



THE  
COMING  
— OF THE —  
HOLY  
SPIRIT

Why Jesus sent his Spirit  
into the world

PHILLIP D. JENSEN

Phillip Jensen has done the worldwide Christian community a huge service in this massive and comprehensive teaching on the person of the Holy Spirit. I have crisscrossed the world more than 70 times and have seen first-hand the confusion regarding the third member of the Trinity, from those who are afraid to talk about him to those who call him 'it'. All Bible-believing and Bible-trusting Christians, regardless of their theological shade or hue, will be blessed by this book. Read it and rejoice that our Lord Jesus gave us his Spirit to empower us to glorify him.

**Michael Youssef**

Founding Rector, The Church of The Apostles, Atlanta, GA

Within weeks of being converted as a 16-year-old in 1982, I realized that the two teachers who led the tiny Christian meeting at my school appeared to believe very different things about the Holy Spirit. As a 19-year-old at university, my college CU was split over the same issue. As a 25-year-old at theological college, I learned that what you believed about the Spirit defined to some degree what camp you were in. And then *Christianity Explored* was created, in part as a response to the 'Toronto Blessing'. Here at last, after 40 years, is a book that says, "Let's look at the key Bible passages; let's talk; let's be like the Bereans." For those of us in England this is particularly timely, because charismatics and conservatives have never needed each other more as we seek to stand together for orthodoxy in the face of the battles over human sexuality. I'm deeply thankful for this book.

**Rico Tice**

Christianity Explored Ministries, London

A theology of the Spirit, but not as we know it. It is fresh and inspiring. Phillip uses words and phrases like 'climactic', 'history-disrupting' and 'world-order changing' to describe the work of the Spirit in God's purposes. This book will take you deep and lift you into the heights, because it pays attention to the sweep of the whole of salvation history in order to understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Be ready to think bigger!

**Andrew Heard**

Lead Pastor, EV Church, Central Coast, NSW

Chairman, FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches)

Australia and Reach Australia

Christians often have questions about the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Phillip Jensen has done the church a great service by giving us a comprehensive but clear and accessible book that looks at what God's word says on the topic. His many years of pastoral ministry and answering questions on this issue come out in the main body of the book, as well as in the 34 (!) appendices. This is an excellent resource that you will come back to again and again.

**Jane Tooher**

Lecturer, Ministry and Church History  
Director, The Priscilla & Aquila Centre  
Moore Theological College, Sydney

In our day of confusion on the Holy Spirit's person and work and gifts, it's refreshing to read such a straightforward biblical theology of the Holy Spirit that resonates with the exegetical wisdom of the Christian tradition in its classic evangelical Protestant expression. I'm so glad Phillip Jensen has enriched the theological conversation in the evangelical community with this theologically rich, engaging and eminently practical volume. If you want to grapple with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from the pen of a wise and biblically faithful pastor-teacher, I strongly encourage you to read this book.

**Matthew Pinson**

President, Welch College, Gallatin, TN

The topic of the Holy Spirit is one of great controversy in the modern church. Phillip Jensen's book directs us to the Spirit-inspired word of God to show us why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. It is no easy feat to write a book on the third person of the Godhead that is concise yet comprehensive, simple yet profound, but Phillip has succeeded in doing just that. This book has opened my eyes to more deeply appreciate how the Spirit leads me to Jesus as Lord, to God as Father, and to holiness of life, and how he assures me of the salvation that Jesus has won for me on the cross. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to understand how the Spirit of God is actively and intimately involved in our individual lives, in the church and in the world.

**Carmelina Read**

Dean of Women, Christ College, Sydney

The Bible tells us all we need to know about the Holy Spirit who authored it. Phillip Jensen is an excellent Bible teacher, and in this helpful book he clearly and carefully distils for us the Scripture's teaching on the Spirit.

**Andrew Cheah**

Dean, St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur

After more than 50 years of reflecting upon and preaching about the Holy Spirit, Phillip Jensen has produced a wonderfully helpful study of the Spirit's person and work. He carefully takes us through an examination of the teaching of the New Testament. With an astonishing 34 appendices, few stones are left unturned as Phillip engages with many of the more contentious issues regarding the Holy Spirit. Throughout, he has consistently written with clarity, understanding and grace.

**Mike Raiter**

Director, Centre for Biblical Preaching, Melbourne

Phillip Jensen has provided us with a careful and systematic account of the Bible's teaching on the Holy Spirit. It is clear, considered, compassionate—at points appropriately direct, but always and at each point an account of the Bible's teaching. Phillip looks at biblical passages in their immediate context and with due consideration of their place in the broader sweep of biblical theology, something that is often missing in other treatments of this topic. He wants the Bible to set the agenda. So, he addresses the promise of the Spirit, the arrival of the Spirit, the Spirit in world mission, and the Spirit in the Christian life. Then, in a series of short but important appendices, Phillip turns to some of our questions about the Spirit, which are better answered from the Bible because we have first allowed the Bible to speak on its own terms. This book is sorely needed where there is so much confusion not only about the Spirit but also about what it means to be truly spiritual. I warmly commend this book.

**Mark D. Thompson**

Principal, Moore Theological College, Sydney

Phillip Jensen has spent a lifetime expounding Scripture with reverent prayerfulness, diligent study, fearless clarity and deep pastoral wisdom. Under God, his ministry has proved singularly effective in impacting generations of young adults, as well as strengthening missions and local church



ministry and ministers across the globe. This book is the fruit of 50 years of engagement with the teaching of Scripture concerning the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Characteristically, Jensen allows Scripture to set the agenda rather than seeking to address points of dispute. Nevertheless, there are no fewer than 34 short appendices addressed to specific questions. The volume takes its shape from the teaching of Jesus, who promises the Spirit, sends the Spirit, and is present and active among his people by his Spirit. *The Coming of the Holy Spirit* is bracing in its biblical rigour, full of fresh insight, and deeply encouraging. It will inform, equip and enlarge your heart of devotion and service to the Lord who promises, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth”.

**Kanishka Raffel**

Anglican Archbishop of Sydney

In *The Coming of the Holy Spirit*, Phillip Jensen has provided us with a gospel-shaped and Christ-centred look at a glorious and hugely important biblical truth: the truth about the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The book is vintage Jensen—full of profound exegetical and theological insight and penetrating contemporary application. Reading it has been hard work but deeply rewarding, not least because I frequently found myself turning from Phillip’s book to *the Book*, to re-read and rediscover the wonderful truth about God’s Holy Spirit and his world-changing, Jesus-centred, God-glorifying work.

