

*maranatha*

# Holy Spirit

Introductory Ecumenical Notes

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# **'Not by might nor by power, but my Spirit', says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4.6)**

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## **1. The Original Words**

Two Hebrew words are used to describe Spirit - **nephesh** which means breath and **ruach** which means wind. Both imply the presence of **life**. "I will put breath in you and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord". (Ezk. 37.6). Ruach is often used to describe the invasion of people's lives by the presence and power of God. The Greek word **pneuma** and the Latin word **spiritus** also denotes breath. Breath is synonymous with life. It is invisible.

## **2. The Person**

**Personal** actions are constantly ascribed to Him - "The Spirit **said** to Philip" (Acts 8.29). The Spirit **comprehends** (1 Cor. 2.11). The Spirit expressly **says** (1 Tim. 4.1).

Promising the gift of the Spirit Jesus said "He will **teach** you" (John 14.26); "He will **bear witness**" (John 15.26); "He will **convince** the world...He will **guide** you..." (John 16.8, 13).

## **3. The Symbols**

These relate to life, health and peace -

### **3.1 Fire**

"He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**" (Luke 3.16). Fire purifies and burns up impurities.

Fire depicts the presence of God - God's appearance to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3.2); the pillar of fire during the journey through the wilderness (Ex. 13.21); the descending of God upon Mount Sinai (Ex. 19.18); the chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings 6.17).

At Pentecost when the Spirit fell "tongues of fire rested on each one of them" (Acts 2.3).

### **3.2 Wind**

"The **wind** blows where it will...so it is with everyone born of the Spirit". (John 3.8). The wind blows away the dirt, dust and cobwebs.

"Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting and they were filled with the Holy Spirit". (Acts 2.2).

### 3.3 **Water**

The Spirit is like **water** on thirsty land (see Is. 44.3). Water cleanses, regenerates and renews.

Jesus spoke of "streams of living water" - "By this He meant the Spirit". (John 7.38,39).

Jesus told the woman of Samaria of the Living Water - "Whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst" (John 4.14).

### 3.4 **Oil**

The Spirit is like **oil**, soothing pain and bringing wholeness. It is a tangible sign of the Spirit's healing power instanced in the anointing of the sick by the early church.

In 1 Samuel 16.13 we read "then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward".

### 3.5 **Breath**

The Spirit is like **breath** and the Hebrew word 'nephesh' which means breath is used to describe God's Spirit which brings life.

The life-giving Spirit which transformed the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel's story is available today to deal with our lifelessness and disease.

When the risen Christ was with his disciples "he breathed on them and said 'receive the Holy Spirit' " (John 20.22).

### 3.6 **Dove**

The Spirit is like a **dove** - the symbol of purity, innocence and peace - "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a Dove and remain on him". (John 1.32). In Genesis 1.2 we read "the Spirit brooded like a bird over the face of the water".

## 4. **The Characteristics**

### 4.1 **Power**

The promise is clearly made - "after the Holy Spirit is come upon you, you will receive **power**". (Acts 1.8).

The Greek word dunamis is the root of the English words dynamite and dynamo.

## 4.2 **Truth**

"But when he, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16.13). "You will know the truth and **the truth will set you free**". (John 8.32). We proclaim the Gospel of liberation.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom". (2 Cor. 3.17).

## 4.3 **Life**

"If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, has his home in you, God, who raised Christ from the dead, will give **life** even to your bodies, subject to death though they are, through the power of his Spirit, who comes and makes his home within you". (Romans 8.11).

## 4.4 **The Activator and Enabler**

The Spirit will enable us to **communicate** our faith - "the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say" (Luke 12.12) and "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict". (Luke 21.15). Jesus said "Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak but the Spirit of your father speaking through you". (Matthew 10.19,20).

He fulfils **personal** roles -  
**helper**  
**counsellor**  
**advocate**  
**strengthenener**  
**intercessor**  
**guide**  
**uniter**

# 5. **The Old Testament**

## 5.1 **The Giver of Life**

The Old Testament reveals that the Holy Spirit was sent by God in the act of creation (Gen. 1.2). He is the giver and sustainer of life.

## 5.2 **Specific Tasks**

The Old Testament records the coming of the Spirit of God upon individuals as an overwhelming strength to undertake specific tasks for the Lord.

