

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Who is He? What does He do?



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1 The Holy Spirit does not ‘speak of himself’ (John 16:13). Does this mean we should not study this subject?

No. This verse does not suggest that the Holy Spirit does not speak about Himself. He does (see the many references quoted below). The point is that the Holy Spirit does not speak independently — that is, ‘out of’ or ‘from’ Himself. This is why it continues to say: ‘but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak’. The Spirit speaks in harmony with, and in dependence on, the Father and the Son.

2 Does the Bible really teach that the Holy Spirit is a person?

Absolutely! It is true, of course, that the Holy Spirit is also spoken of as power (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:49) but He is also a person. The Bible describes the Holy Spirit as acting in ways only a person can. For instance, the Spirit:

- speaks (Acts 13:2; Heb. 3:7)
- gives testimony (Heb. 10:15)

- teaches (John 14:26)
- calls (chooses) to service (Acts 13:2)
- can be grieved (Eph. 4:30)
- can be lied to (Acts 5:3)
- has a will (1 Cor. 12:11)
- has a view on what is good (Acts 15:28)
- can forbid (Acts 16:6–7).

Some have confounded the Holy Spirit with the human spirit of Christ as man. This is a fundamental error. The Holy Spirit is a divine person (see Q 3).

3 How do we know the Holy Spirit is God?

This is made very clear by several Bible passages. The Spirit is:

- eternal (Heb. 9:14)
- coequal (on one level) with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19)
- omnipresent (everywhere (Ps. 139:7))
- omniscient (all-knowing (1 Cor. 2:10–11))

- omnipotent (only God can create (Job 33:4) or raise up (1 Pet. 3:18)).
- Acts 5 furnishes a further proof: Peter charges Ananias with having lied to the Holy Spirit and, in the next verse, says: ‘You have not lied unto men, but unto God’ (vs. 3 and 4). So the Spirit is God.

4 Did the Holy Spirit ‘come’ or was He ‘sent’?

Both. He ‘came’, but He was also ‘sent’ by the Father and ‘sent’ by the Son:

- ‘the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send’ (John 14:26)
- ‘whom I will send unto you’ (John 15:26)
- ‘I will send him unto you’ (John 16:7)
- ‘when he, the Spirit of truth, is come’ (John 16:13).

5 The Holy Spirit was sent. Does this imply inferiority?

Absolutely not. The persons of the Godhead act in unison of counsel (they are of the same mind and they work together) but undertake different tasks and activities in fulfilling a common objective. The Spirit voluntarily takes the subject place of being sent (as does the Son; see John 3:16; 6:38; Phil. 2:7; etc.). Yet there is no question of inferiority, and both are absolutely on the same level ('coequal') with the Father (see Q 3).

6 When did the Holy Spirit come to dwell on the earth?

In His farewell address to His disciples (John 14–16) the Lord still spoke of the coming of the Holy Spirit as a future event (see Q 4). The Spirit could only come once Christ had suffered, died, risen and been glorified (John 7:39). Why? Because He was to testify of the glory Christ had received.

The Spirit actually came on the day of Pentecost (a Jewish feast — Acts 1:5; 2:1–4, 33). Since then, the Holy Spirit has been dwelling on earth: in the believer and in the church (Q 13 and 8.15).

7 What do we know about His character?

In a number of passages, the Spirit is described with an attribute giving us a glimpse of an aspect of His character. Here are some examples:

- the Holy Spirit (many references, e.g. Acts 5:3)
- the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4)
- the Spirit of grace (Zech. 12:10; Heb. 10:29)
- the Spirit of truth (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13)
- the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2)
- the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11)
- the Spirit of sonship or adoption (Rom. 8:15)
- the Spirit of God's Son (Gal. 4:6)
- the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7, JND)
- the Spirit of glory (1 Pet. 4:14)
- the Spirit of God (1 Pet. 4:14)

- the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11)
- the Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