Books about the Holy Spirit frequently focus on the ‘controversial issues’ that often divide Christians. I am so glad that Phillip has put these issues in their place—not ignoring them, but seeing them in the light of the great foundational truths about the Holy Spirit that are so often neglected. As a Christian and as a pastor, I have found this book instructive, challenging and encouraging. I wish that I had read it years ago when, as a young Christian and theological student, conversations about the Holy Spirit were more characterized by heat than light. I am thankful to have read it now and strongly urge others to do the same.

**Mervyn Eloff**

Rector, St James’ Church, Kenilworth, Cape Town

This book is the fruit of a lifelong, gospel-saturated ministry. Instead of focusing on the controversies generated in history, Phillip Jensen bathes in the Scriptures to adorn the person and work of the Holy Spirit as the third person of our Triune God. A classic for the years ahead.

**Richard Chin**

National Director, AFES (Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students)

Author, *Captivated by Christ* and *How to Read the Bible Better*

What do you get when a pastor distills a lifetime of wrestling with Scripture and expounding the person and work of the Spirit? You get a celebration of the grace and faithfulness of God—Father, Son and Spirit—springing from a concerted effort to understand the Spirit’s work on the Bible’s own terms. You get a sustained, searching, forthright, pastoral, always accessible and often controversial exploration of the person and work of the Spirit of Christ, tracing the contours of the Bible’s storyline. That’s not all; you get the preacher’s informative and pointed asides (footnotes) and the fruit of a thousand question times (appendices). Not every reader will agree with every interpretation of contested texts about the Spirit, but they will be challenged, as the author says, to “resist the temptations to limit him by our theological system, marginalize him by our intellectual arguments, or take control of him by our institutional traditions”. This is an urgent plea to believers to be led by the Spirit to be more like Christ and to preach his saving work to the nations.

**Rev Dr Richard J. Gibson**

Principal, Brisbane School of Theology, QLD

This book is a topical study at its most outstanding. Phillip Jensen takes a near exhaustive approach, studying multiple New Testament verses on the Holy Spirit and placing each verse in its proper context, both within passage and Bible book. The result is as thorough a treatment of the person and work of the Holy Spirit as you will find, together with comprehensive and biblically faithful answers to all the most difficult questions. This book will be a lasting resource of enormous value to the church. It is a great gift.

**William Taylor**

Rector, St Helen’s Bishopsgate, London

Evangelicals have debated the work of the Holy Spirit for decades, with attention often going to more peripheral issues. Phillip Jensen has served the church wonderfully by considering the coming of the Spirit on the Bible's own terms. Starting with the foundational teaching of the Lord Jesus and then seeing how other New Testament texts develop this, Jensen helps readers understand the critical work the Spirit has come to do. One does not need to agree with all the points Jensen makes to benefit enormously from this excellent study. Warmly recommended.

**Dr Kyle Johnston**

Pastor, Jubilee Community Church, Cape Town  
Chairman, Biblical Counselling Africa

This book is unique in its content and its approach to what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. It is written as a biblical theology of the Holy Spirit. Phillip Jensen is thoughtful and careful in attending to what Scripture says about the Spirit. He is aware of the many issues and questions we have about the Holy Spirit, but restricts himself in the main part of the book to interacting with those issues only where the Scriptures speak to them. Nevertheless, he does not shy away from addressing those questions, supplying an extensive set of appendices at the end of the book. Phillip writes as a preacher, employing a style and language accessible to lay people, preachers, ministers and students of the Bible. I highly recommend this book as a model for the contemporary application of the Bible and as a standard textbook for understanding what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit. Soli Deo Gloria!

**Ma'afu Palu**

Director, Graphe Bible College, Sydney

Phillip Jensen's many years of faithful study and fruitful ministry have been brought together to provide this fine and comprehensive exploration of the Bible's teaching about the Holy Spirit, structured along the timeline of revelation from Genesis to the new creation. Twin principles govern his approach: the Bible must set the agenda for our thinking, rather than insisting that our questions should do that; and, therefore, the Bible must define and explain our experiences, rather than vice versa. In this area of widespread confusion, Phillip's careful, humble and detailed analysis of what the biblical texts actually say provides the necessary foundation for its

practical application to many of today's misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Leaving no stone unturned with its numerous footnotes, appendices and helpful summaries, this is an enormously valuable resource for every Christian committed to knowing the person—and experiencing the ministry—of the Holy Spirit more fully in our lives. It will illuminate, correct, encourage and refresh your understanding in your personal walk with God. I wholeheartedly recommend it.

**David Jackman**

Former President, The Proclamation Trust, London

Phillip Jensen's long ministry has coincided with the emergence, rise, overwhelming triumph, mistakes and maturing self-reflection of the charismatic movement. At times there have been sharp divisions, disagreements and misunderstandings between conservative and charismatic evangelicals. Phillip has written this excellent new book not to stir controversy, but from the irenic desire to bring understanding and unity. He provides a compelling biblical exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit that insists our expectations be determined by Jesus' teaching. No evangelical Christian could fail to be helped by the main body of the work, which reminds us of the inestimable privilege of living under the new covenant after the Holy Spirit was poured out, and of the vital task of mission that can only be undertaken in his power. The appendices tackle issues where there may be disagreement between brothers and sisters, but do so with clarity and charity. There are very few points at which charismatic or Pentecostal believers will beg to differ, but Phillip's careful, detailed exposition of the biblical texts will help them to appreciate why conservatives take a different view. True unity despite differences can only be achieved by such honest engagement with each other. The thoroughly biblical methodology adopted, and the years of ministry experience Phillip brings to bear, make this book an equivalent of Jim Packer's *Keep in Step with the Spirit* or Don Carson's *Showing the Spirit* for a new generation.

**John Stevens**

National Director, FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches) UK



This excellent book gives clear and comprehensive biblical teaching on the Holy Spirit in a fresh, readable way that is accessible to anyone with an open Bible and an open mind. While being unafraid to touch on points of controversy, it lets the Bible itself set the agenda and therefore keeps the focus on God's priorities, not our hobbyhorses—particularly important for this subject. The careful layout of the main text—with each main section followed by a helpful summary—makes it an ideal resource for group study, and the excellent appendices (covering a host of common questions) is a great reference resource. I expect it will become a staple text in many student and young workers study programmes, including our own.

