

The Holy Spirit: Our Help and Strength

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A Distinct Divine Person

In speaking of the Holy Spirit, the Bible doesn't always use the exact term, "Holy Spirit." We also find terms such as "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ," or simply "the Spirit." The word "Spirit" is from the Hebrew word *ruah* and the Greek word *pneuma*, both of which mean "breath" or "wind." Accordingly, the Bible thus speaks of the Spirit as being the breath that goes forth from God.

Some people believe that biblical references to this Spirit or breath are simply literary devices to refer to a way in which God has seen fit to manifest Himself. In other words, they believe that when the Bible speaks of the Spirit of God going forth and doing something, it really is just another way of saying that God Himself is doing something. Their view is that the Spirit is basically an impersonal force or power or some kind of spiritual essence that emanates forth from God without necessarily being considered as a separate and distinct person (some verses used are Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 2:11).

Most people, however, believe that the Bible indicates that the Holy Spirit is to be construed as an actual divine person separate and distinct from God the Father and Christ the Son. Naturally there is a strong tie between the Spirit and God and Christ, but, just as our breath is a part of us and yet is somewhat a distinct entity which goes forth out of us, so also perhaps it could rightly be said that the Spirit of God/Christ is a part of God/Christ and yet also goes forth as a separate and distinct divine person.

There are several passages in Scripture which suggest a distinction between the identifications of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the OT see Nehemiah 9:5, 20; Psalm 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 48:16; 63:10; Ezekiel 36:27; Haggai 2:5; and Zechariah 4:6.

In the NT there are passages such as Matthew 28:19 ("Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.") and John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, and 16:7-10 (we'll look at these passages in detail later), wherein Jesus speaks of praying to the Father about the sending of the Holy Spirit, thus reinforcing the view that there are three distinct persons of deity.

1 John 5:6-8

One passage often considered in regards to this subject is 1 John 5:6-8. The KJV reads: "(6) This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. (7) For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

There are several interesting aspects of this text (not all necessarily relevant to our specific topic, but interesting to briefly discuss). First, what does John mean by Jesus coming by "water and blood"?

- Many scholars believe that he is referring to a citation in his own gospel record: John 19:34-35. John apparently was a witness to the event which he alone records, that being the soldier piercing the side of Jesus and the pouring out of blood and water.
- Some have also seen within this text a possible allusion to the means by which we are cleansed from sin, that being the shed blood of Christ ("Passion" – blood from both scourging and when pierced in side on cross) and the water of the believer's baptism which symbolizes the cleansing by that blood.

- Perhaps the most likely understanding is that the blood refers to Jesus' death, and that the water refers to His baptism. This event is recorded in Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, and Luke 3:21-22, and all three accounts state that the Spirit of God (or Holy Spirit) descended upon Christ in the form of a dove, and these words were heard from above: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." In Matthew 12:18, Isaiah the prophet is quoted (from Isaiah 42:1) as saying: "Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles." This would perhaps easily fit with v8 in indicating that the Holy Spirit, Jesus' baptism, and His death all three bear witness to the divinity of Jesus the Christ.

Finally, of primary interest to our topic of the Holy Spirit, it needs to be recognized that there is little manuscript evidence for the KJV insertion of v7 (the earliest manuscripts apparently do not have it). Some say that these words were first uttered in a sermon in the year 385 by a Spanish preacher named Presilium. Some say the words were included in an exegesis by Cyprian.

Regardless, these words somehow made their way into the text of later Latin translations, and then ultimately into the Greek text from which was translated the KJV. The verse certainly does appear to speak a concept that is consistent with other biblical teaching (that there are three divine persons), but (to be scholastically responsible we would have to admit) it does not appear that John was originally inspired to include it in this part of Scripture.

"Trinity"

Sometimes people use the word "Trinity" to refer to the union of God and Christ and the Holy Spirit. The origin of the term is discussed in an article from the Catholic Encyclopedia:

The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the [Christian religion](#)—the truth that in the unity of the [Godhead](#) there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: "the Father is [God](#), the Son is [God](#), and the Holy Spirit is [God](#), and yet there are not three [Gods](#) but one [God](#)." In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent. . . .

In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine Persons are denoted together. The word *trias* (of which the Latin *trinitas* is a translation) is first found in [Theophilus of Antioch](#) about A.D. 180. . . . Afterwards it appears in its Latin form of *trinitas* in [Tertullian](#) ("De pud." c. xxi). In the next century the word is in general use. It is found in many passages of [Origen](#) ("In Ps. xvii", 15). The first creed in which it appears is that of Origen's pupil, [Gregory Thaumaturgus](#). In his *Ekthesis tes pisteos* composed between 260 and 270, he writes:

There is therefore nothing created, nothing subject to another in the Trinity: nor is there anything that has been added as though it once had not existed, but had entered afterwards: therefore the Father has never been without the Son, nor the Son without the Spirit: and this same Trinity is immutable and unalterable forever (P. G., X, 986).

Many Christians today, even if not Catholic, would basically agree with the above teaching. One problem, however, with using the word "Trinity" is the unfortunate circumstance that (as with perhaps many theological words) not all people necessarily mean the same thing when using that word.

Some think the word is used to teach that there are three gods (whereas Scripture teaches that there is only one God), and others have even gone so far as to say the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there is a "three-headed God." Perhaps it might be best to always clarify what one actually believes rather than just use a word that might be misunderstood by others.

“Godhead”

Likewise, the word “Godhead” is sometimes used to refer to these three distinct persons who possess divine majesty. But, again, as with the word “Trinity,” the word “Godhead” can also be misunderstood or misused. Actually, the word does not really mean what some people may think it means. The use (or misuse) of this word is derived from the 3 times it is found in the KJV of the Bible:

Acts 17:29 “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”

- *theios*/2304, adjective meaning “divine”
- Thayer: “used by Greeks to denote the divine nature”
- It is found in the only two other uses: 2 Peter 1:3 and 4
- Translated as “divine” in both these cases in KJV
- NASB and most other recent versions have “Divine Nature”
- NKJV translation has “divine nature”

Romans 1:20 “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:”

- *theiotes*/2305, noun meaning, “divinity, divine nature” (only instance of this word in NT)
- NASB and most other recent versions have “divine nature”
- NKJV still retains “Godhead”
- If used basically as a synonym for Trinity, this verse would not really be grammatically sensible!