8 What is 'spiritual'?

Things or persons are called spiritual in contrast to those that are carnal (fleshly)*, i.e. that have to do with the character of natural man. The Bible refers to a number of things as spiritual because the Holy Spirit gives character to them:

- gift (Rom. 1:11)
- the ministry of preaching or teaching (Rom. 15:27)
- godly believers in contrast with certain carnally-minded believers (1 Cor. 2:15; 3:1; 14:37; Gal. 6:1)
- the part taken by believers in their meetings, and among their fellow Christians generally — Paul speaks of spiritual things or manifestations (1 Cor. 12:1)
- the whole of our blessings (Eph. 1:3)

- our songs (Eph. 5:19)
- the understanding of (spiritual) believers (Col. 1:9)
- the house of which we form constituent parts, and our sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5).

9 What are the main activities of the Holy Spirit?

We cannot overestimate the importance of the Spirit's work. It touches virtually every area of our lives. This will become clear from the following list, which makes no claim to be complete!

We can group the Spirit's activities into three categories:

His activities outside of us

- Inspiration
- Prophecy.

* Sometimes also in contrast to what is material (see 1 Cor. 15:44).

His activities to do with our salvation*, which have a once-for-all effect

- New birth
- Indwelling, sealing and anointing
- Deliverance (see footnote in question 14)
- Baptism: joining all believers together in one body
- Abiding with us forever
- Giving gifts.

Activities to do with our daily lives

- Giving us knowledge of being children of God
- Helping us enjoy our relationship with the Father and the Son
- Guiding us
- Teaching us (presenting the glory of Christ)
- Enabling us to receive the truth
- Leading us in worship
- Filling us
- Empowering us

* The Spirit also works with unbelievers to lead them to repentance (Gen. 6:3) — even if His work is being resisted (Heb. 10:29) and the persons concerned are never born again. This is also illustrated in the servant in Luke 14 (see Emblems and types of the Holy Spirit).

- Enabling us to subdue the flesh (i.e. not to fulfil the lust of the flesh)
- Producing His fruit in us
- Witnessing and supporting our witnessing
- Producing His unity in us
- Restoring and leading to repentance
- Making us long for the Lord's return.

Let's have a brief look at each of these in turn.

10 What was the role of the Holy Spirit in inspiration?

The Holy Spirit gave the very words of Scripture ('verbal inspiration'). In particular we read that the Holy Spirit:

- 'moved' holy men of God to write the books of the Bible (2 Pet. 1:21) — that is, they did so under His power
- chose each and every word of the Holy Scriptures: 'not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches' (1 Cor. 2:13)

- speaks through the very words of Scripture. In Hebrews 10, before quoting from Jeremiah*, the writer says, 'the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before ...' (v. 15).
- spoke through human instruments: 'The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue' (2 Sam. 23:2).

The Holy Spirit used the personalities and styles of various writers, but He did so in such a way that each word written was exactly what He wanted to be written ('verbal inspiration'). For more detail about this see Q 10.1–4.

11 What was the role of the Holy Spirit in prophecy?

Prophets were people who uttered a message that came directly from God. Already during Old Testament times, it was the Spirit of Christ who testified in the prophets (1 Pet. 1:11). The Holy Spirit gave them verbal

* Jeremiah 31:31–34.

as well as written utterances, both equally inspired. This still occurred in the early days of Christianity until the New Testament scriptures (the 'prophetic scriptures' of Rom. 16:26, JND) were completed (Col. 1:25).

12 What does it mean to be 'born of the Spirit'?

Natural man has a fallen nature (the Bible calls it 'flesh'; see Q 6.9) which has neither ability nor inclination to please God (Rom. 8:5–9). But God, through the Holy Spirit, works on the soul of every person by using His Word to bring about conviction of his or her guilt and of God's holiness. In this way the miracle of new birth is brought about by water (the purifying action of the Word of God) and Spirit (1 Pet. 1:23; John 3:5). At new birth, the person receives a new nature (John 3:6), although without ever losing the old one, the flesh, while on earth (Rom. 7:18), and he is sanctified by the Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2), i.e. set aside or reserved for God through the Holy Spirit.