**William J. U. Philip**

Senior Minister, The Tron Church, Glasgow

This book has come at the right time. Phillip Jensen deals with a common subject, but takes a unique approach to it: he explores “what the Bible says about the Spirit, being guided by the Bible itself as to what is important and where we should be focused”. In other words, he invites us to let the Bible speak to us on the subject rather than imposing our own questions and confusion onto it. Rarely does one read a book these days on the subject of the Holy Spirit that seriously pursues the role of the Spirit in mission biblically—but Jensen has achieved this. I commend this book to academics, church leaders and preachers. Those who are engaged in local and world mission in the West and Africa will find this book a must read.

**Dr Mwita Akiri**

Anglican Bishop of Tarime

Chair, GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) Tanzania

Research Professor of Mission and African History, Wycliffe College,  
University of Toronto

Phillip Jensen's study of the Holy Spirit is representative of his long ministry. It is biblical, pastoral and challenging. His exposition of the Spirit's work in John 14-16, the Spirit's fruit in Galatians 5, and the Spirit's creation of unity in the church in Ephesians will enrich any serious reader. Jensen teaches a truly biblical spirituality that will see believers through life's good and bad times because it is anchored in God, not shifting experiences.

**Paul House**

Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University,  
Birmingham, AL

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Why Jesus sent his Spirit  
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*The Coming of the Holy Spirit*

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Internet: [www.matthiasmedia.com.au](http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au)

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For Helen,  
who surpasses all.

And for Matthew, Ruth and Rachel,  
through whom God has given us  
thirteen extraordinary grandchildren.

“May the God of hope  
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit  
you may abound in hope.”

(Romans 15:13)





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## INTRODUCTION: UNITY, DIVISION AND CONTROVERSY

What a privilege it has been to write a book on such a glorious subject, for to write about the Holy Spirit is to write about God. Through the work of the Spirit in the world, we see the glorious character of the true and living God. The coming of the Holy Spirit into the world was a defining moment in world history. By sending his Spirit, God fulfilled his age-old plans to convert the Jewish nation and to bring the kingdom of his Son to all nations. The arrival of the Spirit has revolutionized the lives of countless millions of people by transforming them into the children of God.

There could hardly be a more glorious subject to explore than the Holy Spirit. John Stott puts it well:

Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.<sup>1</sup>

1 JRW Stott, *The Message of Acts: To the ends of the earth*, The Bible Speaks Today, IVP, 1990, p 60.

I hope and pray that some of the glory of God the Holy Spirit may be revealed in this book as together we explore his works in the world and in our lives.

However, no book can do justice to this topic. No book can contain all that the Scriptures say of the Spirit, let alone present the Bible's teaching with perfect balance. It is a heavy burden to speak of God without misrepresenting him. I pray that God uses this effort to teach his word for his glory and for your profit.

Very sadly, Christians have long been divided over the person and work of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> By far the most significant Holy Spirit-related division today is the disagreement within Protestantism between Pentecostal/charismatic Christians and Reformed/evangelical Christians. These divisions express themselves in multiple subjects and controversies that all, in one way or another, relate to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. For example:

- Does the Spirit fill Christians completely at conversion, or is there a second baptism in the Spirit that all true Christians should undergo? And is the evidence of that baptism speaking in tongues?
- Does this extra Spirit-baptism give Christians a victorious and power-filled Christian life, in which sin can be beaten down or even defeated entirely?
- Did the miraculous 'gifts' of the Holy Spirit cease within New Testament times, or do they continue today? Do Spirit-filled people still have the gift of healing today?
- Does God still give prophetic words of knowledge by his Spirit?

2 From early in its history, Christianity was split over whether the Spirit proceeded from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son (this is one of the major doctrinal differences between Eastern or Orthodox Christianity and the Western Christianity of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism). Within Western Christianity, Roman Catholics and Protestants have had fierce disagreements about the Spirit's work in the Sacraments.

- Does God give me specific words of guidance, apart from what he says in the Bible, by the Spirit?
- Does the fullness of God's Spirit bring a new level of health, wealth and prosperity to our lives?
- Is the Spirit's work in our church gatherings seen in a heightened sense of experiencing God's very presence, especially as we worship him in song?

Depending on your age and personal history, you may be aware of some or all of these issues. It is very likely that at least some of them have touched you personally. Whatever the source or nature of our divisions, I hope and pray that we get past them and avoid being captivated by the many controversial subjects that arise whenever the Spirit is discussed; I pray that these divisions and controversies will not undermine the intent or effect of this book.

Such undermining could happen in several ways.

For one thing, these issues may be so important to us, or may loom so large in our vision, that we can't see around them to what God has actually said to us about the Holy Spirit. We may be so insistent on solving our current problems and answering our burning questions that we fail to hear what God is saying to us through his word.

This may be true for us whether we see ourselves in the charismatic camp, the non-charismatic camp, or somewhere in between. Whenever the subject of the Holy Spirit comes up, we all assume that these controversial issues will be the most important things to discuss. But they may not be. If we listen carefully to the Bible, we may discover we are asking the wrong questions, and that there's something far more important that God wants us to know.

I will touch on some of the controversial issues in the course of what follows, but it would be a mistake to start with them or to use them as the organizing principle (more on this below).

These controversial questions might also get in our way simply

because we get stuck in our personal history and commitments. We find it easier to stay where we are and to reinforce our beliefs by talking with people who believe what we already believe. It's hard to engage genuinely and openly with others who have a different view of how God works by his Spirit.

I can't help thinking of a conversation I had some years ago with the leaders of a large Pentecostal church. They invited me to lunch because, very commendably, they wanted to seek greater peace and unity with non-charismatic Christians (like me). As the Scripture says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18).

It was a very pleasant lunch, and its agenda was to try to sort out our differences and to avoid public disputes. In many ways, that's also why I'm writing this book—not to inflame controversy or division, but to seek agreement and unity.

But the peacemaking lunch wasn't a success.

For one thing, it became apparent as we talked that the younger generation who were present were quite ignorant of the depth of the conflicts that the older generation had experienced. As we talked about things that had happened 20 or 30 years earlier, one younger person said to the older man beside her, "That didn't happen!"

"Yes, I'm afraid it did", said the older man in an embarrassed whisper.

Peace and unity can't be achieved by rehashing the conflicts and mistakes of the past or arguing over our versions of them. We all have our stories to tell.