Colossians 2:9 “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

- *theotes*/2320, noun meaning “deity” (only instance of this word in NT)
- NASB and most other recent versions have “Deity”
- NKJV retains “Godhead”
- Meaning is that in Christ dwells full deity or divine nature/majesty

Again, other than the KJV and NKJV, most translations realize the inadequacy and inappropriateness of the word “Godhead” and have instead used words and terms like “Divine Nature,” “divinity,” or “deity.” In other words, it is not grammatically proper or biblically accurate to use the word “Godhead” as if it was a title of the group of three persons. Those three persons are not the Godhead. Rather it would be more accurate to actually say that those three persons possess “Godhood,” meaning that they each possess the quality of being God or possessing the quality of divine majesty.

The Holy Spirit in the People of Israel

The Spirit in the writings of the OT was basically the manifestation of God in action, accomplishing some particular end or purpose of God (if God wanted something done, He often sent His Spirit to take care of it). Most OT passages concerning the Spirit deal with the covenant relationship between God and the nation of Israel. And most of these passages have to do with gifts and/or powers conferred by the Holy Spirit upon the people of Israel. God cared greatly for His children and thus He blessed them, and these blessings were often carried out by the Spirit.

1. Judges 6:34. The Spirit conferred power (upon Gideon who was called to be a leader for God’s people; also in 3:10 upon Othniel, 11:29 upon Jephthah, 13:25 and 14:6 upon Samson, and in 1 Samuel 16:14 where it says “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul.”).
2. Exodus 31:2-5. The Spirit conferred wisdom and skill (upon workmen for the tabernacle; also Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25 upon Moses and seventy elders who were to be leaders in Israel; Deuteronomy 34:9 upon Joshua as he was to succeed Moses).

3. The Spirit had a part in OT prophecy, helping people like Saul (1 Samuel 10:6ff) and David (2 Samuel 23:1-2) and later prophets (preachers) who were trying to help the people of Israel get back to the way they were supposed to be (Ezekial in Ezekiel 2:2; 8:3; 11:1ff; Micah in Micah 3:8; also 2 Peter 1:20-21 which says that prophecy was not merely an act of human will, but “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” 2 Timothy 3:15-17 refers to OT writings as being inspired, implying divine help).
4. Ezekiel 36:22-27. The Spirit imparted moral and spiritual character (also Psalm 143:10, Isaiah 32:15-17, 44:3-5, and Zechariah 12:10).

How would we summarize these things? What was the Holy Spirit doing for the people of Israel? He was helping them to be what God wanted them to be. God had chosen the people of Israel to be His children, and He entered into a covenant relationship with them. Because He loved them and cared for them, God gave His Spirit to lead them, guide them, help them, strengthen them, bless them, and (overall) to help them be the kind of people God wanted them to be. (Later in our study we’ll see that that is basically what the Spirit can do for us today as well.)

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

The Spirit was involved in the Birth of Jesus. See Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:26-42, 67-68; 2:25-28 (Luke 2:40-52 would also perhaps suggest the influence of the Spirit during the childhood of Jesus).

The Spirit was involved in the Baptism of Jesus. See Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:22; John 1:32-34. Apparently the baptism of Jesus was the occasion for a complete bestowal of the Spirit upon Him. John 3:34 records John the Baptist saying that God gave the Spirit to Christ “without measure.” V35 says, “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.” (This would contrast with the individual and partial distribution of the Spirit such as upon various ones in 1 Corinthians 12.)

In Acts 10:37-38, Peter seems to indicate that the baptism of Jesus also served as the formal and public anointing for His Messianic work. Such an anointing for public service was common in the OT for priests, kings, and prophets. Those anointings were done with oil, and the oil came to be regarded as a symbol of the Spirit of God.

It has been suggested that the appearance of the Spirit as a dove could symbolize several things: association with creative power; divine wisdom or reason; or perhaps the brooding or hovering of the Spirit as in Genesis 1:2. It is also worth noting at this time that there is a probable connection between Christ's reception of the Spirit at the time of water baptism and the reception of the Spirit by a believer at the time of water baptism (see Acts 2:38 and Galatians 3:26-27; 4:6).

The Spirit was involved in the temptation of Jesus. Matthew 4:1 says Jesus was “led up by the Spirit into the wilderness.” Mark 1:12 says, “The Spirit impelled (KJV: driveth) Him to go out into the wilderness.” Luke 4:1 says, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness.” James 1:13 tells us that God cannot be tempted, but Philippians 2:7 teaches us that Jesus laid aside His divine privileges, and thus in His humanity, it was therefore possible and necessary for Jesus to be confronted with temptation (see Hebrews 4:15). It is unlikely that the specific temptations mentioned in Scripture were the only such that He endured, and surely it was by the means of the Spirit’s help that He remained sinless throughout all His life.

The Spirit was involved in the public ministry of Jesus. Following the temptations in the wilderness, Luke 4:14 states that “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit.” The verses that follow speak of various activities that would be typical of His ministry, and it would seem obvious that His entire ministry was under the power and direction of the Spirit. As mentioned earlier, in Matthew 12:15-18, Jesus, after healing those in need, speaks of His ministry and declares that the Spirit will be upon Him.

Finally, the Spirit was involved in the death of Jesus. He had been completely filled with the Holy Spirit throughout His entire ministry, and so even at His time of death was there the presence of the Spirit. Hebrews 9:14 states that Christ “through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God.”