13 Who is indwelt by the Spirit?

This is a special privilege of Christian believers (John 14:17; Rom. 8:11; 2 Tim. 1:14). The indwelling of the Spirit occurs when a person believes the ‘gospel of [his] salvation’ (Eph. 1:13). This involves believing in the work of Christ as well as His person. From this point onwards we are ‘sealed’ with the Spirit (see Q 40) so that the Holy Spirit abides with us forever (Q 16).

The believer’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). This great privilege carries with it great responsibility: to use our bodies for the Lord’s glory (1 Cor. 6:13–20). This is the individual side. In addition, the Holy Spirit indwells the church (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22). This is the collective side.

14 How are we delivered from the power of sin?

A believer no longer needs to serve sin — sin no longer has dominion over him (Rom. 6:1–2, 14). He has ‘died with Christ’ (JND) and, therefore, sin no longer has

any claims over him (Rom. 6:1–11). This is true of every believer — it is our ‘position’. In principle, therefore, a believer never needs to sin. He can just live his life for God. But this is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. If we try to please God in our own strength we will fail. This is the painful process as described in Romans 7 (where a person, who is already born again, tries to please the Lord in his own strength but keeps failing; see Q 6.17–23). Once he realises that sin still dwells in him (v. 17) and that he cannot please God in his own strength but needs help from outside (v. 24), he finds full deliverance through the power of the Holy Spirit: ‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and of death’ (Rom. 8:2). Then he can walk in the Spirit and, in this way, overcome the flesh (Q 6.27–31).

15 What exactly is meant by the baptism of, or with, the Holy Spirit?

John the baptist stated that he had baptised with water but that one would come after him who would

baptise with the Holy Spirit (and fire*, Matt. 3:11). Before His ascension the Lord announced that this baptism with the Spirit would occur after ‘not many days’ (Acts 1:5). Ten days later, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven (Acts 2:1, 17, 33) to dwell on earth (in the believer and in the church: see Q 13). On this day the believers were ‘baptised into one body’ (1 Cor. 12:13).

The baptism of the Spirit, as such, only occurred once — when the church was formed. However, every believer today forms part of that body of Christ and can therefore be regarded as included in this Spirit baptism. The notion that a ‘second experience’ is required is false (Q 46).

16 What does it mean that the Holy Spirit abides with us forever?

The Lord Jesus told the disciples that the Father would give them ‘another Comforter, that he may abide

* The baptism with fire refers to the judgment Christ will bring on those who have rejected Him. This is still future and therefore completely distinct from Spirit baptism. John mentions both together to emphasise that they were far beyond what he was doing and that Christ would carry them out.

with you for ever’, adding, ‘you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you’ (John 14:16–17). In the first instance, the statement that the Spirit would abide with them forever is to show the contrast with the Lord Himself, who had been with the disciples for a few years but was about to leave them. The Holy Spirit would always be with them, every day of their lives. In addition, it is also true that the Holy Spirit will be with us in eternity. This wonderful privilege of the permanent presence of the Spirit rests on the accomplished work of Christ on the cross and His glorification (John 7:39).

Old Testament believers did not enjoy this privilege. The Holy Spirit could come upon them (Jdg. 6:34) but could also be taken away (Ps. 51:11). He did not dwell in them. New Testament believers, on the other hand, are ‘sealed’ with Him forever (see Q 40).

17 What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Spiritual gifts are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit, not to be confounded with natural abilities such

as eloquence or a sharp mind (although God can make use of these). We read in 1 Corinthians 12: 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit' (v. 4). This chapter lists many spiritual gifts: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues (that is, languages), etc. All believers have received different gifts, but they come from the same Spirit and should be used for the benefit of the whole body of Christ (see Q 7.16).