When my teenage grandson was dying of cancer, a charismatic Christian at a conference I was speaking at told me that unless we took Nathan away from the doctors and the hospital, God would not heal him. This was a terrible thing to say to a grieving, worried family. But I do not believe that this sort of belief (and remark) is true of charismatics in general. It certainly wasn't true of my friend and colleague Jim Holbeck, who ran the healing ministry at

St Andrew's Cathedral (when I was the Dean there). Some charismatic Christians can no doubt tell similar stories of offensive remarks or behaviour they have experienced at the hands of non-charismatic Christians. But again, I don't believe offensiveness is the hallmark of non-charismatic Christians.

But the peacemaking lunch really failed because it was a wallpapering exercise. We were attempting to cover over the cracks in the hope that what could not be seen would cease to matter. If we could at least *appear* to be friends (by not publicly disputing or criticizing), then perhaps unity would follow. But Christian unity must be unity in the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth. Christian unity is not in politics or coercion; it's not in diplomacy or obfuscation; it's not in the friendly politeness of pleasant lunches. The unity that Christians have—and must maintain—is found in the truth that comes through Jesus Christ. And that truth is revealed in the Scriptures.

This brings me to a very different conversation I once had with a fellow believer—someone with whom I had profound differences.

I was in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, spending a couple of weeks teaching the Bible to the missionaries at their base camp at Ukarumpa. One afternoon, one of the high school teachers came to see me. She was from Texas, and her Christian understanding was that of a premillennial Dispensationalist.<sup>3</sup> She found herself deeply troubled by my expositions of the Psalms. My talks had connected the dots of the Bible in a way that was completely different from anything she had heard before. So, over a pot of tea, we sat down with our Bibles open to listen to each other's understanding of God's word.

It was one of the most pleasant and challenging interchanges I've

3 Dispensationalism owes a lot to Anglo-Irish Bible teacher JN Darby (1800-1882) and to the Scofield Bible (1909, revised in 1917). It understands the Bible as teaching that God relates to us differently in different ages of biblical revelation. Premillennial Dispensationalists are particularly looking forward to the thousand-year reign of Christ.

ever had. We both loved the Lord Jesus, both loved the Scriptures, and both were seeking to understand in order to be obedient—and yet we disagreed. And we didn't disagree about one or two things, but about verse after verse. She would say, "But it doesn't mean that", then I would reply, "But it doesn't mean what you're saying". I found it astonishing that she was unimpressed by my proof-texts; I was even more astonished to find myself appreciating the alternative meaning she gave them.

I had read about Dispensationalism and had even read some dispensational literature, but I'd never before had a face-to-face discussion with somebody who held these views. For her part, she had never heard a Bible teacher who was *not* Dispensationalist. For her, all people who professed any other position were, by definition, theological liberals and therefore unbelievers. But here was this Australian who obviously believed the Bible every bit as much as she did, but who was anything but a Dispensationalist.

It was a long and, in many ways, arduous conversation. We struggled with what each text was saying because we both wanted to know the truth. What the Bible meant mattered to us more than what we believed it meant. We tried to see what the Scriptures were teaching *in their context*, not just as proof-texts to support our preferred system.

What made the whole conversation so enjoyable and encouraging was that we were both genuinely listening in order to understand—to understand each other, but ultimately to understand what the Bible was actually saying. It was not a debating match, scoring points and claiming victories, but a serious exploration of the meaning of the Scripture, text by text. By God's grace, we managed to talk together like the noble Bereans, who "received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

My hope and prayer is that this book is for you as that conversation in Ukarumpa was for me. I pray that it will be encouraging and

invigorating, even though it may be challenging and uncomfortable at some points. It will be longish and arduous. Searching and enquiring carefully into what the Bible is saying takes real work, and it will be the main work that this book seeks to do.

## **What's in this book**

This book is written for Bible believers—whatever our history and background in the controversies that have divided us—to help us know what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit. The aim is to find what God himself says about the coming and work of the Spirit of Jesus. To accomplish this task, we must listen to the Spirit by prayerfully and obediently studying the words of Scripture. For the Scriptures are the words of the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7; 1 Pet 1:10-11; 2 Pet 1:21).

As I've already hinted, we must not begin with present disagreements or controversies. We need to listen as the Spirit himself speaks, not as we want him to answer our questions. And we must lay to one side not simply our disagreements, but also our experiences and current practices, lest we seek to justify ourselves with biblical references rather than to understand our experiences and conform our practices to the Spirit's teaching.

My plan, then, is to work carefully and systematically through what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

As we investigate the Bible's teaching, we must be satisfied with what God has revealed about himself there, and not demand to know more. There are twin dangers here: on the one hand, we could fail to accept all that God reveals in Scripture; on the other hand, we could add to what has been revealed. Each error is as bad as the other.

We need to be satisfied—no, we need to rejoice—in what God has told us, and to live by these words. As with many matters of revelation, God has revealed all that we need to know, not all that could be known or all that we want to know. But our sinful hearts do not



trust God to tell us all we need to know. Our over-imaginative minds become more interested in what we have not been told than in rejoicing in what we have been told. We can be so perverse. We will go to the stake over matters on which the Bible is virtually silent, while taking for granted and even ignoring the great things that God *has* told us.

We are also impatient. We want to cut to the chase, to find some quick and applicable answers. We want to hear what the Bible has to say about the Spirit, but we're reluctant to adopt the patience, thoughtfulness and humility that is required to search the Scriptures and learn from them.

The teaching of Scripture about the Holy Spirit is large and varied and sometimes complex. It will stretch us, and it will require our patience. This book aims to patiently and carefully explore what the Bible says about the Spirit, being guided by the Bible itself as to what is important and where we should be focused. To avoid repetition and deal with some issues and questions that arise from the study, I have included a large series of appendices. These can be read at any time and in any order, but they are best understood in light of the book's overall argument. Without this context, they are likely to be misunderstood.

## **Where should we start?**

We could start at Genesis 1 and look at all references to the Spirit of God throughout the Bible. That would give us some 568 references across 515 verses. We could work through them one by one.

That would not only be excessively tedious; it would also fail to respect the way that God has given us the Bible. It does not come to us as a series of detached verses, each with its own message. The Bible is a collection of books—each contributing to the Bible's overall shape and storyline. The Bible is rightly split into two Testaments, with both continuity and discontinuity between them. The

Spirit of God is at work in both Testaments. He is often mentioned in the Old Testament, though his distinctive work is not much discussed, nor is he identified as the third person of the Triune God. His divinity is never doubted in the Old Testament, but his personhood is not prominent. (It is the reverse for Jesus in the New Testament: his personhood is never doubted, but his divinity is seriously questioned by his enemies.)

