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SESSION 1: Introducing the Holy Spirit

"For Paul the Spirit, as an experienced and living reality, was the absolutely crucial matter for Christian life, from beginning to end." Gordon Fee, God's Empowering Presence, 1.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." John 14:15-17.

I. WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Holy Spirit appears on page 1 of our Bibles:

"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." Genesis 1:2.

As we continue reading through our Old Testament, references to the Holy Spirit are relatively rare, but we discover that the Holy Spirit is active with God's people, often empowering them for special works of service or proclamation. These are often brief fillings for specific purposes:

"See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft." Exodus 31:2-5.

"And he said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet, and I will speak with you." And as he spoke to me, the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me." Ezekiel 2:1-2, many more like this in Ezekiel and other prophets.

"This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you." Daniel 4:18.

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward." 1 Samuel 16:13.

THE HOLY SPIRIT: GOD'S EMPOWERING PRESENCE

As we keep reading through our Bibles, we also find that promises that this temporary manifestation of the Holy Spirit will come in a greater way in the future: “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.” Isaiah 44:3.

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.” Ezekiel 36:26-27.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.” Joel 2:28-29.

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament

The Holy Spirit is visible in the New Testament, right at the beginning of each of the gospels, by conceiving the baby Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary and coming upon Jesus at his baptism, empowering him for ministry.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit... But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 1:18, 20. See also Luke 1:35.

“And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;” Matthew 3:16, also Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, John 1:32.

Acts records the momentous occasion when the Holy Spirit comes in a new way upon His people, fulfilling the Old Testament promises that the Holy Spirit would fill, indwell, and empower all His people for witness and for works of service:

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts 2:1-4.

The Holy Spirit, The Third Person of the Trinity

1. God exists eternally as three persons.
2. Each person is fully God.
3. There is only one God.

The Holy Spirit is fully God. Two important conclusions for this class:

- 1. The Holy Spirit is personal.**
- 2. Christians can expect to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.**

II. WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT DO?

1. The Holy Spirit Exalts Christ

The Holy Spirit has a “spotlight” or “background” ministry

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (John 16:13-15; See also, Acts 4:3; 1 Cor 12:1-3; 1 Cor 2:8-13; 1 Cor 12:1-3).

Jonathan Edwards, "Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God"

"When the operation is such as to raise their esteem of that Jesus who was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem; and seems more to confirm and establish their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares to us of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; it is a sure sign that it is from the Spirit of God" (109).

2. The Holy Spirit Saves, Fills, and Empowers Believers

"Jesus answered, '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 3:5–8, ESV).

3. The Holy Spirit Edifies the Church

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7).

III. CONCLUSION

"We are not left on our own as far as our relationship with God is concerned; neither are we left on our own to "slug it out in the trenches," as it were, with regard to the Christian life. Life in the present is empowered by the God who dwells among us and in us. As the personal presence of God, the Spirit is not merely some "force" or "influence." The living God is a God of power; and by the Spirit the power of the living God is present with and for us." Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 8.