18 Have I got a gift of the Spirit? How can I know?

The Spirit distributes the gifts 'as he pleases' (1 Cor. 12:11, JND). We should not focus on what we have received or might receive. Our job is to do the work the Lord shows us. Before long it will become clear (to us and to others) what our gift is. Our responsibility is to use it 'for profit' (v. 7, JND) and out of love (1 Cor. 13).

19 How does the Holy Spirit give us the knowledge of being children of God?

He testifies with our spirits that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). He does this by pointing us to Bible verses that bring out this truth (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1–2a, 10). At new birth we become children of God; but the Holy Spirit helps us to take in and enjoy this truth.

20 What is meant by the expression 'the Comforter'?

This expression (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) presents the Holy Spirit as the one who stands by believers and looks after their interests in every way. We are not left 'comfortless' (John 14:18; 'as orphans', JND), but are supported by the Comforter. He helps us to enjoy our relationship with the Father and the Son (see Q 21) and to be witnesses in a hostile world (John 15:24–27).

21 How does the Holy Spirit help us enjoy our relationship with the Father and the Son?

He does this by enabling us to appreciate the words Christ spoke on earth (John 14:26), including His revelation of the Father. He also testifies of Christ as He is now (15:26) and guides us into the whole truth, that is, helps us to take it in and appreciate it, as well as future things (16:13). In this way He connects our hearts with Christ and with the Father. He also enables us to enjoy access to the Father: 'For through him we ... have access by one Spirit unto the Father' (Eph. 2:18). The work of Christ is the basis for this access, and the Spirit gives us the power to enjoy and use it.

22 How could the Lord describe His absence as an advantage for the disciples (John 16:7)?

Because He would send the Spirit who would testify of Him as the glorified Lord, enabling the disciples to

enjoy a deeper relationship with Him and the Father (see Q 21). The Lord was with them, but the Holy Spirit would be in them, giving them a fuller understanding of the truth than they ever had when the Lord was on earth.

23 What does it mean to be guided by the Holy Spirit?

Being led by the Holy Spirit is a characteristic of the sons of God (Rom. 8:14). This is in contrast to natural men who are 'in the flesh' and cannot please God (v. 8). It is also in contrast to law-keeping (Gal. 5:18).

In order for us to be led by the Holy Spirit in practice, we have to be willing to do the Lord's will rather than our own, ask Him for guidance, read the Scriptures (Acts 8:27–29; 16:6–10), and judge the impulses of our flesh (Rom. 8:13). The Spirit's guidance will never contradict the Bible (it was given by the same Spirit; see Q 10).

24 How and what does the Holy Spirit teach us?

The Holy Spirit teaches us the glories of Christ (and the whole truth) by giving us an understanding of the Scriptures (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15; 1 John 2:27). He enables us to receive the truth (see Q 25).

25 How can we receive the truth of God?

There are three important stages in the transmission of God's truth to us, all of which are brought about by the Holy Spirit: its revelation by God (1 Cor. 2:10), its communication to us (v. 13), and its reception by us (vs. 14–15). In other words, the Spirit knew all God's thoughts and was able to express them in human language ('revelation'); He gave the very words that should be (and were) written in the Bible ('communication'); and now it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we receive the Word in our hearts. For more detail about inspiration see chapter 10.

26 What is worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24)?

The Lord Jesus used this expression in His conversation with a woman from Samaria. She was used to an external and ceremonial worship, based on a mixture of heathen religion and Jewish rites (see 2 Ki. 17:24 and following verses). The Lord explained that a new era was beginning and with it a new type of worship: 'when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23).

Worshipping 'in spirit' conveys that (a) Christian worship is spiritual as opposed to material (in particular, in contrast to Jewish worship: robes, buildings, incense, animal sacrifices) and (b) the Holy Spirit guides the Christian worshipper as to what to express before God.

Worshipping 'in truth' conveys that worship is based on the truth revealed, and that it should be real: we mean what we say and do not just recite things or pay lip service (Matt. 6:7; 15:8; Isa. 29:13).