The preaching of John the Baptist, the teaching of Jesus, and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost all indicate the change that takes place between the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the Spirit find their fulfilment with the coming of Jesus, with his death, resurrection and ascension, and with the new outpouring of the Spirit that the risen Jesus brings.

Jesus Christ is at the centre of all the Bible's themes and promises. Therefore, the place to start in understanding the coming and work of the Spirit is with Jesus. Starting with Jesus, we can look back to the Old Testament expectation of the Spirit's coming and work, and we can look forward to what Jesus promised the Spirit would come and do after his (Jesus') departure.

If we are going to begin with Jesus—with how the Spirit is present in Jesus' work and teaching, and what Jesus himself says about the Spirit—there is no better starting point than John's Gospel. In particular, John 14-16 contains the most concentrated teaching about the Holy Spirit in the whole Bible—teaching that comes from the lips of Jesus himself. The earlier chapters of John lay the groundwork for these extraordinary chapters, particularly by showing the importance of the Old Testament promises and expectations, and by documenting the ministry of John the Baptist.

We will start, then, with John, before moving on to see how Jesus' promise to send his Spirit was fulfilled in Acts and how the Spirit continues to do his work in the lives of individual Christians and churches (as revealed in the New Testament letters). The plan looks like this:

- Part I: Jesus promises the Spirit
- Part II: The Spirit arrives
- Part III: The Holy Spirit's world mission
- Part IV: The Holy Spirit and the Christian life
- appendices on a variety of subjects arising from the book.

Because of the approach I am adopting, you might occasionally find yourself wondering if we're still 'on topic'. This could happen because of my shortcomings as a writer! But it could also happen because we struggle to let the Bible correct our expectations and set the agenda. Let me urge you to patiently follow the sweep of the argument, keep your eyes on the forest, and allow yourself to be caught up in the Bible's big picture of the Spirit and his work.

My prayer is that by his Spirit, God would give us all the attitude of the noble Bereans so that we examine his word carefully and eagerly; and that he would give his people such a trust in his word, and such a will to obey it, that we attain an ever-greater unity in the truth of Jesus Christ.

That may give us at least a glimpse of our great and glorious God.

— PART I —

JESUS  
PROMISES  
THE  
SPIRIT



The place to begin our study on the coming and work of the Spirit is with the teaching of Jesus. For some readers this will be a frustration, because they have questions about the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament. So why start here?

The Bible gives us an unfolding revelation of God. We are not told everything on the first page or within the early chapters or books. We learn more as we proceed from the creation and the fall, through the family of Abraham, and on into the history of Israel. Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, the prophets interpret this history as they address the failure of Israel, the division of the tribes, the fall of the northern kingdom, the Babylonian captivity of the southern kingdom, and the restoration of the nation under the Persians.

Slowly, in all this prophetic history, we learn more of the character of God. But we do not really see his Triune nature until the New Testament. Only three times in the Old Testament is the Spirit of God called by the normal New Testament title of “Holy Spirit” (Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10, 11). Rarely are we given a glimpse of him being spoken of as a person (Isa 63:10, where we are told that he is “grieved”).

Broughton Knox wrote concerning the Trinity:

The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine of the New Testament. It is not revealed in the Old Testament, and cannot be gathered from the Old Testament alone. Yet it is present there, and this is not surprising, because the God of the Old Testament is the God of Trinity, and his Word in the Old Testament from time to time reflects this truth.<sup>1</sup>

1 DB Knox, “The Everlasting God,” in *D. Broughton Knox Selected Works*, vol 1, *The Doctrine of God* (T Payne ed), Matthias Media, 2000, p 84.

Jl Packer wrote about the person of the Holy Spirit:

The Spirit's distinct personhood can, and according to the NT should, be read into the OT, but cannot be read out of it.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Gerald Bray commented:

It is not always clear whether these [Old Testament] passages refer to the being or nature of God, or whether they should be seen as allusions to the third person of the Trinity who had not yet been revealed as such.<sup>3</sup>

As we'll see, the Old Testament certainly looks forward to a day when the Spirit will come. But it is only as we come to the teaching of Jesus that we find, for the first time in the Bible, teaching about the Spirit himself—his person, his coming and his work. We must therefore commence our inquiry by turning to Jesus' teaching on the Spirit, which is found most fully and clearly in John 14-16. This will be the focus of part I:

Chapter 1: Expecting the Spirit to come

Chapter 2: The five promises of Jesus

Chapter 3: The first promise: Another Helper, the Spirit of truth

Chapter 4: The second promise: The Teacher

Chapter 5: The third promise: The Witness and the witnesses

Chapter 6: The fourth promise: The Prosecutor

Chapter 7: The fifth promise: The Guide

Chapter 8: The Spirit and forgiveness

2 Jl Packer, 'Holy Spirit', in SB Ferguson, DF Wright and Jl Packer (eds), *New Dictionary of Theology*, IVP, 1988, p 316.

3 G Bray, *God Has Spoken: A history of Christian theology*, Crossway, 2014, p 612.

# 1. EXPECTING THE SPIRIT TO COME

Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:39)

**T**he coming of the Holy Spirit was an extraordinary moment in the history of humanity. Most people missed it, but for those who listened to God it was long expected. Yet even for those who listened, the details of how and when the Spirit would come, and what he would do when he arrived, would only become clear through Jesus, the one who sent his Spirit into the world.

If we are to understand why Jesus sent his Spirit and what the Spirit has been sent to do, we must listen to Jesus. The Bible's most important teaching on the coming and the work of the Holy Spirit occurs when Jesus speaks to his disciples on the night he was betrayed, as recorded in chapters 14-16 of John's Gospel. This is the key passage to study carefully if we are to understand our topic.

Yet sadly, perhaps because it's not controversial, it is often overlooked.

This teaching from Jesus doesn't drop out of the sky. The previous 13 chapters of John's Gospel establish certain expectations (and hose down others) about who Jesus is, what he has come to do, and what part the Spirit of God plays in his life and ministry. But



those earlier chapters of John are hardly the beginning of the story; they echo and fulfil the promises and expectations of the Old Testament.

Before we turn to Jesus' teaching in John 14-16, then, we need to have our expectations properly set about who Jesus is, what sort of new age or kingdom he is bringing, and how the Old Testament promises of the Spirit relate to these things.

## Old Testament expectations

According to 1 Peter 1, the Spirit of Christ was at work in the Old Testament prophets, predicting “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories” (1 Pet 1:10-12). The prophets did not understand what all this meant, for the Holy Spirit did not reveal it until the coming of the gospel. These twin themes—the Christ's sufferings and the Christ's glories—can be found throughout the Old Testament.