Just as the Spirit helped the people of God in the OT to be what they were called to be, so also the Spirit bestowed upon Jesus enabled Him to be what He was to be. The Spirit was the source of His power to endure temptation, to teach, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, and to endure His sufferings and His death. Remember that Jesus laid aside His divine privileges (Philippians 2:7), and so apparently He required the presence of the Spirit in order for Him to fulfill His Messianic vocation.

Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

See Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10.

A part of Jesus' ministry was casting out demons by the power of the Holy Spirit. Some wrongly said of Jesus, "He has an unclean spirit." Such an offence was declared to be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

By definition, to blaspheme is to insult or speak irreverently. Perhaps the main thing that stands out in this episode is Jesus' distinction between speaking against Him and speaking against the Spirit. Some have seen a similarity between this and Numbers 15:27-31 which speaks of the difference between a person who unintentionally sins and one who deliberately and rebelliously sins.

Accordingly, perhaps Jesus was speaking of the difference between one who might ignorantly speak against Him (not yet believing in Him) and one who would deliberately ascribe obvious divine works of the Spirit to a diabolic source. The former could still be forgiven, but the latter apparently would be committed by one who would have such a hopeless and immoral nature that repentance and forgiveness would not be possible.

It may be that Jesus was also referring to those who would fully reject the Holy Spirit Himself and His teachings. Remember Hebrews 1:1-2? "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world." God at one time spoke to people by way of the prophets, but many rejected them.

Then Jesus came and preached, but again, many refused to listen. But there was one more opportunity for them to listen: the Holy Spirit was coming to guide them into all truth (John 14-16). That would be their last chance. (Some have compared this to "3 strikes and you're out!") For those who would refuse to listen to the preaching of the gospel by way of inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there would be no other chance; there is no other plan. There will be no other means of revelation regarding salvation other than that given by the Spirit, and to reject Him is to do so fatally.

Regarding the unforgivable sin (not directly related to our specific topic), consider the words of 1 John 1:9. It says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Thus, the only real unforgivable sin is one that we refuse to confess.

Also notice Hebrews 6:4-6: "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame."

The writer here speaks of a truly hardened apostate who has completely turned away the faith and refuses to repent and confess his sin. Such a one, the Bible says, has fallen away and has, in effect, become guilty of once again crucifying the Son of God. Apparently some can become so hardened by sin and rebellion that they will refuse to repent and return to the Lord. Notice that the writer heaps clause upon clause to show that there was once a genuine saved relationship with the Lord, and it may very well be that that is why it is thus impossible to renew them when they do fall away so completely.

The Holy Spirit in the Early Church

In the OT, God had a covenant relationship with the people of Israel, and He therefore blessed them through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. In the NT, the Holy Spirit similarly worked among men in order to fulfill God's will in connection with the new covenant. There were differences, however. The new covenant would be not be concerned with just one particular nation.

Furthermore, the new kingdom would not be a physical one, but rather it was/is a spiritual one. The Spirit no longer anointed kings and judges for their duties, and prophecy was no longer concerned with political interests. Instead, in the NT, the Spirit was/is involved with individuals (regardless of nationality; Acts 10:34-35) and with the development of the church, the body of Christ.

In preparation for the establishment of the church, much is said about the Spirit blessing and giving power to Jesus' disciples in connection with their work for the Lord (see Matthew 10:16-20; Mark 13:9-11; Luke 12:11-12). The Spirit would provide them with the necessary words to speak as they went forth proclaiming the coming of the kingdom.

Then, looking to the book of Acts, we find recorded the beginning days and years of the kingdom. In Acts 1:4-8, Jesus predicted the power that would be bestowed upon the disciples by the Holy Spirit. All throughout the book, we find recorded numerous occasions of the Holy Spirit guiding and directing those early disciples, thus enabling them to be greatly effective in spreading the gospel message and bringing about a great increase in the kingdom.

For citations of early church growth, see Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4, 31-33; 5:14, 42; 6:7; 8:3-4, 12, 25, 39-40; 9:31; 10:34-35, 44, 48; 11:17-24. Great things were happening as a result of the Holy Spirit helping those early Christians to continue to spread the good news all throughout the world around them.

Holy Spirit Inspiring the Writing of Scripture

Not only did the Holy Spirit aid the disciples and the apostles in their speaking, but He apparently also influenced them in their writing. Various situations and concerns would arise that would necessitate the authoritative teaching of the Lord's apostles.

Several passages in the NT attest to the fact that writings of Scripture (of both the Old and New Testament) originated from the Spirit...

- Paul seems to be acknowledging divine help when he said in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment."
- He specifically refers to the influence of the Spirit in 1 Timothy 4:1 when he writes, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith..."
- The Hebrew writer also acknowledges the speaking of the Spirit in Hebrews 3:7; 9:8; 10:15.
- We also consider again the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is inspired of God. As already noted, he had specifically in mind the writings of OT Scripture, but this verse would also indirectly apply to all that would rightly be deemed as Scripture, including Paul's letters themselves (as apparently attested by Peter in 2 Peter 3:15-16).

Does the Holy Spirit Directly Convert Sinners?

Some believe, as John Calvin once taught, that man is born in sin (born guilty of sin and separated from God), that he cannot do anything good, and that he cannot choose to do good or choose to love God until God directly intervenes by means of the Holy Spirit in order to change the will of that person. (Perhaps one passage used in connection with such is John 16:7-11, but overall NT teaching is that the Spirit would work through the apostles.)

The Bible, however, teaches that man is created with the capability to choose good rather than evil. Romans 2:14-16 talks about Gentiles doing by nature the good things of the Law. Acts 10:1ff says that Cornelius, though not saved, was “a devout man, and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the people, and prayed to God continually.” Indeed man does have the freedom to make such choices as is evident in the words of Joshua: “Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

God has not supernaturally interceded in the lives of particular individuals to call them to His grace, but rather He has called all men by Jesus Christ and His gospel. John 1:9 says that Jesus is “the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.” Romans 1:16 declares that the gospel “is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” Romans 10:17 says that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says, “The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Peter 1:23-25 clarifies that the word of God which brings about new birth is the gospel.

