity of the spiritual world. From beginning to end, the Spirit is actively involved in everything that God does, and especially the work of Christ’s church.

On the other hand, even though the Spirit was present at and

*Who is this Holy Spirit?*

involved in the creation of the visible world, we do not learn about Him by observing the visible world in the same way we can learn about God (cf. Romans 1:18-20). "...The study of the material universe does not reveal anything about the nature or work of the Holy Spirit in the redemption of man. The only source to which we can go to learn of the Holy Spirit is the Bible."<sup>20</sup> This means that regardless of what one *thinks* he knows about the Spirit, his conclusions must be supported by what the Spirit Himself has already *declared* through the inspired words of Scripture.

We have much more to say on the Spirit and His work, "and this we will do, if God permits" (Hebrews 6:3).