In the great messianic Psalm 2, the nations rage against God and his Christ, but God promises that he will give his anointed Son the victory and that all the nations will have to bow before the Son. This Christ will be both the son of David and the son of God, and as such he will be especially endowed with God's Spirit. Even when David's dynastic tree seems to be cut down, out of the stump will grow a glorious new branch, for “the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him” (Isa 11:1-2; cf. 61:1-4).<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament also predicts that the ‘suffering servant’, described in Isaiah 42-53, will have a special outpouring of God's Spirit. This servant is introduced to us when God says:

1 The word ‘LORD’ in upper case in the English Old Testament indicates that the original Hebrew text has the personal name of God, ‘Yahweh’. This word does not refer to *what* God is, but to *who* he is. I am a man (*what* I am), but my name is Phillip (*who* I am). A name is personal and speaks of character and reputation.

“Behold my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my Spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.” (Isa 42:1)

So, the Old Testament sets up an expectation of the coming of a person (or persons) who will have a special outpouring of the Spirit of God to do the extraordinary work of God in bringing his kingdom, through sufferings that precede glory. But this work will not be understood until the Spirit arrives.

Yet while creating an expectation of a special outpouring of the Spirit for *an individual*, certain expectations of the Spirit are also associated with *the whole nation*.<sup>2</sup> Moses had expressed the hope that “all the LORD’s people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” (Num 11:29). And Joel spoke of a day when:

“... it shall come to pass afterward,  
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
your old men shall dream dreams,  
and your young men shall see visions.  
Even on the male and female servants  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.” (Joel 2:28-29)

Perhaps the prophecy that most clearly predicts the coming of the Spirit upon God’s nation is found in Ezekiel 36-37. Ezekiel prophesied that God would save Israel, not so much for their sake as for the sake of his name. Within that prophecy, he foretold the coming of the Spirit upon the people:

2 The ambiguity of the servant being the nation and an individual in the servant songs of Isaiah is intentional.

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezek 36:25-28)

This is a startling new vision of the people of God. Instead of only some having the Spirit—like the prophets or the judges or the king—in the coming age *all* God’s people will have the Spirit of the LORD. And this Spirit will move their new hearts of flesh to obedience. Where their history had once been marked by disobeying and ignoring the law of the LORD, in this vision of their future the nation will be a people transformed into those who will obey the law from the heart, for the Spirit will be within them.

So vivid is this transformation that in Ezekiel’s next chapter we read of the famous prophecy of the ‘valley of dry bones’—bones which rise from the grave and by the Spirit are clothed in flesh and come to life. This is a visual prophecy of the whole nation being born again. This is the transformation of God’s people that will occur when God fulfils his promises to “put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (Ezek 37:14). This is when the divided nations of Israel and Judah are reunited, with God appointing his servant David as king over them (Ezek 37:15-28).

Furthermore, this transformation—this rebirth and resurrection—happens as the prophet prophesies by the breath (Spirit) of God. For by Ezekiel speaking, prophesying to the bones, the Spirit of God enters the dead bones and brings life. This reflects the consistent Old Testament understanding of the power of the word of God. We know from Genesis 1 that God simply spoke and creation

sprang into existence. The psalmist reflects upon God's act of creation:

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
and by the breath [Hebrew: *ruach*] of his mouth all their  
host. (Ps 33:6)<sup>3</sup>

John's Gospel tells us that everything that was created was created by the Word of God. This is because that Word was not only *with* God, but also *was* God (John 1:1-3). The Word (or word) and the Spirit are always together, which is why the work of the Spirit is so often associated with prophecy.

And so, with these Old Testament expectations in place, John the Baptist steps onto the scene and announces that it's all about to happen.

## **John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet**

In the Old Testament, prophecy springs directly from receiving God's Spirit.<sup>4</sup> The Spirit enables prophets to speak God's word (e.g. Num 11:24-30; 1 Sam 19:18-24; 2 Chr 15:1, 20:13-17; Joel 2:28-29). It is said even of the unwilling prophet Balaam that "the Spirit of God came upon him, and he took up his discourse and said ..." (Num 24:2-3).

John the Baptist bore all the marks of the prophets God had sent to his people. With the Spirit in him (in his case, from his mother's womb; Luke 1:15), he spoke the word of God.<sup>5</sup> He was an Old Tes-

3 The Hebrew word *ruach* can be translated as 'breath' or as 'Spirit' (or 'spirit').

4 The connection between the Spirit of God and the word of God, as seen in prophecy, is simple when we remember that words are spoken by the 'breath' of the speaker.

5 Interestingly, John was also like the Old Testament prophets in not understanding everything that the Spirit of Christ within him was prophesying. He didn't realize that the Christ had to suffer and die before coming into his kingdom; that is, he didn't know about the "sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories" (1 Pet 1:10-11; cf. Matt 11:3).

tament figure living in the New Testament, the last of the prophets who pointed forward to the coming of the Christ (Matt 11:2-3; John 1:29-31). The kingdom that he proclaimed was yet to come, the Christ he foreshadowed had not yet arrived on the scene, and the new age of the Spirit had not yet started.

John the Baptist is first introduced in John's Gospel as "a witness" who came "to bear witness about the light" that was coming into the world: "He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light" (John 1:6-8). So, John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, to prepare God's people for the coming kingdom of God and the new age of the Spirit (cf. Mark 1:4). John was adamant that he was not the Christ; rather, he was the forerunner of the Christ. He saw himself as nothing compared to the one who followed him—"the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie" (John 1:27). He knew that he must decrease, and the Christ must increase (John 3:30).

The key contrast between John's ministry and that of the Christ was the Spirit (Luke 3:15-16). When Jesus came to John for baptism, the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. The other Gospels record that a voice from heaven identified Jesus as both the conquering Christ of Psalm 2 and the suffering servant of Isaiah 42. But in John's Gospel we read the Baptist's account of knowing that Jesus was the Son of God because of the descent of the Spirit (John 1:29-34). Later, in chapter 3, the Gospel writer describes the Father's gift to his Son as giving "the Spirit without measure", which enables him to speak God's words (3:33-35).

But in John the Baptist's eyes, Jesus was much more than the recipient of the Holy Spirit; he was also the one who would baptize others with the Spirit (John 1:33; cf. Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16).<sup>6</sup> In saying this, John was drawing on an expectation that many other Old Testament prophets shared: one day, God's Spirit

6 See appendix 1 for a discussion of baptism with the Spirit.

would be poured out not only on the Christ, but also upon all God's people (through the Christ).