Finally, in Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, “Come unto Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Why would He invite all of us if most of us were created incapable of accepting that invitation?! The Bible teaches that Jesus is standing at the door and knocking; each of us must decide whether or not to open that door to Him (Revelation 3:20; see also 22:17).

Thus it appears that the only true way in which the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner and brings Him to Christ and salvation is through the power of the gospel as declared by Spirit-indwelled believers and found written in Spirit-inspired Scripture.

The Coming of the Spirit Foretold in John 14-16

The Messiah had been promised by prophets like Isaiah and others. The people of God had longed for His coming and all that He would give to them and do for them, and the wonderful ways in which He would greatly bless them. John 1:9-14 speaks of how that Messiah had finally come into the world, and while many had not believed in Him and accepted Him as the promised Messiah, those who did were given the right to become children of God. How wonderful it was that Jesus came and dwelt among men.

But then we come to John chapter 14, and Jesus announces that He will be leaving! Later on in 16:20-22, Jesus acknowledged that they would be filled with sorrow, that they would weep and lament. But, in 14:1a, He says, “Let not your hearts be troubled...”

Why not? Because there is reason to rejoice. He is about to explain to them that all will be well; He’s going to explain to them that they are going to be even more blessed after He leaves than they were while He was personally there with them.

- 14:1b Jesus essentially said, “You have believed in what God has said; you can also believe and trust in what I am about to say to you.”
- 14:12-14 Jesus is saying, “Yes, I am leaving, but great things are in store for you.”
- 14:15 “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” Indeed God’s way is the best way, and the disciples would soon learn that they would have help from God’s Holy Spirit in both knowing the will of God and living according to that will (Paul will teach a great deal about such as seen later in this lesson). God’s Holy Spirit works on our spirits to make them holy! His Spirit within us helps us and gives us the strength to be more obedient to His commandments.
- 14:16 KJV has “Comforter,” NASB has “Helper,” translated from the Greek *parakletos*/3875, which means “summoned, called to one's side, esp. called to one's aid; one who pleads another's cause before a judge, a pleader, counsel for defense, legal assistant, an advocate.” This word is found only in John’s writings in NT Scripture: four times here in gospel of John (14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7) referring to the Spirit, and one other time in 1 John (2:1 “Advocate”) referring to Jesus.

- 14:17a “Spirit of truth...” John also tells us that God is true (7:18, 28; 17:3), that Jesus is the truth (1:9, 14; 14:6; 15:1; 1 John 5:20), and that the Spirit is true (14:17; 15:26; 16:13). (Notice in John 8:44 that the devil is characterized as the opposite of truth; the nature of God and the nature of Satan are completely opposite to one another.) The word “truth” refers to that which is “real, ideal, genuine.” There have been many throughout history who have foolishly worshipped false gods (Romans 1:25 talks about those who “exchanged the truth of God for a lie.”), but Jehovah God is the one and only true God. Likewise, there were many in Jesus’ day who were falsely professing to be the Messiah and falsely leading people astray, but Jesus was the one and only real, true, genuine Christ, the Son of God. And the Spirit was true and would come to further reveal all that was/is true. According to John 8:32, it is knowledge of this divine truth (perhaps embodies fully knowing God and Christ) that will truly set us free.
- 14:17b “He abides with you...” Some manuscripts actually suggest a future tense, which would be more consistent with the entire passage, that being that the Spirit would soon come to abide in them.
- 14:18 KJV: “I will not leave you comfortless.” NASB: “I will not leave you as orphans.” Jesus is leaving, but He’s not going to leave them alone, spiritually destitute, and without help. That is why Jesus could say, “Let not your heart be troubled.” He would come to them again through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 14:19-20 Perhaps Jesus is referring to their seeing Him after the resurrection, or perhaps He is referring to their beholding Him symbolically through the indwelling of the Spirit.
- 14:21-22 What did Jesus mean by “disclose/manifest” Himself to them? (the disciples ask...)
- 14:23 Apparently Jesus was again referring to the manner in which He and the Father would make their abode with them through the indwelling of the Spirit. The word “abode” is from the Greek word *mone*/3438, a noun which Thayer says means: “1) a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode; 2) to make an (one’s) abode; 3) metaphorically of the God the Holy Spirit indwelling believers.” Again, Jesus says that He is leaving, but there will be a way in which He will still be with them. Believers will be the abode of God and Christ as the Spirit Himself will dwell within them.
- 14:24 Jesus again mentions the importance of God’s children living as God would have them to live. Just as the Spirit desired to help the chosen people of Israel to be what they were supposed to be, so also will He be given as a Helper for God’s chosen people today (baptized believers), helping us be what God wants us to be, and to live as He would want us to live.
- 14:25-27 The Spirit would “bring to remembrance...” Jesus had taught a great deal about loving God and others above all else, and how that we are to live in such a way as to be a blessing to God and others. The Spirit would help the apostles to remember the teachings of Jesus as they shared the word of God, and He would also help every Christian to know God’s will and to live according to the godly principles which Jesus had espoused.
- 14:28-31 Jesus seems to be summarizing the message of this whole section of Scripture: “I’m going away, but I will come again to you.” Again, perhaps He is referring to His resurrection, or perhaps He is referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit (or perhaps both).
- 15:26-27 As we’ll see later in this lesson, NT Scripture gives abundant evidence that all Christians receive the indwelling of the Spirit, but it appears that the apostles would be given a measure of the Spirit’s help somewhat beyond that otherwise typically received by believers. Jesus said that, since they had been with Him from the beginning, the apostles would be used to “bear witness” in a special way. The apostles were to wait in Jerusalem to receive the Holy Spirit as was promised (Luke 24:49). Acts 1:4-8 speaks of the coming baptism of the Holy Spirit (a special anointing from above) that would help them to be witnesses throughout all the known parts of their world.
- 16:1-4 The Spirit would give them strength in difficult times. See also Matthew 10:16-23.