27 What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)?

Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (see Q 13), but we are not all (and are not always) filled with the Holy Spirit, so we get the exhortation: 'be filled with the Spirit'. Here, being filled with the Spirit is contrasted with being drunk with wine. The Christian should be controlled (not by wine but) by the Holy Spirit and guided by Him.

In order to be 'filled' we need to make room — by judging and removing that which hinders the Spirit. If we only allow a guest into one room, then he does not 'fill' our house and cannot make his influence felt everywhere. For this to occur we have to open up the whole house to him.

When we are filled with the Spirit this will have a great impact on our joy, testimony, and service (e.g. Luke 1:41, 67; Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9, 52).

28 In what way does the Holy Spirit empower us?

The risen Lord had told His disciples: 'you shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me ...' (Acts 1:8; see also Luke 24:49). A few days later, on the day of Pentecost, this power in witness became apparent when Peter addressed the crowd and 3,000 people were saved. Today, the Holy Spirit empowers us for our testimony and gives strength to our 'inner man' to appreciate the glories of Christ (Eph. 3:16). He energises our service, our hope, and our joy (Rom. 14:17; 15:13; 1 Thess. 1:6). He does so by helping us to trust in God, in His Word, and not in ourselves or in men, etc. (Zech. 4:6).

29 Can the Holy Spirit help us overcome the flesh?

As born-again believers we have a new nature (see Q 12). This new nature has the right desires but lacks the power to act accordingly, or to overcome the inclina-

tions or promptings of the flesh (or sin)* that still dwells in us (Rom. 7:15, 17). This is where the Holy Spirit comes in as the power that enables us to live in a way that pleases God (Rom. 8:4, 13). This does not mean that we overcome sin once for all (we cannot) but that the only way to avoid giving in to the demands of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5 gives us the divine problem statement: ‘the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh’ (v. 17, JND), as well as the divine answer: ‘Walk in the Spirit, and you shall no way fulfil flesh’s lust’ (v. 16, JND; Q 6.27–31).

By way of illustration: all the efforts of 1,000 men cannot move a train one inch. But when the driver turns the key, the power is there to move the train for miles. It is not the driver’s power that moves the train, but he removes the obstacle so that the power of the engine becomes effective. So it is with us: if we remove what hinders the Spirit, His power becomes effective.

* In the sense of not listening or not responding to them.

30 What is the fruit of the Spirit and how is it brought about?

The ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:22–23) stands in contrast to the ‘works of the flesh’ (vs. 19–21). It is one fruit but consists of nine components (love, joy, peace, etc.). Fruit is the reproduction of the features of Christ in believers who follow and imitate Him (John 15:8). It is through the Holy Spirit that these features of Christ are reproduced in our lives. This will happen to the extent that we walk in the Spirit (see Q 29).

31 What is the Spirit’s role in witness?

Bearing witness is a central part of the Holy Spirit’s activities. This is in line with His character as the ‘Spirit of truth’ (John 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:13). Indeed, ‘the Spirit is the truth’ (1 John 5:6–12). In particular, the Spirit gives witness to us:

- of the glorified Christ in heaven — He testifies of what He ‘hears’ in the glory (John 16:13–14)

- of the fact that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16), and to the world
- of the gospel (Acts 5:31–32). The disciples would have a hard time giving witness in a hostile world, but the Holy Spirit would also bear witness (to the disciples, showing them the glorified Christ as He is with the Father) and, in this way, He would strengthen their witness and make it effective (John 15:26–27). He helps us in this way too.

The Spirit uses God's Word to give this testimony (e.g. Heb. 10:15).