"The Spirit of God will come mightily upon you...and you will be changed into another person". (1 Sam. 10.6)

"The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon". (Judges 6.34)

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor". (Is.61.1)

"The Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied among them". (1 Sam. 10.10)

"When the Spirit rested upon them they prophesied and did not cease". (Num. 11.25)

"The wisdom of the elders administering the law came from God's Spirit". (Num. 11.17)

### 5.3 **A Broader Vision**

Israel awaited a gift of the Spirit which was to be more profound than the stirrings of individual people.

Moses said "would that **all** the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them". (Num. 11. 26-29).

The prophet Joel sees a whole people animated by the Spirit of God "I will pour out my Spirit on **all** flesh". (Joel 2.28)

Ezekiel has a vision of God's entire people being revitalised "I will give you a new heart and put my Spirit within you". (Ezek. 36.26,27).

## 6. **The Gospels**

### 6.1 **The Prophecy**

Pointing to the coming Messiah the Prophet declares "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord". (Is. 11.2).

### 6.2 **The Preparation**

When Mary asked about the coming of the Messiah the answer was given "the Holy Spirit will come upon you". (Luke 1.35).

When Elizabeth met Mary with Jesus in her womb she was "filled with the Holy Spirit". (Luke 1.41).

When Zechariah received back his power of speech he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and prophesied. (Luke 1.67).

### 6.3 **The Ministry of Jesus**

The Holy Spirit is directly involved in the birth, baptism and ministry of Jesus.

When Jesus prepared for his preaching he was "filled with the Holy Spirit" and "led by the Spirit". (Luke 4.1).

The ministry of Jesus was started "with the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4.14) and he was "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power". (Acts 10.38).

#### 6.4 **The Promise of Jesus**

Jesus promised the gift of the Spirit to his followers. He said "when he the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you". (John 16. 13 & 14).

## 7. **Pentecost**

### 7.1 **The Birth of the Church**

When they were together (Acts 2.1) - they **heard** "a sound like the blowing of a violent wind", they **saw** "what seemed to be tongues of fire", they **received** "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit", they **spoke** "they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them".

Those who saw what was happening were amazed, bewildered and perplexed.

Peter immediately spoke out "God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father **the promised Holy Spirit** and has poured out what you now see and hear". (Acts 2.32 & 33).

Pentecost was the day on which the Jews celebrated the Covenant of Sinai. It now became the day when the **new** Covenant was bestowed on God's people. The **new** Covenant is a dramatic reversal of the old concepts. In the story of the Tower of Babel we hear of estrangement and hostility symbolised in multiplication of languages. This situation is reversed at Pentecost - men are now 'of one heart and soul'. (Acts 4.32).

### 7.2 **The 'Gentile' Pentecost**

Whereas Acts 2 describes a gathering of Jews "from every nation under heaven", chapter 10 is concerned with the relatives and close friends of Cornelius a Gentile. While Peter was speaking to them 'the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message'. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. (Acts 10. 44-46).

### 7.3 **A Continuing Experience**

When Paul went to Ephesus he met a group of disciples - "he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit, when they became believers. 'No', they said. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit". (Acts 19.2). "When Paul laid his hands on them , the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy". (Acts 19.6).

## 8. The Epistles

We are encouraged to "**walk** by the Spirit". (Gals. 5.16)

We are asked to "**pray** in the Holy Spirit". (Jude 20)

We are warned "**do not** grieve the Holy Spirit". (Eph. 4.30)

We are commanded to **take** "the sword of the Spirit". (Eph. 6.17)

We are implored "**do not** quench the Spirit". (1 Thes. 5.19)

## 9. The Gifts

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12.4)

The gifts of the Spirit include -

**words of wisdom**  
**words of knowledge**  
**faith**  
**healing**  
**miraculous powers**  
**prophecy**  
**discernment**  
**tongues**  
**interpretation of tongues**

(1 Cor. 12. 8-11)

and also

**servicing**  
**teaching**  
**encouraging**  
**contributing to others' needs**  
**leading**  
**showing mercy**  
(Romans 12. 6-8)