- 16:5-7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” Jesus’ “going away” may refer to His coming ascension, but most likely it more immediately referred to His death. Both events would be shocking to His disciples as they would likely feel empty and forsaken. But Jesus’ death would actually be a great blessing to mankind. His death would usher in a new age, a new dispensation, the covenant of grace. This new covenant would be far better than the previous one of legal law. Each baptized believer would receive the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit within them, a gift that, unbeknownst to them at that time (surely they did not yet fully comprehend), would be a blessing even greater than the actual physical presence of Jesus Himself! (Something we need to grasp today: there is a resource within us that could do so much for us if we’ll only let Him be our strength.)
- 16:8-11 How would the Spirit convict the world? Based on all the information seen thus far, it seems evident that He would do so through the work of the apostles as they would bear witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and proclaim salvation by grace through faith in Him. They would teach about man’s guilt of sin, the righteousness of God in giving His Son so that man could be made righteous, and the judgment and the wrath of God poured out upon Satan and those in his power.
- 16:12-15 The Spirit would “guide [them] into all truth.” He would disclose/declare all that God would have them to know. Perhaps it is also proper to say that the Spirit would guide them and us in all ways that are true. Remember that Philippians 4:8 teaches us to let our minds dwell on things that are true. Surely, as we’ll study soon, the Spirit can help us to live lives that are true, real, genuine; He can help us not to be led astray and deceived by the false and meaningless things of this world.
- 16:16-22 They would experience sorrow in the coming days, but soon they would come to understand that all that would happen would be necessary, and that it all happened so that their lives (and our lives today) might be filled with great joy.

John 14:23-27 and John 14:1-4

Let’s go back and spend some more time looking at John 14:23-27. Notice again that Jesus stated that He and the Father would come to the believer “and make our abode with him.” As previously discussed, “abode” is the Greek word *monē*/3438, a noun which Thayer says means: “1) a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode; 2) to make an (one’s) abode; 3) metaphorically of the God the Holy Spirit indwelling believers.” Jesus apparently meant that He and the Father would come by means of the Holy Spirit to dwell within the heart of the believer.

Look again at v25-27. Jesus spoke these things because He knew the disciples would be feeling some turmoil at the thought of Jesus soon leaving them. And so He told them the Comforter would come, and therefore He (Jesus) was actually leaving them in peace, or in a manner in which they could be confident that all would be well. “Let not your heart be troubled...”

Now, while thinking about this passage, go back and look again at 14:1...

In John 14:1, there is that same phrase: “Let not your heart be troubled...” Why would they be troubled? As already stated many times, Jesus was leaving. He said it here in 2b-4. But now consider the phrase found at the first part of v2. The KJV says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” Most of us have therefore developed this glorious picture of Heaven with huge, beautiful mansion homes in which we as God’s children will live eternally. And indeed, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “We’ve never seen, nor ever heard, not even have we ever imagined all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

But, is that really what Jesus was talking about in John 14:2? Was He really talking about huge, beautiful mansions in Heaven? Go back again to John 14:23. Remember the word “abode” from the Greek word *monē*? The word “mansions” in the KJV of v2 is the same Greek word *monē*. In fact, these two places are the only two places in all of NT Scripture where we find this Greek word. So why did the KJV translators use the illustrious word “mansions” in v2 and the humbler word “abode” in v23? As it turns out, while these two words might convey two very different ideas in our modern English, they were actually very similar words in the 17th century English of the KJV.

The American Heritage Dictionary says that the etymology (the origin and historical development of a word) of the word “mansion” is from Middle English (the English of a few centuries ago), meaning a dwelling or an abode. In other words, when the KJV was translated centuries ago, mansion and abode meant the same thing. And thus our concept of mansion in John 14:2 is not really consistent with the actual original words spoken by Jesus. He was actually simply saying, “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places” (which is exactly how this verse is rendered in the NASB, as it is in most newer translations).

“In My Father’s House”

Let’s go one step further. Was Jesus talking about abodes in Heaven when He said, “In My Father’s house are many abodes...”?

One of the most important rules in proper interpretation is to consider the context of the passage before determining what a particular part of it means. Some Bible students make the mistake of going to Scripture to find support for what they have already decided. This process is generally called eisogesis, which is defined as reading one’s own meaning into a text. This is an extremely easy practice into which we may slip (I confess that I’ve surely done so many times in my life). While those who practice this method of interpretation may do so with the most honest of intentions, it is nevertheless not a very responsible way to handle Scripture, and it’s not a very good way to find truth.

The more proper practice is called exegesis, which literally means “to lead out.” It means that we go first to Scripture and carefully consider what it has to say before we set out to arrive at any conclusions. James 1:5 says, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” God has promised to help those who sincerely ask for such. (And thus I have fervently prayed over the past few years for help, not in necessarily finding support for what I’ve always believed, but for help in knowing what is really true and consistent with God’s will.)

So, looking at John 14:2 in the context of this entire section of Scripture, what might Jesus have meant when He said, “In My Father’s house are many abodes...”? First, is it not reasonable to consider that the abodes of v2 are intended to be the same as the abodes of v23? Again, that’s the context of the whole passage: Jesus is leaving, but let not your heart be troubled, because He and the Father will come and make their abodes within believers through the indwelling of the Spirit. That’s what He was talking about in v23, and it’s the same word in v2. Therefore it seems reasonable to interpret it to mean the same thing. The verse ends: “I go to prepare a place for you.” Isn’t the message of this whole section of Scripture that Jesus was leaving so that we might become the place or abode in which the Spirit would come to dwell? We’re the place being prepared!

Then notice the word “receive” in v3. It is from the Greek word *paralambano*/3880, meaning, “to take to, to take with one’s self, to join to one’s self; to associate.” Yes, we will certainly be joined to and associate with the Lord when we reach our eternal home, but the message of Christ in John chapters 14-16 is that we will be joined to and associate with Him now through the indwelling of the Spirit.