32 What is the Spirit's role in restoration?

The primary objective of the Holy Spirit is to help us enjoy the glories of Christ (John 16:14). However, when we have grieved the Holy Spirit (see Q 36) we will be unable to enjoy these things. In these circumstances His efforts with us will be focussed on leading us to see and confess our failure and to return to 'the joy of[our] salva-

tion' (Ps. 51:12). This is borne out by the many practical exhortations in the New Testament epistles addressed to believers by the Holy Spirit for their restoration (see for instance, the many exhortations in Eph. 4:17 and 5:1 and the verses that follow them). This is illustrated by two types:

- The use of water on the occasion of the feet washing in the upper room (John 13) speaks of the application of the Word by the Holy Spirit
- In Numbers 19 the water of purification was produced for the people of Israel as they went through the wilderness by putting running water on the ashes of the red heifer (v. 17). This is a picture of the remembrance of Christ's sufferings being made alive to us by the Spirit and applied to us for cleansing and restoration.

33 What is the unity of the Spirit — and how can we keep it?

We need to distinguish the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) from the unity of the body (Eph. 4:4). The latter concerns the fact 'there is one body', which has always been true since Pentecost (see Q 6). No action or failure of man can ever change this. But regarding the unity of the Spirit, we are exhorted to keep it. We cannot make it, but the Spirit brings it about if we act according to the Word of God and His guidance — on the basis that there is one body. This also requires the qualities mentioned in verse 2 (humility, etc.). It is no easy task and requires endeavour. But it is worthwhile. It will mean harmony locally and between different assemblies (Q 7.21), and dependence on the Spirit, being guided by and subject to Him.

34 How does the Spirit make us long for the Lord's return?

The Holy Spirit occupies us with the glories of Christ (see Q 24) and, in this way, makes us long for Him. In Rev-

elation 22:17 the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voice of the bride (the church) merge into one: 'the Spirit and the bride say, Come'! See also Galatians 5:5.

This is beautifully illustrated in Genesis 24 where Abraham's servant (type of the Holy Spirit) shows Rebecca (type of the church) the glory and the greatness of Isaac (type of Christ) and then leads her to him.

Our activities in relation to the Holy Spirit

35 What is meant by praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20)?

It means praying under the conscious guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if we pray in the Holy Spirit, we will express exactly the right requests in the right manner (Eph. 6:18). We should be praying in the Holy Spirit, not to the Holy Spirit (see Q 50). The Spirit is here, He is in us, and He forms and guides our prayers.

36 What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?

Believers should not, but can, grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). The surrounding verses give some examples of how and why this might occur: 'corrupt communication', 'bitterness', 'wrath' ('heat of passion', JND), 'anger', 'clamour', 'evil speaking' and 'malice'. These things are examples of the (sinful) activity of the flesh. When a believer fails in this way the Holy Spirit will be grieved and, therefore, will not be able to help us enjoy the things of Christ, guide us further into the truth and so on, until the matter is confessed (see Q 32).

37 Is grieving the same as quenching the Holy Spirit?

Grieving is the effect of carelessness in our personal lives. Quenching is mentioned in connection with a lack of appreciation of prophetic ministry (1 Thess. 5:19–20). The Word of God shows us that there are, or should be, regular meetings for edification where there is opportunity for prophesying (applying the Word of God to the

hearers in their current situation, see 1 Cor. 14:29; see Q 7.13). Unfortunately, in many Christian circles (so-called 'churches') no such opportunity is given, at least not on a weekly basis. Where prophecy is held in low regard the Holy Spirit is quenched, which does not mean that He cannot work at all but that He will be severely constrained. This is a very serious matter.

But even where the doctrine of the guidance of the Spirit is held it is possible to hinder or even quench the Spirit through carnal activity or by following habits or tradition.

38 What is meant by 'insulting' the Spirit?

This expression occurs in Hebrews 10: 'who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and ... insulted the Spirit of grace' (v. 29). It is a question of an unbeliever who knows about the gospel but refuses it and in this way insults the Holy Spirit. If he does not repent from this position, he will suffer eternal judgment (John 3:36).

In its immediate context this verse refers to a Jew who had professed the Christian faith — one who had been sanctified by ‘the blood of the covenant’, he was set apart for God outwardly as belonging to God’s people and having professed to receive Christ as Messiah — yet now turned away from the sacrifice of Christ. But the principle and fate also apply to unbelievers today unless they accept Christ.

