

Introduction

Why study about the Holy Spirit? This seems an appropriate question to ask in the beginning of a book *on* the Holy Spirit. Some Christians may *never* engage in such a study. Others may only do so superficially, perhaps to answer a nagging question or two. But *you*, dear reader, are apparently ready to launch into an entire *book* on this oft-neglected subject. Why would you do such a thing?

Better yet, why did I *write* such a thing?

Of course, I cannot answer why you chose to read this book. The reason I chose to *write* this, however, is quite straightforward: I have a personal passion to introduce Christians of any level of spiritual maturity to the Holy Spirit of God in a manner I had not seen before. There are a number of very good books on the Spirit; I have read a number of them and will quote from some of them myself. Yet none of these approached the subject the way in which you will read it here. This book is not designed as merely a clinical study *of* the Holy Spirit; instead, it is designed as a tribute *to* Him. I feel strongly that Christians—even those seeking to *become* Christians—should not just know *about* the Holy Spirit, but that they should enjoy a rewarding fellowship *with* Him.

The researching and writing of this book has been tremendously rewarding for me personally. Beyond this, I cannot stress enough how important a study of the Holy Spirit is to anyone seeking to “draw near to God” (cf. James 4:8). It stands to reason that if you truly wish to draw near to God, then you would *strongly desire* to learn as much as you can about Him. It also makes sense that no one in the world should be as interested in God as those who wish to be saved by Him. Furthermore, if one truly desires to “walk by the

Spirit” (Galatians 5:16), then he ought to know who this Spirit is that he is to follow.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned over 200 times in the New Testament, and yet He may be foreign to many of our spiritual conversations. In part, this is because some think there is little to *know* about Him. There is a considerable amount of information and insight concerning Jehovah God¹ of the Old Testament. Likewise, we have four gospels and a healthy amount of exposition—both theological and practical—concerning Jesus, who is both Messiah (Christ) *and* the Son of God (John 20:31). But of the Spirit, we have comparatively little information. Even His name—“Holy Spirit”—is vague, even cryptic; it is more descriptive (of His essential nature) than it is personal. (This is evidenced by the fact that He is always called *the* Holy Spirit, and never just “Holy Spirit.”) The King James Version (1611) has not helped matters: by referring to Him as the “Holy Ghost” gives the impression of a disembodied specter, a phantom, a paranormal oddity. This immediately characterizes the Spirit as a mysterious and unapproachable entity, which only further makes Him more alien to us. It is easy for us to disconnect ourselves from those things—or Persons—which are unfamiliar to us. Because of this, we tend to downplay or altogether ignore the Spirit’s role in the church or the life of a Christian. We are much more comfortable and conversant in the redemptive work and mediatory role of Jesus Christ. Thus, we put our primary focus on Christ (which is what the gospel has taught us to do) but perhaps to the exclusion of the Spirit (which the gospel has *not* taught us to do).

We may also fail to learn more about the Spirit because it is a difficult thing to do (as you probably already know). A study like this takes time,

dedicated concentration, prayer, and a healthy examination of the Bible—not just in *citations* of Scripture, but also in understanding the *context* of Scripture. Time is something a person is unlikely to devote to anything unless he anticipates a good return on his investment. Not every Christian is convinced that a better understanding of the Holy Spirit is even worth pursuing. A study of the Spirit does not seem to be as immediately rewarding or inspiring as, say, a study of the Beatitudes or the grandeur of heaven. Some feel that their present knowledge of the Word, or the direction of their walk with God, is already sufficient. They think (but may not put into words), “Since I already have a healthy relationship with the Lord *apart from* a deeper knowledge of the Holy Spirit, I really don’t see the benefit of this.”

Furthermore, many have been conditioned to think that God has provided the gospel for the “experts”—in this case, preachers and theologians. Yet God has provided the gospel for *every believer* to learn, not just the so-called “clergy.” It is disturbing that one’s knowledge of the Holy Spirit would be neglected only because we have deemed Him too difficult to understand—or too controversial to even try. God *expects* us to get beyond the “elementary teaching about the Christ” and “press on to maturity” in our faith (Hebrews 6:1).

The many references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament are there for a reason: there are things God wants us to know about Him. It is one thing to know that God *does* work in our lives; it is quite another thing to know *how* He works—at least, according to what He has revealed to us in His Word. A deeper, more accurate understanding of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives leads to a deeper, more fulfilling relationship with God Himself. This also gives us a much greater appreciation for the Christ who *sent* the Spirit to us—and how He

[Christ] is the Prime Mover behind all that the Spirit does for us. A better comprehension of our fellowship with God—the Father, Son, *and* Spirit—will give us an even greater understanding of our fellowship with one another.

Thankfully, there are those like you and me who are ready to jump into this study with both feet forward, unwilling to ignore it any longer. We are unconcerned with where this study will take us, as long as we are directed by God’s truth. Since we can “bear fruit” *for* God only through the truth of God (Colossians 1:5-6), we want the truth—not some pre-scripted, “safe” doctrine that ties God’s hands, holds the Holy Spirit hostage to human expectations, and doesn’t really do anything for *us*. Our Bibles are open; our minds are filled with hope and looking forward to gaining knowledge; our hearts are filled with prayer imploring God’s guidance in our study; we are poised and ready. The question as to whether or not we should learn about the Holy Spirit has already been answered: we cannot go any further *without* such learning.

So then, let’s get started.

¹ “Jehovah” is the Masoretic rendering of Yahweh (from the ancient Hebrew, *YHWH*), the noun form of the verb phrase, “I AM” (as used in Exodus 3:14). Permanent vowels were not added to the Hebrew Bible text until perhaps the fifth century AD by the Masoretic scribes, thus producing Yahweh from *YHWH* (Larry Walker, *The Origin of the Bible*, ed. Philip Comfort [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992], 215-216). If one wishes to investigate this further, <http://apostolic.net/biblicalstudies/jehovah.htm> (cited June, 2009) provides a good beginning point. In this book, “Jehovah” will be used as an understandable reference to God the Father.