And, if that be the case, then what would be the Father’s house? If there are many places in which the Spirit will be able to indwell, and those places are us as believers, then the Father’s house would likely refer to the whole world of believers. Perhaps Jesus was saying, “There will be believers throughout the entire world, and I’m going so that the Spirit can come again and dwell within all those many believers.” His going, His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension were all necessary so that we could become the dwelling places in the Father’s house.

There are several places in Scripture that would suggest that the Father’s house is the whole world:

- In 1 Kings 8:27, as Solomon was contemplating the temple in which God was supposed to somehow dwell, he said, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!”
- David said in Psalm 139:7-8, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.”

- In Isaiah 66:1-2, the Lord said, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being.”

There are also several places that refer to us as Christians as being the Father’s house:

- 1 Timothy 3:15 “But in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”
- 1 Corinthians 3:9-11 “For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
- Consider the words of Hebrews 3:1-6, where the writer states that we as God’s children are to be considered as the house of God and Christ.
- Ephesians 2:19-21 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.”

Numerous Passages Regarding the Spirit and Christians

As already mentioned, it appears that the apostles were to be given a measure of the Spirit’s help somewhat beyond that otherwise typically received by believers so that they could “bear witness” in a special way. But, despite that extraordinary measure for the apostles (and a select few others, as will be discussed later), it still needs to be recognized that there are numerous verses throughout the NT that teach that the Holy Spirit is given to all those who would become Christians. He would not only dwell within the apostles and help them, but He would also dwell within the hearts and lives of all believers.

Luke 11:13; John 7:37-39; 14:16-17 (“forever”); Acts 2:38-39; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:11, 19; 12:13; Romans 5:5; 8:9, 11, 15-16; Galatians 3:2; 4:6; Titus 3:5-7; Ephesians 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:14; Hebrews 6:4; 1 John 3:24; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

The Bible also teaches that receiving the indwelling of the Spirit is the guarantee of the full redemption that is to come in the resurrection to eternal life: Romans 8:11, 23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30.

Notice that all these verses speak of the Spirit being given at the time of one’s initial salvation. As seen earlier, the involvement of the Spirit was necessary in order for Jesus to be born physically into this world and the family of mankind. Likewise, the involvement of the Spirit is necessary in order for those who believe in Jesus to be born again into the spiritual kingdom and family of God. In John 6:63, Jesus said, “It is the Spirit that gives life.” Our spiritual rebirth and life is only made possible by the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is Our Helper

Just as the indwelling of the Spirit is necessary for our spiritual rebirth and life, so also is the indwelling of the Spirit necessary for us to continue to live the spiritual lives that we should. Just as the Spirit helped the people of Israel to be what God wanted them to be, so also the Spirit helps Christians today to be what God wants us to be. Without God’s Spirit, without His help and strength, we would remain bound to our fleshly natures and desires and we would never truly be what God wants us to be.

There are numerous passages which speak of our old natures being renewed: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:1-8; 8:29; 12:2; Ephesians 2:1-10; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9b-10; 2 Peter 1:3-4. All of this renewing is done with the help of the Helper, the Holy Spirit.

The NT contains many passages that teach that the Holy Spirit continues to be a Helper for all Christians...

- Christians are commanded not to grieve, quench, or insult the Spirit (in other words, we need to recognize His indwelling and help): Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Hebrews 10:29.
- The Spirit is a source of peace and hope and joy for the Christian: Romans 8:6; 14:17; 15:13.
- The Spirit helps provide access to the Father: Romans 8:26-27; Ephesians 2:18; 6:18.
- The Spirit empowers Christians to live a more godly way of life: Ephesians 3:16-20; 5:1-18; Galatians 5:16-25; Jude 17-21; Romans 1-8; 12:1-2.
- The Christian life is to be one that is in the Spirit and led by the Spirit: 2 Corinthians 3:3-8; Galatians 5:5; 6:7-8; Ephesians 4:1-4; Philippians 2:1; 3:3; Romans 8:14-16; Acts 20:22-24.

The Bible says that for Christians, for those led by the Spirit, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22-23)." In other words, because the Spirit dwells within the Christian as his Helper, the Christian thus exhibits these godly qualities.

How Does the Spirit Lead Us?

Consider a few examples from Scripture that might give us some indication as to how the Spirit leads...

Acts 1:15-26

Peter addressed the brethren concerning the need for a replacement for Judas. From the text it is obvious that they sought to make a decision that would be in harmony with God's will. So what did they do?

1. V15 Peter stood up! Matthew Henry (in his commentary on Acts) said, "He did not sit down, as one that gave laws, or had any supremacy over the rest, but stood up, as one that had only a motion to make, in which he paid a deference to his brethren, standing up when he spoke to them." In other words, while they were obviously seeking divine help, Peter was not speaking as if he were divinely inspired. Neither he nor any of the other apostles announced that God had given him the name of the next apostle (it would have perhaps saved Justus some grief or embarrassment). They would seek to be led by the Lord in their decision, but that help would apparently not come through some outwardly-manifested miraculous means.
2. V20 Peter referred to Scripture as basis for their decision. He cited two passages from the book of Psalms (69:25 and 109:8), and they thus used such as a basis for their actions; they were going to do what they believed Scripture would have them to do.
3. V21-22 Peter suggested the circumstances that he believed would best qualify a man to serve with them as a fellow apostle. Again, there was no explicit statement that the Spirit had inspired him to give those particular qualifications, but it would be reasonable to infer that the Spirit was helping him and the entire group to use good judgment in their thinking and decisions.
4. V23 They put forth two men whom, by means of their own good judgment, they apparently thought would be suitable for the job. Who were the "they"? The other apostles? The 120 brethren? Perhaps the entire group discussed the matter and arrived at the two best candidates.
5. V24-25 They prayed about it. They asked for divine help in determining which one of the two would be best suited according to the will of God.
6. V26 They drew lots. Essentially, they flipped a coin to see which one would be selected. This may sound somewhat strange or foolish to us today, but notice that this was construed by them to be a decision made by the help of the Lord.