39 What is ‘resisting’ the Holy Spirit?

In the first instance, this is said of unbelievers who refuse to listen to, and accept, the message God addresses to them (Acts 7:51). By extension, believers can also resist the working of the Spirit if they refuse His testimony — that is, do not obey the Word of God.

Emblems and types (pictures) of the Holy Spirit

The Bible uses a remarkable number of emblems (generic items or objects such as a seal) and types (spe-

cific people or things like the servant in Luke 14:15–24) to illustrate the many different ways in which the Holy Spirit serves and benefits us. Three emblems — sealing (see Q 40), unction (Q 41) and earnest (Q 42) — speak of the blessing of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but each expression shows us a different aspect of this blessing.

40 What is the meaning of being ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit?

Christians who have believed the gospel of salvation are ‘sealed’ with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22). The seal speaks of authenticity and authority (like the seal on a king’s letter, Esther 8:8) and of ownership (e.g. the seal on the foreheads in Rev. 7:3 and following verses; 9:4). It also stands for finality — no one can interfere (Dan. 6:17; Matt. 27:66; Rev. 20:3).

Accordingly, the believer who has been sealed with the Holy Spirit (a) is real or authentic (born again), (b) belongs to God, and (c) has this forever. Sealing occurs as a consequence of faith, not experience (Eph. 1:13).

41 What is the meaning of 'anointing' and 'unction'?

In Old Testament times anointing occurred with a view to receiving a special task or office, for example as a king (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13), a prophet (1 Ki. 19:16b), or a priest (Ex. 28:41). The anointing (or 'unction', which is an alternative translation of the same Greek word) therefore speaks of being consecrated to a task or service, and of being equipped with insight (1 John 2:27) and power. This connection becomes particularly clear in the following references (which primarily speak about the Lord): Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38.

42 What is the meaning of the Holy Spirit being the 'earnest'?

'Earnest' is an old word for deposit, down payment, or guarantee. When a buyer of a house pays the deposit, you know that he intends to pay the balance. In this sense, the Holy Spirit is called 'the earnest of our inheritance' (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:5): God has already given us His Spirit, so He will also give us the future inheritance

— to share in Christ's universal dominion (Eph. 1:10–11, 22–23). This is why verse 14 says: 'to the redemption of the purchased possession'. It is a future redemption*: the inheritance is already ours but still needs to be redeemed, like a cheque you have already received but is only redeemed when it is presented to the bank.

43 What are the other emblems and types of the Holy Spirit in the Bible?

There are many other emblems of the Holy Spirit, such as oil, a dove, wind, etc., and also types like the two servants mentioned already, the one in Genesis 24 and the other in Luke 14. There are more than we have space for in this book, but you can find a list of them in the section about the Holy Spirit on the www.faq-bible.org website.

* Our inheritance has already been purchased through the work of Christ, but the day will come when it will be redeemed by power — set free from every adverse influence.

Common misconceptions

44 Should we ask to receive the Holy Spirit?

We read in Luke 11:13: ‘how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ These words were addressed by the Lord Jesus to His disciples — before His death, resurrection, and ascension, and before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But since that day the Holy Spirit has come. He now dwells on earth (see Q 15).

Christians do not need to ask for the Spirit to come. Once they believe on the finished work of Christ they are indwelt by the Spirit (Q 13).

45 How can I know that I received the Holy Spirit? Do I need to speak in tongues?

No, the gift of tongues was given by the Spirit but only in the beginning and even then, not to all (1 Cor.

12:29–30). So how then do we know we have received the Spirit? The plain answer is because God has said so (Eph. 1:13). It is true that we will also experience it (the assurance the Spirit gives us that we are children of God (see Q 19 and 8.21), the joy He gives, the way He opens up the Scriptures and so on) but the knowledge of His indwelling is based on the Word of God, not on our feelings (Rom. 8:11; 2 Tim. 1:14).

