

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

- Genesis 1:1–2

God’s own Spirit, Joel tells us, is poured out upon all of His people in the last days (Joel 2:28–29). We know that this outpouring happened on Pentecost, shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 2:1–21), but to fully enjoy the Spirit’s presence in our lives, we must understand who He is and what He does. Over the next week, volume 5 of Dr. R. C. Sproul’s teaching series *Foundations*, which covers pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit), will guide us in a study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

You will note that in the preceding paragraph, we repeatedly referred to the Holy Spirit as “He,” not “it.” This reflects the teaching of Scripture that the Spirit is not an impersonal force or a mere attribute of God’s power, but rather a person. Many sects and cults teach otherwise, yet the use of the personal pronoun for the Holy Spirit and the fact that the Spirit possesses a will, knowledge, and affections reveals His personhood (John 16:4b–11; Eph. 4:30). We have a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit just as we have a personal relationship with the other two persons of the Holy Trinity.

The best place to begin our study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is at the beginning, for the first place we read about the Spirit is in the opening verses of the Bible. Today’s passage reveals that at the moment of creation, God the Holy Spirit hovered over the primordial waters that our Creator had made *ex nihilo*, that is, “out of nothing” (Gen. 1:1–2). By His power in creation, He brought forth light out of darkness and order out of disorder. Thus, one of the key works of the Holy Spirit is to bring things to life and to set things in order. He is the Spirit of order, as Paul explains, for “God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33).

Throughout the Old Testament, we see the Holy Spirit working also in redemption. We have noted that the old covenant ministry of the Spirit to gift individuals for service was mainly limited to prophets, priests, and kings, although He regenerated all believers during the old covenant period. The Holy Spirit anointed prophets to speak God’s Word, priests to intercede for the people, and kings to lead Israel against the enemies of God (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Chron. 24:20; 2 Peter 1:21). The Lord used all these individuals to advance His plan of redemption, pointing ultimately to Christ, whom the Spirit anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King to secure our eternal salvation (Heb. 1:1–4; 9:14).

Coram Deo

In the church today, we are seeing a renewed emphasis on the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, much of this emphasis is not on His work in creation and redemption to bring order out of chaos. Wherever the Spirit is truly at work, we see order in worship and lives being conformed to the image of Christ, whose whole life was ordered toward the end of pleasing the Lord. Such things result from a true biblical emphasis on the person and work of the Spirit.

Passages for Further Study

Psalm 104:24–30

Isaiah 32:14–20

Luke 3:21–22

Romans 8:1–11

Like 18 people like this. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends like.

First published in *Tabletalk Magazine*, an outreach of Ligonier. For permissions, view our [Copyright Policy](#).



TOPICS The Holy Spirit, The Old Testament

Imitating the Father
July 24th, 2019

Learning to Love
July 23rd, 2019

Producing Fruit
July 22nd, 2019

Experiencing Supernatural Joy
July 21st, 2019

Discerning Between Joy and Happiness
July 20th, 2019

Renewing the Mind
July 19th, 2019

Walking in Wisdom
July 18th, 2019

Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort
by W. Robert Godfrey

5 Minutes in Church History
by Stephen Nichols

Final Word: Why We Need the Bible
by John MacArthur

The New Testament Canon
by Michael Kruger

The Basics of the Christian Life
by Sinclair Ferguson

ESV Reformation Study Bible, Condensed Edition

[VIEW ENTIRE COLLECTION](#)

Support Ligonier.org

your giving enables us to maintain and grow this outreach.

[MAKE A DONATION](#)

MINISTRIES

Renewing Your Mind Broadcast
Tabletalk Magazine
Reformation Trust Publishing
Reformation Study Bible
Reformation Bible College
RefNet (Reformation Network)
Ligonier Connect

Teaching Series
Conferences
Sermons
Articles
Devotionals
Questions Answered

INDEXES

Topics
Scriptures
Teachers
Keywords

09.29.19 | 2019 English Reformation ...
11.08.19 | 2019 Regional Conference
03.19.20 | 2020 National Conference

STORE

Featured Resources
Books
DVDs
CDs
Bibles
Music

holiness of God in all its fullness to as many people as possible. Your gift enables our worldwide outreach.

[DONATE NOW](#)

CONTACT US

Email Us
Live Chat
Call Toll Free: **800.435.4343**
421 Ligonier Ct. Sanford, FL 32771
407-333-4244
[Directions to our office](#)

[FAQ](#) | [Ligonier Blog](#) | [Sign up for our email updates](#)

[facebook](#) | [twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [Instagram](#) | [flickr](#)

[Terms of Use](#) | [Copyright Policy](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Employment](#)

© 2019 Ligonier Ministries