Acts 15:1-29

After Paul and Barnabas had returned to Antioch after preaching to the Gentiles, "...some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" So what did Paul and Barnabas do?

1. V2a They had a debate with those who were teaching such. In other words, they had a very serious discussion, perhaps even a heated argument, about the matters that were being taught.
2. V2b It was "determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue." Who determined this? Apparently it would have been the brethren there in Antioch who were dealing with this situation, or Paul and Barnabas in conjunction with them. It's interesting that Paul later wrote in Galatians 2:2 that he went up to Jerusalem "because of a revelation." Apparently the decision for them to go was construed as something the Spirit had revealed to them or led them to do.
3. V6-7a The apostles and elders in Jerusalem met to discuss the matter. Remember that these apostles would be men who we believe were already given an extraordinary measure of the Spirit's help, and yet they still spent the time discussing the issue just as any group of Christians would likely do.
4. V7 After the extended discussion, Peter speaks concerning his views.
5. V12 After Peter speaks, Barnabas and Paul speak about what they had seen among the Gentiles.
6. V13 After they were through speaking, James spoke. In v15-18, notice that, just like the example in Acts 1 of choosing a new apostle, he first referred to Scripture. And then in v19-21, James gave his "judgment" as to what he thought should be done.
7. V22 The apostles, elders, and the whole church decided to send men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with a letter.
8. V25 Their discussion led them to be of one mind in their decision.
9. V28 Notice what they said in the letter: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials..." These godly men had thoroughly discussed the matter and had come to a united decision, and they thus believed that Holy Spirit had led them to that decision.

Acts 20:28

In his farewell to the Ephesian elders, Paul warned, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Question: How and when did the Spirit appoint elders?

There are only two verses of Scripture which record the specifics of elders being appointed:

1. Acts 14:23 says that Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the various churches as they traveled and established congregations. It says that they did so "having prayed with fasting."
2. In Titus 1:5, Paul instructed Titus, who had been left in Crete, to appoint elders "in every city as I directed you." No further information is given as to the specifics of how such was done other than the type of men who would be best suited to the office.

The word "appoint/ordain" in Acts 14:23 is from the Greek word *cheirotoneo*/5500, which means, "1) to vote by stretching out the hand; 2) to create or appoint by vote: one to have charge of some office or duty; 3) to elect, create, appoint." Perhaps this gives us some indication of the manner in which those elders were selected, that being that perhaps the congregation as a whole expressed their views as to whom they believed to be suited to shepherd the flock. Regardless, no specific information is given to us as to how these men were selected other than that they were appointed by other men. And yet, according to Acts 20:28, such appointed men were deemed to have been actually appointed by the Holy Spirit, thus suggesting that the men who actually did the appointing were in some way led by the Spirit (through prayer and fasting) in making decisions that would be in accordance with the will of God.

What then do we learn from these examples about being led by the Spirit?

What kind of people were these ones who were being led by the Spirit? They were obviously spiritually-minded people, people whose greatest concern was the Lord and His will. They trusted in and were seeking God's help and the guidance of His Holy Spirit. They diligently prayed for God's help, sometimes even with fasting. And they spent time with other godly people, studying what Scriptural guidance and principles might apply and seriously discussing such things as they sought for a consensus as to what they believed God would have them to do. And, having done all this, they had confidence in the Lord's promise that the Holy Spirit would indeed guide them and lead them in the way that God would have them to go.

God has promised His Spirit to all who become His children. Will His Spirit lead us today as He led so many as recorded in NT Scripture? Some have been prone to say, "When we do what they did, we get what they got." (Remember that Acts 2:38 records two blessings: forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit; we get both when we do what they did.) Perhaps, therefore, we too today should have a similar and great confidence that, when we seek to be the kind of people God would have us to be, when we diligently search the Scriptures and pray for God's Spirit to guide our way, then indeed we too will be blessed with help from above and within.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

There are six occurrences in the NT of the phrase "baptism of/with the Holy Spirit." Four of those are found in the various Gospel accounts (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) where John the Baptist speaks of his baptism in water compared to the time that Christ will baptize "with the Holy Spirit." The other two are found in the book of Acts and clarify what John was talking about. In Acts 1:5, Jesus told His apostles shortly before the day of Pentecost, "John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The fulfillment of that takes place in Acts 2:4 when Peter and the others are "filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

The only other time this phrase is found is in Acts 10-11. There the Gentiles (Cornelius and his family) were also given the gift of speaking in tongues for the purpose of convincing the Jewish brethren that proclaiming the gospel message to the Gentiles was indeed God's will. Peter said in Acts 11:15-16, "The Holy Spirit fell on them, just as He did upon us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" The phrase "at the beginning" refers to the gift of speaking in other languages that first occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

In both of these instances, a miraculous endowment by the Holy Spirit was given to certain ones directly from above. It happened in Acts 2 so that the gospel could be proclaimed to the Jews. Then it happened in Acts 10 so that it would be known that the gospel was also to be proclaimed to the Gentiles. There are no other instances in Scripture where "baptism of the Holy Spirit" is mentioned.

An Extraordinary Measure of the Holy Spirit for Some Christians

A great emphasis is often made on the miraculous manifestations in the early church. However, while every Christian was indwelt by the Spirit and received His gracious help and strength, it appears that only a few received the extraordinary power to do miraculous deeds. The book of Acts tells about thousands who became Christians, but only a few are specifically mentioned as receiving an extraordinary miraculous measure of the Spirit, which was bestowed by the laying on of the apostles' hands...