46 Is it true that I need a special baptism of the Spirit or some ‘second experience’ after I have been born again?

No. What we need is not some special experience, miraculous gifts or the like, but faith in the gospel of our salvation (Eph. 1:13). Upon such faith we are sealed and the Spirit dwells in us and abides with us forever. But we do need to allow the Spirit to fill us (see Q 27).

Also note that being baptised with the Spirit does not imply spirituality. In Corinth, all believers were re-

garded as included in the baptism of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) but most were carnal, not spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1).

47 How do you recognise a Spirit-filled believer? Does he need to speak in tongues or perform other miracles?

Miraculous gifts (like speaking in tongues) were given in the beginning (Mark 16:17–18; Heb. 2:3–4). But this does not mean that every Spirit-filled believer has such gifts. The normal signs of being filled with the Spirit today are singing, joy and power in service and testimony (see Q 27), as well as a spiritual behaviour ('walk[ing] ... after the Spirit', Rom. 8:4).

48 What is the 'special anointing' we keep hearing about?

Some teach that Christians can or should reach a higher level of spirituality, receive a 'special anointing' of the Holy Spirit and, as a result, receive special power. The

Bible also uses the term anointing (or 'unction') in connection with the Holy Spirit (see Q 41) but, interestingly, this is not said of the 'fathers' or 'young men' but of the 'little children', the youngest in the faith (1 John 2:18, 20, 27). Therefore, the anointing is a privilege of every believer, not just of the very advanced or spiritual ones.

49 What does it mean to be 'slain in the Spirit'?

This is not a biblical expression — or a biblical phenomenon. Those who talk about being 'slain in the Spirit' are usually referring to situations where, frequently through the influence of a 'healer', people lose control of themselves and fall over, often backwards. They claim that these experiences are brought about by the Holy Spirit. However, the many Bible passages speaking of the Holy Spirit and His power never mention any experiences of this type. In fact, they are in direct contradiction to the character (see Q 7) and the work (Q 9) of the Holy Spirit as described in God's Word.

50 Why shouldn't we pray to the Holy Spirit?

First, because the Bible neither asks us to, nor gives any examples of such a practice (though there are many examples of prayer to the Father and to the Son). But what is the reason for this? We have seen that the Holy Spirit is no less God than the Father and the Son (see Q 3), but His role is a different one. Our relationship is not so much directly with Him but with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3), and He works to help us enjoy that relationship and fellowship (Q 21). Furthermore, we are asked to pray 'in' the Spirit which, really, precludes the idea of praying 'to' the Spirit (Q 35).

51 What is 'the sin against the Holy Spirit'?

People often use this phrase but it does not occur in the Bible. Usually they mean the 'blasphemy of' (not 'sin against') the Holy Spirit (see Q 52). Every sin committed by a Christian is a sin against the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit dwells in them and is grieved by sin (Q 36).

52 What if I commit the blasphemy against the Spirit?

This question is related to Mark 3:29: 'whosoever shall speak injuriously against the Holy Spirit, to eternity has no forgiveness' (JND). The explanation is given in the next verse: 'because they said, He has an unclean spirit'. The Lord had cast out demons in the power of the Holy Spirit. The crowds were amazed and said, 'Is not this the Son of David?' but the Pharisees, against their better knowledge, accused Him of casting out the demons through the power of Satan who they called Beelzebub (Matt. 12:22–32). This behaviour — seeing the evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ Himself and ascribing it to Satan — was blasphemy which could not be forgiven.

Today, it is not possible to commit this sin because Christ is no longer on earth working miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

Who is He? What does he do?

The Holy Spirit is a divine person. He is co-equal with the Father and the Son in the Godhead, yet He indwells each and every believer on the Lord Jesus and the church as a whole. This booklet focusses on His person and work, and the way we should relate to Him in our lives. Not only is it very important to let Him guide and control us so that we bring glory to God and blessing to others, but we need to avoid many wrong teachings about Him that are popular today and lead to wrong practices.

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