The key words about the gifts of the Spirit are -

**Phanerosis** (manifestation) - an uncovering, laying bare, revelation.

**Diakonia** (services) - presenting a living sacrifice.

**Pneumaticos** (spiritual) - this denotes invisibility and power.

**Charismata** (gifts) - a free gift, undeserved.

**Dunamis** (power) - mighty deeds and manifestations of God's strength.

## 10. The Fruit

The fruit of the Spirit include -

**love**  
**joy**  
**peace**  
**patience**  
**kindness**  
**goodness**  
**faithfulness**  
**humility**  
**self-control**

(see Gal. 5.22)

Jesus says "by their fruit you shall know them". (Matthew 7.20)

## 11. Receiving the Spirit

We are weak until we receive the Holy Spirit, We will be utterly exhausted if we do God's work relying on our own strength. The Holy Spirit himself is a **gift** and Jesus specifically urges us to ask for this gift. He said "ask and it will be given you...if you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask him?" (Luke 11. 9-13).

Jesus said in a loud voice, "If a man is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him". By this he meant the **Spirit**, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (John 7. 37-39).

## 12. The Church

The Church is the Body of Christ and Temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12.11-13 & 1 Cor. 3.16). With the Spirit **dwelling in us** we belong to Christ. (Romans 8.9).

The faithful are "powerfully **strengthened** by the Spirit" (Eph. 3.16). We are brought together as one in "the **unity** of the Spirit". (Eph. 4.3).

The Spirit gives Christians the **power** to confess the Lordship of Christ. (1 Cor. 12.3)

Preaching is a "**demonstration** of the power of the Spirit". (1 Cor. 2.4)

Jesus says that the world does not know the Spirit - "but you know him, because he dwells **with** you and will be **in** you". (John 14.17)

The Church baptises and blesses in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28.19 & 2 Cor. 13.14). We are taught to **pray** in the Holy Spirit. (Jude 20)

When Paul met a group of followers at Ephesus he endeavoured to confirm their Christian belief by asking the question "did you **receive the Holy Spirit** when you believed?" (Acts 19.2). After recognising that they did not he laid hands on them and "the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied". (Acts 19.6).

### 13. The Proof of Our Faith

The Holy Spirit **convicts** us. He **leads** us to repentance. He **shows** us Jesus. He **regenerates** us and he **manifests** his presence amongst us.

"By this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us". (1 John 3.24)

"By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us. Because He has given us of His own Spirit". (1 John 4.13)

"The Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the truth". (1 John 5.6)

### 14. Biblical Evidence

The following is a check-list of the nature of the Holy Spirit revealed in the New Testament.

**Deity** - Matthew 28.19 & 2 Cor. 13.14

**A Person** - John 14.26, Acts 11.12

**Relationship with Christ** - John 7.39, Acts 2.33, John 15.26

**The Inspirer** - Acts 4.25, Hebrews 3.7

**The Interpreter** - John 14.17, 1 Cor. 2.10

**The Creator** - Genesis 1.2, Job 33.4, Psalms 104.30

**His Relationship with the Church** - Acts 4.31, 1 Cor. 3.16, Eph. 2.22

**Author of Gifts to the Church** - 1 Cor. 12.4, Heb. 2.4

**New Birth** - John 3.5, Romans 8.9-11, 1 Cor. 12.13

**Guidance** - Acts 8.29, 10.19, 11.12, 16.6, Rom. 8.14, Gal. 5.18

**Intercession** - Romans 8.26-27, Eph 6.18

**Sanctification** - Rom. 8.2, 1 Cor. 6.11, Gal. 5.16, 2 Thess. 2.13

**Our Assurance**

**"It is through the Spirit, whom He gave us, that we know that He has entered into our life". (1 John 3.24)**

**"This Spirit you have received makes you a son in the family of God and through this Spirit we can cry to God; 'Father, dear Father'. This same Spirit joins with our spirit in the assurance that we really are children of God". (Romans 8.15,16)**

**There can be no life in God's people without the Holy Spirit**

The Orthodox Church emphasises this and in the Dialogues with Patriarch Athenagoras we read:

*Without the Holy Spirit; God is far away,  
Christ stays in the past,  
the gospel is a dead letter,  
the Church is simply an organisation,  
authority a matter of domination,  
mission a matter of propaganda,  
the liturgy no more than an evocation,  
Christian living a slave morality.  
But in the Holy Spirit:  
the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the  
birthpangs of the Kingdom,  
the risen Christ is there,  
the gospel is the power of life,  
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,  
authority is a liberating service,  
mission is a Pentecost,  
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,  
human action is deified.*