- Acts 6:6 The apostles laid hands on the seven deacons; Stephen (6:8) and Philip (8:6,13) then did great wonders and miracles.
- Acts 8:14ff The Samaritans, who had already been baptized and would have apparently received the gift of the Holy Spirit as taught in 2:38, now received a miraculous measure after Peter and John laid hands on them; notice Simon had become a Christian, but was only beholding the miracles and signs being done by Philip.

- Acts 19:3-6 Twelve men in Ephesus were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, then Paul laid hands on them to enable them to speak in languages and to prophecy.
- In 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6, Paul states that Timothy had received a miraculous measure of the Spirit at the hands of Paul.
- Perhaps 1 John 2:20, 27 is referring to some in the church there who might have been blessed with miraculous knowledge and/or discernment.

In all the rest of the New Testament, the only other instance of Christians given miraculous gifts is that of the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul states that they had been given a variety of gifts by the Spirit, such as faith, healing, miracles, etc. Although they seemed to be most interested in the gift of languages (from the Greek word *glossa*, same as in Acts 2, meaning the language of a people), Paul made it clear that not all of them were intended to receive the same gift. He said in 12:29-30 that not all could work miracles, or heal, or speak in tongues.

In these chapters, Paul gave commands concerning the use of these gifts in connection with the church and its public assemblies. While he encourages them to “earnestly desire the greater gifts” (12:31), he does command them to exercise self-control within the public assembly. The gifts of the Spirit gave great life and excitement to the worship of the early church. It appears that almost everyone had something to contribute to the gathering, but Paul tells them to “do all things decently and in order” so that their meetings would lead to greater faith and exhortation rather than to confusion and chaos.

The Miraculous Measure was Temporary

As mentioned, in 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul speaks about the miraculous, spiritual gifts with which some of the early Christians had been endowed. But, as important and necessary as they were for that time, they were nevertheless temporal in nature and would some day cease to exist.

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 says, "Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part, and we prophecy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known."

The statement in verse 8, though often overlooked by many in the religious world, is clear: miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were temporary in nature. There would come a time when they would stop. Concerning the gifts of miraculous prophecy and miraculous knowledge, Paul uses the Greek word *katargeo*, which means (according to Vine's Expository Dictionary) "to reduce to inactivity."

Concerning the gift of tongues, Paul uses the word *pauso*, which means "to stop, to make an end." Vine further says regarding 13:8, "They were to be rendered of no effect after their temporary use was fulfilled [just as] when the apostle became a man he did away with the ways of a child."

Verses 8-12 state that such gifts would some day cease to exist, and that such would happen "when the perfect comes." According to Thayer's lexicon, the word "perfect" is from the Greek word *teleios* (actually *to teleion*, neuter gender) which means something that is "brought to its end, finished; wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect."

It is suggested by some that this "completion" or "perfect" refers to the second coming of Christ (thus allowing for the gift of tongues, etc. to continue until the end of time). However, such would ultimately contradict what Paul says later in this chapter. Not only does he speak of gifts that will cease, but also of three gifts that will abide: faith, hope, and love (v13). Surely a gift that will abide has to last longer than a gift that will cease. However, the Bible teaches that faith and hope will, in fact, one day cease, when faith becomes sight and when hope is realized at the return of Christ. Love, the greatest of gifts, not only is abiding, but eternal.

Since faith and hope will cease at the return of Christ, and these are referred to as gifts that abide, the gifts that will cease (prophecy, knowledge, tongues) MUST cease prior to the return of Christ. This in itself does not say exactly when, but it proves beyond a reasonable doubt that the miraculous gifts must cease PRIOR to the return of Christ, not AT the return of Christ.

Looking again to v8-12, the context of the passage itself dictates what is being completed. Paul said in verse 10, "When the perfect comes, the partial will be done away." What was partial? The answer to that is in verse 9: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part."

At the time Paul wrote these words, their knowledge and understanding of God's will was only partial. God was still revealing His will to the relatively-infant church through the Holy Spirit who was inspiring the apostles in their teaching. It was therefore apparently God's intention that such miraculous gifts would continue throughout the time of the apostles, and that these miraculous gifts would thus pass away as the apostles themselves would pass away.

History does seem to support this in that there was little or no mention of such in the 2nd century and beyond. Philip Shaff, in his renowned work *History of the Christian Church*, appears to represent the majority of scholarship when he spoke of "the miraculous gifts of the apostolic church, which gradually disappeared as Christianity became settled in humanity, and its supernatural principle was naturalized on earth" (Vol. 2, p423).

Summary

1. Some believe that, when the Bible speaks of the Spirit of God, it is referring simply to a way in which God has seen fit to manifest Himself. There are, however, many passages of Scripture which suggest that the Spirit is to be regarded as a distinct person who shares in the divine majesty of God and Christ.
2. God had chosen the people of Israel to be His children, and He entered into a covenant relationship with them. Because He loved them and cared for them, God gave His Spirit to help them be the kind of people God wanted them to be.
3. The Spirit also helped Jesus to be what He was meant to be. Since Jesus had laid aside His divine privileges and assumed humanity, He thus required the presence of the Spirit in order for Him to fulfill His Messianic vocation.
4. In preparation for the establishment of the church, much is said about the Spirit blessing and giving power to Jesus' disciples in connection with their work for the Lord. The Spirit would provide them with the necessary words to speak as they went forth proclaiming the coming of the kingdom.
5. Just as the Spirit helped many in OT times to speak and write the things of God, so also He helped the apostles and various others to speak and write God's will regarding the Christian covenant.
6. Just as the involvement of the Spirit was necessary in order for Jesus to be born physically into this world and the family of mankind, so also was/is the involvement of the Spirit necessary in order for those who believe in Jesus to be born again into the spiritual kingdom and family of God. Our spiritual rebirth and continuing spiritual life is only made possible by the Spirit.
7. The Spirit is the indwelling help and strength for every child of God. We can have a great confidence that, when we seek to be the kind of people God would have us to be, when we diligently search the Scriptures and pray for God's Spirit to guide our way, then indeed we too will be blessed with help from above and within.