

Names of God from the Bible

54 – The Holy Spirit

All God's Names are eternal names – so He is still The Holy Spirit for us today.

Reading: Isaiah 61:1-11

Contrary to what a lot of Christians seem to think, the Holy Spirit did not 'arrive on the scene' at Pentecost. He is God and eternally existent. Consequently, I want to look at what could be described as the three dimensions of the Holy Spirit's activity:

1) The evidence of the Holy Spirit prior to Jesus' incarnation, 2) The Fruit of the Spirit and 3) The Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1) The evidence of the Holy Spirit prior to Jesus' incarnation

As we read the Old Testament from Genesis 1 through to the beginning of the New Testament and the birth of John the Baptist, we find many references to the Holy Spirit's work. First in Creation and then through the lives of various people.

On most occasions, however, we find that the Holy Spirit was 'given' to specific people at specific times for specific reasons. In Exodus, we see Moses being filled with the Spirit to lead the Hebrews and that was followed by the Spirit given to other leaders. Bezalel was given the Spirit to help with the construction of the Tabernacle and all its fittings.

In Judges, we read Gideon received the Spirit of God so as to lead the Israelites against the Midianites. Samson received the Spirit of God for power, which resulted in the beginning of the Israelite domination of the Philistines. Later, Saul had the Spirit of God for prophecy, as did Isaiah. There are many other examples of the Spirit of God being given to individual people. The climax, if you like, was John the Baptist who was filled with the Spirit, even from birth. The supreme example is when Jesus was incarnated by the Holy Spirit working in Mary's body.

However, as Joel prophesied, there was a growing expectation that, one day, the Spirit would be given to every one. That began at Pentecost.

2) The Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of the life of God in Jesus and His true disciples. Like all fruit, they start small and should become increasingly obvious as we are attached to the Vine, Jesus, and become increasingly conformed to His image. A process called sanctification, which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

In one sense, all of the fruit should be visible, just as in a bunch of grapes. The vine doesn't produce just one grape but a whole bunch is produced together. If I am a true disciple of Jesus Christ, I should show the fruit of the Spirit in my life. However, I should not just be joyful at the expense of love – that would be selfish and un-Christ-like. I should not be gentle but unfaithful. I should not be kind but lacking in self-control. No, each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit should be evident in my life in increasing measure.

3) The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

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Whilst many people quote 1 Corinthians 12 as proof of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, I believe with others that, as you look at Scripture, there are far more gifts of the Spirit. Indeed, any evidence of a special empowering of God that reflects Jesus in a dramatic way can be considered a gift of the Holy Spirit (consider Bezalel's gift of creativity).

The apostles were, obviously, Christians prior to Pentecost. From the record in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, many people were followers and disciples of Jesus prior to being able to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit. While every Christian should display all and the same fruit of the Spirit, not all Christians have the same gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, all Holy Spirit-filled Christians have at least one gift. It is our job to discover and use it in every increasing measure for the Glory of God.

The Holy Spirit was given to us primarily so that we would be Christ's witnesses throughout the world.

What does that name mean for us today

Awesome power. God has entrusted His Spirit to us so we demonstrate His power on earth in order to make disciples.

Prayer

Father, thank You so much for sending us the Holy Spirit to be with us, to make us more and more like Jesus, and to extend His Kingdom on earth. Amen

Additional Readings

- Genesis 1:1-2
- Judges 13:1-25
- Galatians 5:13-25
- 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Questions

1. What is the role of the Holy Spirit today?
2. Has God revealed Himself in this way to you? How and when?
3. What gifts has God, the Holy Spirit, given you and how are you using them?