



The Spirit of Christ | The Spirit and the Messiah

Lesson 3

At the end of last week's lesson, we saw that in Joel the Old Testament predicted that one day the Spirit of God would have a greater role among God's people. But there is another set of Old Testament prophecies concerning the future work of the Spirit. The Old Testament also predicted that when the Messiah came, He would be empowered by the Spirit. And when Jesus comes, we read over and over about the relationship of the Spirit and Jesus. Sadly, many believers read right past these verses and don't give much thought to the work of the Spirit in the ministry of Jesus.

Why don't we think much about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus?

To properly understand the role that the Spirit has to us, we need to understand the role that He had to Jesus. Now, any time we study the trinity we are coming to a topic that can and should overwhelm us at some level. Aspects of this lesson will be challenging and difficult to fully grasp. God has opened a tiny window into a topic so vast and overwhelming that we would be foolish to think we can totally and completely understand it. But what God has revealed to us He revealed to us, not just to satisfy our curiosity, but because we need it.

As we study this lesson, one of the question which might naturally come up is, "How will any of this affect my life?"

Why should we study a topic like the relationship between the Spirit and Jesus?

There are several important reasons for a deep study like this.

- **To know our God better** – God has graciously told us about who He is and how He works. A love for Him should drive us to want to know all that we can based on what He has told us. As we do that, we will find that a clearer knowledge of God should lead to a greater love and more worship to God.
- **To avoid theological heresy** – many of the heresies throughout history have come from a misunderstanding of the trinity. It's not surprising that one of the most complex doctrines is also one of the most abused.
- **To see a model of Spirit-empowered living** – Jesus demonstrates for us what it looks like to always be walking in the Spirit and demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit.

- **To humbly point out our dependence on the Holy Spirit** – if Jesus performed miracles and engaged in His ministry through the power of the Spirit, who are we to think we don't need the Spirit when we serve God?

The Spirit and the Old Testament Messiah

In the gospel of Luke (4:16-21), the first time we get to listen in on a message of Jesus occurs when He comes to Nazareth, His hometown, to read Scripture and teach. He gets up and reads a portion of Scripture from Isaiah 61:1-3. In this passage, the anointed one (i.e., the Messiah) has a mission to accomplish God's purposes in the earth. In preparation for that mission, the Spirit comes upon the servant of God to empower him for this ministry. This lines up with other passages such as Isaiah 11:1-2 and 42:1, which describe the coming ruler and the servant of God as someone who has the Spirit of God rest upon him. Jesus reads the passage, sits down, and tells everyone that this passage is talking about Him. It's no wonder that Luke starts this story by observing that Jesus returned in Galilee "in the power of the Spirit".

Why would the Spirit be necessary for the work of the Servant in Isaiah 61:1-3?

This prediction by Isaiah that the Messiah would be empowered by the Spirit would have made a lot of sense to Isaiah's audience, since they had often seen the Spirit come upon rulers to empower in the work God had given them. If the coming Messiah was going to be the ultimate ruler, then one would expect him to have the Spirit of God come upon him in a unique and special way. This teaching would become important for Jews who were looking for and expecting a coming Messiah who was Spirit-empowered. This will help explain why the role of the Holy Spirit is strongly emphasized throughout the life of Jesus.

What are some ways in which the role of the Spirit is emphasized in the life of Jesus?

The Spirit and the Birth of Jesus

Matthew and Luke are the two gospels that tell us about the birth of Jesus, and both emphasize that the Holy Spirit was responsible for the virgin birth (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:34-35). Mary and Joseph are told that Mary's pregnancy will come through the agency of the Holy Spirit. This is important for several reasons.

What would someone get wrong if they do not believe in the virgin birth?

Why would the Spirit's role in the incarnation matter?

Since the Spirit is involved in the incarnation, we have yet another activity in which all three members of the trinity participate. The Father sends the Son, the Son comes to earth, and the Spirit is the one who oversees and makes possible what the Father has planned and what the Son is doing.

Another reason why this matters is because it allowed Jesus to be born free from the sin nature inherited from Adam, but also be entirely human.¹ This allowed Jesus to be a new representative for humanity, and means that from the very beginning Jesus had the Spirit.

Finally, this matters because it means that the Holy Spirit has been involved with the life of Jesus from the very beginning. A theological heresy called adoptionism taught that the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus later and at that point Jesus became the Son of God. The virgin birth, however, shows us that from Christ's first moment in the womb the Spirit was involved with Jesus's life.

