

Who is the Holy Spirit?

By

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The Holy Spirit is mentioned often in the Bible, mostly in the New Testament. He is called by various names, such as “Spirit of God” (Genesis 1:2, 1 Samuel 10:10), “Spirit of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1), “Spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17), “Spirit of Jesus” (Philippians 1:19), or “Holy Spirit” (Psalm 51:11, Matthew 28:19). So who is this Holy Spirit and what is his work?

The Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is one Person of the triune God , besides God the Father and God the Son. He is not just an impersonal force, but a fully divine Person.

One verse showing that the Holy Spirit is just as much “God” as the Father and the Son, is Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have

commanded you.” Other verses show that the Holy Spirit has divine attributes indeed:

He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14)

He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)

He is omniscient, meaning that He knows everything (1 Corinthians 2:10-11)

He is almighty (Luke 1:35-37)

He is holy (Romans 1:4)

What is the work of the Holy Spirit?

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one God, but they have different roles. They perform these roles in full cooperation with the other members of the trinity.

The Holy Spirit is clearly at work throughout the world's history; in creation, in the incarnation of the Son, in the new birth of humans, in the inspiration and illumination of the Bible, and in transforming believers .

Was the Holy Spirit involved in creation?

The Bible begins with the clear statement that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The second verse makes clear that the Holy Spirit was actively involved in the process of creation: “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2)

The Hebrew word for “spirit” as it is used here, can also be translated as “breath”. That is what most Bible translations do in Psalm 33:6, which reads:

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
And by the breath of His mouth all their host.”

Another verse about the Holy Spirit’s creative power is Job 33:4,

“The Spirit of God has made me,
And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” (compare Genesis 2:7)

So, although the Bible does not explain in detail what the Holy Spirit’s role in creation was, it is clear that He was actively involved.

What is the Holy Spirit's role in the incarnation of Jesus?

When God the Son became human, He was born from a virgin, Mary. When the angel Gabriel announced His birth, he explained: "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) Just like the Holy Spirit hovered over the face of the waters at creation, He overshadowed Mary to create a baby in her womb while she was a virgin.

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual life

The ultimate life goal of humans is to know and love God, and to honor Him with their whole life. But since humans are sinful, they are not able to fulfill this goal anymore. They are spiritually dead (see Ephesians 2:1-3). It is the Holy Spirit's task to make people spiritually alive again.

The decisive turning point for becoming a Christian, is metaphorically called "the new birth" or "being born again". The Holy Spirit has a central role in that process, as Jesus explains: "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).

The Holy Spirit convicts people of their sins and points them to Jesus’ atoning death. If people come to faith and accept God’s offer of forgiveness, the Spirit testifies that they have received eternal life and are children of God (Romans 8:16).

The Spirit transforms believers

The Holy Spirit is God, and yet He dwells in the heart of everyone who comes to faith in Jesus. Read for example Romans 8:9 – “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.”

The Spirit dwells in believers and teaches them the truth of God’s Word, so that they will be focused on Jesus:

“The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened” (Ephesians 1:17-18).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit leads to purification and sanctification, meaning that the power of sin is broken and believers become more holy as they grow in faith. The fruit of the Spirit proves God’s work in someone’s life. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Holy Spirit will raise our bodies from the dead

Not only does the Spirit make people spiritually alive, He will also raise their bodies: “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.” (Romans 8:11)

The Holy Spirit and the church

After Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven, the apostles should spread the Gospel. But they could only do so when they were empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost . And still, the Holy Spirit transforms believers into witnesses of their faith, so that the Gospel is spread worldwide.

The Holy Spirit is also at work within churches. He gathers and protects them. But He also purifies the church, so that ultimately she will be holy and blameless and above reproach before God (Colossians 1:22). In all this, the Holy Spirit is not focused on Himself, but on the glory of Jesus (see John 16:13-14).

What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

The Bible mentions several gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. The apostle Paul lists “the utterance of wisdom, ... the utterance of knowledge, ... faith, ... gifts of healing , ... the working of miracles, ... prophecy, ... the ability to distinguish between spirits, ... various kinds of tongues , ... the interpretation of tongues.” (1 Corinthians 12:8-10) Not every individual does receive

every gift, but there are varieties of gifts given for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4; 12:7).

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