Yet not all God's people welcomed it or even understood it.

## Poor Nicodemus?

In John 3, an important and devoutly religious man named Nicodemus comes to Jesus, and acknowledges that there is something unique about this unaccredited wandering preacher: "Rabbi," he said, "we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no-one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (v 2). But before Nicodemus had asked a question—almost before he even started the conversation—Jesus sends a shot across his bow: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v 3).

Jesus' first words to Nicodemus seem almost rude. Nicodemus had to be personally "born again": he needs a radical and completely new beginning, a fresh start, a total personal and individual transformation.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, you cannot be in God's kingdom unless you are reborn.

These words took Nicodemus quite by surprise; his responses to Jesus in the ensuing dialogue show that he was completely out of his depth. His first response may seem sensible, but he clearly missed the point: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (v 4). Jesus explains that he is talking about being "born of the Spirit" (vv 5-8).<sup>8</sup> But this only leaves Nicodemus floundering still further: "How can these things be?" (v 9). At this point Jesus seemingly adds insult to

7 The Greek word translated "you" in verse 3 is in the singular. But this message is not for Nicodemus alone, as if only he needed rebirth. In verses 3 and 5, Jesus speaks of "one" being born again, which generalizes his teaching to all people. And in verse 7, the word translated "you" is plural.

8 See appendix 2 for what it means to be "born of the Spirit".

injury: “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (v 10).

Do you feel some sympathy for poor Nicodemus?

It’s hard not to feel sorry for him. But we shouldn’t. As the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus should have known better. Based on his knowledge of the Old Testament, Nicodemus should have known what being “born of the Spirit” meant, and why it was so necessary. He should have understood why the coming of the Holy Spirit and rebirth by the Holy Spirit were so central to God’s plans and God’s kingdom. He should have been *expecting* Jesus to say what he did about the Spirit of God. Even if he didn’t remember Ezekiel 37, he should have heard the very public, very widely known testimony of John the Baptist.

But, somehow, Nicodemus still didn’t get it. He had missed or forgotten what he should have been expecting from the Old Testament, and instead had his own set of expectations. And so, he wasn’t ready or able—or perhaps willing—to hear what Jesus was saying.

In fact, Jesus didn’t trust him. And John’s Gospel warns us not to trust him either. For there was a deeper problem with Nicodemus: he was one of the ‘sign-believers’ that Jesus did not trust.

## **The man Jesus did not trust**

At the Passover feast in chapter 2, Jesus performed many signs, which drew many to believe in his name (2:23). On the surface, this seems like a great thing; surely it’s good for people to believe in Jesus’ name. But the next two verses show us that there’s more to ‘believing’ than meets the eye:

But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no-one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man. (2:24-25)

Jesus didn’t trust people whose belief was simply based on ‘signs’.

Belief on the basis of signs was the mark of the false believer.<sup>9</sup> Now notice how John's Gospel introduces Nicodemus:

But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no-one to bear witness about *man*, for he himself knew what was in *man*. Now there was a *man* of the Pharisees named Nicodemus ... (2:24-3:1)

John gives us more than a hint that Nicodemus is someone who believes in Jesus for all the wrong reasons. And the hint is confirmed when Nicodemus says to Jesus, "We know you are a teacher come from God, for no-one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (3:2). Jesus knew what was in Nicodemus' heart—not a genuine trust in Jesus, but a 'trust' in the signs that Jesus had done. And so, Jesus knew what such a person truly needed: to be born again through the Spirit (3:3-8). When Nicodemus saw Jesus performing amazing 'signs', he 'believed' him to be a man sent from God. But Nicodemus had his own expectations of what a man sent from God would be like and what such a man would do. Jesus didn't trust those who believed in him based merely on his signs, because signs can be misread. You can read your own expectations and desires into signs.

In fact, in the chapters following his encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus encounters more sign-believers who aren't to be trusted. John presents this in contrast with some surprising 'word-believers' who come to genuinely put their trust in Jesus. It's worth briefly looking at this contrast, as it lays the foundation for understanding the kind of kingdom God is bringing through his Son and the Spirit's role and work in the coming of this kingdom (as spelled out in John 14-16).

9 John didn't use the noun 'belief', but only the verb form ('to believe'). To simplify the description, I will use the noun 'belief' without implying anything about John's usage of the words.



## Sign-believers and word-believers

A picture isn't really worth a thousand words. Nearly all art galleries have captions underneath their pictures, using words to explain the picture we are seeing. Similarly, a 'sign' is not self-explanatory.

Jesus undoubtedly performed many effective and extraordinary signs. The signs pointed to something much larger and greater than themselves, but it was easy to be so impressed by Jesus' *signs* as to completely miss what they *signified*. Jesus knew not to trust people who simply believed because they had seen signs.

Sadly, the Jewish people at the Passover feast in Jerusalem focused on Jesus' signs and drew certain conclusions about him. But they failed to see what his signs really signified. The signs could not authenticate Jesus to the unbelieving Jews (2:18-22); they could not generate true faith in the people (2:24-3:2). As the apostle Paul later wrote, "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). Being deeply impressed by the signs without understanding what they signified was not the kind of belief that Jesus trusted.

As we have already seen, Nicodemus was one such untrustworthy believer. John reflects on this when he speaks of Jesus bearing witness "to what he has seen and heard", yet without people receiving Jesus' testimony (3:32). Even so, John goes on to write that those who *do* receive Jesus' testimony certify that God—not just Jesus, but God—is true (3:33). In Jesus' teaching there is the very truth of God's word, such that those who receive Jesus' words know and confirm that they are listening to the very truthfulness of God himself. John explains this in the next verse: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, *for he gives the Spirit without measure*" (3:34).

The reason you can hear the truthfulness of God in the words of Jesus is that God has given Jesus the Spirit “without measure”.<sup>10</sup> God the Father’s love for his Son means that he has given the Son all things, including (or especially) giving the full measure of the Spirit.<sup>11</sup> The words of Jesus are the words of God because the Spirit (or ‘breath’) of God reveals his truth in the words of God’s Son.

Strangely, in John’s next chapter, it is the despised Samaritans who understand this and trust in the words of Jesus.