The Spirit and the Life of Jesus

Not only was the Spirit present at the birth of Jesus, but from the beginning of Jesus's ministry and on we see the importance of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes upon Jesus in His baptism, leads Him out for the temptation in the wilderness, and then empowers Jesus throughout His ministry.

The Spirit and Baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22)

Although Jesus always had the Spirit, when He was baptized the Spirit came upon Him in a special and unique way. Many questions surround the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. While we don't have time to carefully study and answer all those questions, we will focus on why it was that Jesus was baptized and how the Spirit plays a role in that.

Read the accounts of Jesus's baptism in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and then answer the following questions:

As you read the different accounts of the baptism, what are some of the key things that appear in all three accounts?

Remember, the Jews who were reading Isaiah were expecting that when the Messiah came, the Holy Spirit would come upon Him and empower Him for ministry. As we saw before, the Spirit had been involved in the life of Jesus since His birth. But one of the functions of the baptism of Jesus was to give a public demonstration of the Spirit coming on Jesus in fulfillment of the prophecies that the Spirit was coming on the Messiah.

The Spirit and the Temptation of Jesus

Immediately after His temptation, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. All three gospel writers connect these events (Matthew 3:13-4:11; Mark 1:9-13; Luke 3:21-22; 4:1-13), and Matthew and Luke highlight the importance of the phrase "Son of God" in the temptation. Satan is trying to get Jesus to respond in His flesh rather than follow the leading of the Spirit, so that He proudly and selfishly uses His newly declared sonship as a way to meet His own needs. Jesus instead

¹ Some have argued that Jesus's sinlessness is because Jesus did not have a human father and the sin nature is passed on through the male. This reads more into the Scripture than is stated.

recites Scripture every time He is tempted, showing how a Spirit-controlled person responds to the attacks of the devil.

How might Satan try to tempt us to use what God has given us for our glory rather than for God's?

How can watching Jesus's resistance of Satan's temptation be a help to us in our spiritual walk?

The Spirit and the Ministry of Jesus

As we look throughout the ministry of Jesus, we see that Jesus worked in the power of the Spirit. This is stated occasionally, but it is clear from a careful study that this is assumed to be the case throughout the whole of His ministry. This is perhaps the most confusing for us, because we are clear on the fact that Jesus is both God and man. That means that He shouldn't need any help. Yet what we see over and over is that the ministry of Jesus, His teaching and His miracles, was done in the power of the Spirit.

We already noted that Luke depicts Jesus as returning from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 4:14). Shortly after Jesus kicks off His teaching ministry. Beyond that we see that Jesus explicitly connected His exorcisms with the power of the Spirit (Matthew 12:28), so that when the Pharisees accused Him of casting out demons through the power of Satan, Jesus accused them of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. What we are beginning to see is that Jesus in His teaching and miracles was pointing to the Holy Spirit as His source of power.

How does seeing Jesus as being Spirit-empowered help us to think about the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Why would Jesus choose to rely on the power of the Spirit and to follow the leading of the Spirit, rather than do things in His own power?

The Spirit and the Resurrection of Jesus (Romans 8:11)

The resurrection of Jesus is one of the works in Scripture in which we see all the trinity participate. The Bible says that Christ raised Himself (John 2:19-21; 10:18), that the Father raised Christ (Acts 2:32; Ephesians 1:19-20), and that the Spirit raised Christ (Romans 1:4; 8:11; 1 Timothy 3:16²).

How can meditating on the Spirit's resurrection of Jesus encourage us in our spiritual walk?

This is important for us a Christians to understand, because as Paul will argue in Romans 8:11, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is now at work in you. This Spirit will one day give you a new and glorified body, as He did Christ, but He can also help you now to live a life of holiness. Our hope is the hope that a resurrection is coming, and we can be confident in that hope because the Spirit has already brought one person back from the dead with a glorified body, and He will do the same for us.

² The "vindication by the Spirit" refers to the resurrection of Jesus, which proved that He was who He said He was.

Few Christians picture Jesus as operating under the power and control of the Spirit. Again, for many Christians the thinking is that since Jesus is God, He wouldn't need any help. Yet the gospel accounts have many references to the work of the Spirit at every key juncture in Jesus's life and ministry: birth, baptism, temptation, teaching, healing, exorcisms, and resurrection. This, as we will see, enables Jesus to one day baptize others with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was the Spirit-empowered Messiah that the Jews were expecting, and His ministry opened up the work of the Spirit to all of us and set the example of living by the Spirit that we all need. In our remaining lessons we will look more closely at the Spirit's role toward us.

What has been the most surprising or helpful part of this lesson for you?