

We Believe: Foundations of the Christian Faith

Session 4: The Holy Spirit

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The Nicene Creed

The Person of the Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

The Articles of Religion

Article IV: Of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

The Confession of Faith

Article III: The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from and is one in being with the Father and the Son. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. He leads men through faithful response to the gospel into the fellowship of the Church. He comforts, sustains, and empowers the faithful and guides them into all truth.

The Rublev Trinity

Andre Rublev - 15th Century

- A depiction of the Trinity
- Genesis 18 - The Oaks of Mamre
- Father, Son, and Spirit
- Holy Spirit - dressed in blue (heaven) and green (new life)
- Pointing toward the front of the table - relic niche, invitation
- Mountain - revelation, spiritual journey



The Relationship of the Spirit to the Trinity

Proceeding from the Father, or the Father and the Son?

- Filioque - “and from the Son” - added to the Nicene Creed by the western Church in middle ages
- Cause of the Great Schism between the Eastern and Western Churches in 1054
- Our creeds and doctrinal statements reflect the Western view, supported by Scriptures such as John 20:22; Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:9, Philippians 1:19

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

The Trinity at Work

- Hovers over the waters of creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Isaiah 32:15)
- Breathes life into humanity (Genesis 2:7)
- Strives with sinners (Genesis 6:3)
- Empowered warriors, judges, and prophets (Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Saul)
- Spoke through the prophets (Isaiah 61:1; 2 Samuel 23:2; Ezekiel 2:2)
- Inspired holiness in God's people (Psalm 143:10; Ezekiel 36:27)
- Pointed toward the Messiah Jesus (Isaiah 11:1-5)

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels

Overshadowing, directing, empowering

- Overshadows Mary in the incarnation (Luke 1:26-38)
- Inspires prophetic words (Zechariah, Simeon, John the Baptist)
- Descends on Jesus at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22)
- Filled Jesus and led him into the wilderness (Luke 4:1)
- Set the agenda for Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:18)
- Imparted by Jesus to his disciples (John 20:19-23)

The Holy Spirit and the Early Church

Acts of the Apostles (Acts of the Holy Spirit)

- 56 references to the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts
- Fulfillment of promise in Joel 2:28-29 - a “democratic” movement of the Spirit
- Empowering and equipping followers of Jesus (Acts 1 and 2)
- Power for healing, signs and wonders
- Power for preaching and speaking to authorities (Acts 4)
- Providing discernment for important decisions (Acts 15)

The Holy Spirit in Paul's Ministry

Acts 20:17-38

- The Spirit both compels Paul's travels and prevents them
- He was compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem even though the Spirit told him that persecution and trial awaited him there
- He preached what the Spirit put on him (note that all of the sermons in Acts were spontaneous)
- 2 Corinthians 11 - Paul goes through all of that but never once mentions burnout. Why? He was empowered and driven by the Spirit.
- "The Holy Spirit will have control or he will have nothing." E.M. Bounds

The Holy Spirit and the Church Today

The Neglected Member of the Trinity

- John Winter - “When do we do the stuff?”
- The key task of the Church is to rekindle the flame of the Holy Spirit in our life and ministry. Without the Spirit, churches and believers are nothing, nor can we understand the Book the Spirit wrote for us through those who were empowered and inspired by him.
- Only when the Spirit is present are people transformed!

The Role of the Spirit in the Church

The Spirit endues the Church with God's authority

- Not an impersonal force, but the empowering presence of the living God
- The gospel continues to unfold and spread in the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.
- Jesus on the Spirit: "I've only been with you, but the Spirit will be *in* you."
- God has authority over the world but also continues to act in the world
- The Spirit empowers us for effective service and witness
- The Spirit intercedes for us and in us for effective prayer
- The Spirit teaches us when we read the Scriptures
- The Spirit endues us with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
- The Spirit convicts us of sin and draws us back to God, enabling faith

The Role of the Spirit in the Church

The Spirit empowers the Church for global mission

- Acts 1:8 - receiving power to be witnesses “to the ends of the earth”
- The Spirit compels and moves people into gospel ministry
- The Spirit gives gifts to individuals that make up the Body of Christ to equip the Body for the work of ministry
- The Spirit enables boldness and puts God’s word in the mouths of those filled with the Spirit
- The Spirit brings forth compassion for the lost and the hurting

The Role of the Spirit in the Church

The Spirit brings forth God's new creation in signs and wonders

- The Spirit enables the ministry of the Church to reflect the ministry of Jesus in teaching, healing, and performing signs and miracles.
- “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it.” - John 14:12-14
- The things we associate with Jesus and with heaven (healing, reconciliation, deliverance) can be accomplished here and now because of the presence of the Spirit

Discerning between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of the Age

An important distinction

- The Holy Spirit does not contradict the Word of God. After all, he is the Author of that Word - “If it’s true, it’s not new. If it’s new, it’s not true.”
- The Holy Spirit’s gifts and power are always given to us for the benefit of others, not for our own edification or exploitation.
- The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, and most definitely does not encourage or excuse our sin.
- The Holy Spirit is not a “force” that can be manipulated or controlled, but the Spirit of God who does the will of God.

Questions?