## In spirit and truth

The interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman in John 4 is well known and needs no rehearsing. For our purposes, the issue of the Spirit arises in the context of whether worship should be conducted on Mount Gerizim or Mount Zion (4:20-21). Jesus’ response was to talk of a new age—one in which neither mountain mattered, because worship will be spiritual and truthful (4:24). This would be the true worship of God, who is spirit.<sup>12</sup> As we have seen from the end of chapter 3, it is Jesus’ words of testimony which, coming from the gift of the Spirit, demonstrate that God is true. The linkage of ‘spirit’ and ‘truth’ is a consistent theme. And the Samaritans’ response to Jesus continues John’s development of this theme:

- 10 A note on the word ‘word’ (or ‘words’): there are two synonymous words for ‘word’ in Greek: *rhema* and *logos*. Some people try to establish a difference—especially a spiritual difference—between these two words, but the New Testament uses them interchangeably (e.g. John 12:48; Acts 10:44; Heb 12:19).
- 11 An alternative understanding of this passage is to see it as Christ giving the Spirit to his disciples. Don Carson comments, “That may be true, but it does not fit the context well, and it loses the close connection with v. 35, a connection nicely preserved on the assumption that God is the subject of this last clause in v. 34”; DA Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC, Eerdmans, 1991, p 213.
- 12 Translators and publishers have a difficult decision to make as to whether to render the word as ‘Spirit’ or ‘spirit’. So the NIV1984 translates it as ‘spirit’, but the NIV in the same place translates it as ‘Spirit’. The ESV opts for ‘spirit’.

So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world.” (4:40-42)

There are two important elements to notice. Firstly, the Samaritans were the inveterate enemies of God’s people (e.g. Ezra 4:1-6:12; Luke 10:33, 17:15-19; John 8:48).<sup>13</sup> Yet they of all people acknowledged Jesus as the Saviour not only of Israel, but of the whole world. Secondly, they did not believe because of Jesus’ miracles, but because *they heard his word for themselves*. John says of the Samaritans that “many more believed *because of his word*” (4:41). The Samaritans became word-believers.

The Samaritans’ response to Jesus is immediately contrasted with that of the Galileans. It is strange that the Galileans welcomed Jesus, for he had taught that a prophet has no honour in his hometown. So why was Jesus welcomed in Galilee (4:44-45)? John explains this anomaly by noting that the Galileans had seen Jesus’ signs in Jerusalem (“they too had gone to the feast”). In other words, like Nicodemus and unlike the Samaritans, the Galileans did not believe Jesus’ word; they believed his signs. And because of their belief in Jesus’ signs, they did not believe in his word (4:48).

It is not in seeing signs but in hearing the testimony of Jesus—the Spirit-inspired word of God—that saving faith is found. Jesus is the one who was given the Spirit without measure, so he uttered the words of God; whoever received his testimony affirmed that God is true (3:32-34; cf. 4:42, 50).

13 The Samaritans kept only an altered version of the Torah (the first five books of our Old Testament) and rejected the remainder (the Prophets and the Writings). They built their shrine to God on Mount Gerizim and rejected the temple in Jerusalem. See Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 11.7.2, 11.8.2.

Long before we have arrived at the key teaching about the Spirit in chapters 14-16, John's Gospel challenges our expectations about the Spirit. When the long-promised Spirit comes and baptizes God's people, his work will not fit normal human expectations. His work won't be seen in impressive displays of raw power. Instead, *the Spirit will bring the truth of the word of God, spoken by the Son of God, who has the Spirit without measure.* Those who understand this and respond to the word—not those who are impressed by the signs—are the ones who are reborn by the Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

But the first half of John's Gospel puts in place another important set of expectations about the Spirit: our expectations about the *timing* of the Spirit's outpouring, and what must happen first.

## **Jesus' glory and the Spirit**

In John 7, at the Feast of Booths, Jesus stands up and cries out:

“If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (7:37-39)

The confusion and bewilderment of the crowds and the disciples was going to continue for some time. While he was among them, Jesus' Spirit would not be given; only when Jesus was glorified would the Spirit be given to those who believed in him.

14 This same theme is continued in John 6 when Jesus confronts the crowd (who were following him because of the signs). After his challenging teaching, Jesus says that his words are “spirit and life” (v 63), but many of the crowd grumble and turn away. Simon Peter, however, speaks for the word-believers when he says, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (6:68-69).

But when would that be? And what was the ‘glory’ that Jesus was going to display or receive?

‘Glory’ is a massive theme of John’s Gospel, and beyond our scope to explore in detail at this point. From the very beginning, John tells us that the magnificence or splendour or reputation of God (for that is what ‘glory’ means) would be seen in Jesus: “glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

Once again, against the expectations of the people and their leaders, this glory of God in Jesus was not seen in displays of impressive power. While Jesus was indeed very powerful and his actions astonishing, he studiously avoided drawing attention to himself that way (Matt 12:39, 16:1-12; John 2:18-3:2, 7:3-9). Such outward, attention-grabbing, love-of-the-praise-of-people glory was not his glory, nor was it the glory of his Father (Exod 33:18-19; cf. John 1:14).

Jesus’ glory was going to be very different. We see it at the critical turning point of John’s Gospel: chapter 12, where Jesus announces that his hour has come. It is time for him to be glorified. But to the surprise of everybody except Jesus, this glorification does not come in a sensational conquest. It is just the reverse: his glorification comes in a shameful crucifixion. In answer to the Greeks who ask to see him, Jesus says:

“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit ...

Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ...

Now is the judgement of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. (12:23-24, 27-28, 31-33)

God sends Jesus into the world to glorify his Father by graciously and faithfully fulfilling God's plan for the salvation of sinners. The glory of God for Jesus was to die upon a cross for the sins of the world. Even the horror of the cross would not deter Jesus from his mission of glory. It was only *after* he was glorified—that is, after his death and resurrection—that the Spirit would be poured out. For the gift of the Spirit will be the gift of the crucified and risen Christ.

And what an extraordinary difference the Spirit would make when he came! He would bring life and new birth to the Nicodemuses of this world, for “it is the Spirit who gives life” (6:63). The living water of the Spirit would bring resurrection life. In fulfillment of the prophets, the dead nation of Israel would rise up for a new, eternal day. And those who would receive this living water would never thirst again (4:14).

But the Spirit wouldn't come until Jesus was glorified in his death. John knows this and can write about it, for he wrote after the glorification of Jesus, when the glorified Jesus had poured out his Spirit on the disciples (including John). Yet at the time of the Feast, when Jesus made his promise without mentioning the Spirit, nobody understood what Jesus was talking about, or when or how his promise would be fulfilled. The disciples would require more teaching about the coming of the Spirit for any of this to make sense, even after the event. And it is to that teaching—on Jesus' last night, when he spent time with his disciples warning and explaining what was about to happen—that we now turn.