

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

John 15:26-16:15

As Christians we confess the Trinity, the three in one and one in three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We pray to the Father almighty, maker of heaven in earth, in the name of Jesus, the only begotten Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Trinity is not an impersonal force or modalistic “face” of God, but rather the personal Lord and giver of life. As Christians we ought live in conscientious communion with the Holy Spirit, knowing what He has done in history and how He empowered the life of Jesus, and rejoicing in the work He is doing in and through us (Gal. 5:22-23).

With Me from the Beginning

While no evangelical is willing to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit, few understand His role(s) in Scripture. Augustine said “The New (Testament) is in the Old concealed, and in the New the Old revealed.” Having seen the persons of the Trinity in the New Testament, we can then discern them in the Old. John is famous for including *double entendres* in his Gospel, words and phrases with two meanings. Jesus says He will send the Helper, who bears witness about Him, to them (v26). They will also bear witness since they have been with him from the beginning (v27). The disciples are somehow like the Spirit who was with Jesus at the beginning of creation (Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2; Gen. 1:3). Which beginning is he talking about, His ministry or the creation? Yes. And where in the OT do we see the Spirit with Jesus and the Father? He hovers over creation, ready to continue creation and take what has been created and shape it into further maturity. The word for “hover” occurs two other times in the Bible, and once referring to the Spirit, when the Spirit engages in another (re)creation event, the Exodus (Deut. 32:10-11; Is. 63:10, 13-14). The Spirit is the “breath” of life (Gen. 2:7; Ps. 104:30), and overwhelmingly powerful (Micah 3:8; Is. 31:3). The Spirit makes enormous and beautiful things (Ps. 33:6), empowers judicial saviors like Othniel and Samson (Judges 3:10, 14:6), snatches up and deposits prophets (Ez. 3:12-15), and drives rushing water (Is. 59:19). Man is made in the image of the Spirit (Gen. 1:26-27) and the Spirit empowers men to serve God and take dominion, notably Bezalel, Oholiab, Joseph and Daniel (Ex. 31:1-11, 35:30-35; Gen. 41:38; Dn. 4:8-9). The Spirit also dwelt with the faithful in the Old Covenant (Ps. 51:11).

The Spirit of Jesus

We see the ministry of Holy Spirit in the New Testament in three stages. The first two regard the preparation for and life of the God-man, Jesus Christ. First, the Spirit overshadows Mary indicating a new creation (Lk. 1:35), and then fills Elizabeth and Zechariah for blessings and prophecy (Lk. 1:41, 67). Second, He came upon Jesus at His baptism (Lk. 3:21-23). Although the dove is a sign of peace and rest, the Spirit empowered Jesus for much conflict (Lk. 4:1-2). The Spirit was with Jesus throughout His life and ministry: for preaching and liberating the captives in Jubilee (Lk. 4:18 cf. Is. 61:1-2); bestowing glory and preparing Him for the greater Exodus at the transfiguration (Lk. 9:29-31, 34); causing Him to rejoice about the work of the Father (10:21); and keeping Him focused on the mission (Matt. 12:17-21). Jesus did not become God by the Spirit; he lived as a true man by the Spirit.

The Given Spirit

All of this leads up to the greater sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells the disciples this in order to give them hope (Jn. 16:1-4). He would not leave them orphans (Jn. 14:18). It’s to their and our advantage that Jesus would leave and send the Spirit (Jn. 16:7). The world would be convicted of sin, righteousness and

judgment (vv8-11). They would learn more about Jesus after He was gone (vv12-13) than while He was with them! The Spirit points to Jesus and the Father (vv12-14). This leaves us in a remarkable position: filled with Spirit (Acts 2:16-17; 2 Cor. 1:22). We find anything this doesn't apply to. Just four things now: the Holy Spirit is fruitful in our lives (Gal. 5:21-22; Eph. 4:30); He glorifies the Son and the Father; He is our source of fellowship (2 Cor. 13:14); He will accomplish His mission (Jn. 16:8).

Questions for Little Saints

1. How many persons are in one God?
2. What was the Holy Spirit doing on the first day of creation (Gen. 1:2)?
3. What does it mean to “grieve” the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)?