

5 The hand of God - the holy spirit

This subject can be confusing, but is really about God - his qualities and works. Imagine an essay about some great person, e.g. Sir Winston Churchill, entitled 'The spirit of Winston Churchill'. We would expect it to describe the character of the man, what he did, how and why. So the spirit of a person, as we would use the word in everyday English, is his personality - the things that make him what he is.


Look at 1 Corinthians 2:11, and see how scripture speaks of the spirit of God in the same way.


This lesson then is about the qualities of God himself. To talk about God's spirit is to talk about him. We see him in what he does and what he says.


What is the holy spirit?


Look at the passages below and see what they are talking about. The quotations are all taken from the NIV, but you should be able to use whichever translation you have - you may like to discuss any differences.


Note the words that are used to describe God's spirit, and look for parallels, where different terms are used with the same meaning. What are the key ideas that are used to describe the spirit of God, and how do they relate to each other?


 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and thewas hovering over the waters. And, "Let there be light," and there was light. (Genesis 1:2-3)


 The has made me; the gives me life. (Job 33:4)

 Jeremiah 10:12-13 God made the earth by , he founded the world by and stretched out the heavens by

 By the the heavens were made, their stary host by the (Psalm 33:6)

 The angel answered, "Thewill come on you, and the will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

 He sends to the earth; runs swiftly. (Psalm 147:15-18)

 Take the helmet of salvation and the which is the (Ephesians 6:17)

See how the following information, taken from the online Bible, confirms these multiple meanings.

Old Testament		
Hebrew Word	Translated (in the AV)	Number of times
ruach	spirit	232
	wind	92
	breath	27
	mind	5
	others	22

New Testament		
Greek Word	Translated (in the AV)	Number of times
pneuma - a noun	spirit or ghost, including holy spirit, spirit of God, spirit of Christ, evil spirit, ...	364
	others	21
pneo - a verb	blow	6
	wind	1

An important principle



Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-12. Although this passage relates to a first century situation, what important points do you think it makes?

The spirit of God in the lives of all men



Look at Genesis 2:7, Job 33:4, and Psalm 104:27-30, and see the way in which scripture describes the hand of God in sustaining life. Now look at Acts 17:24-28 and Matthew 5:45. What conclusions do you draw from these passages?

Among God's people



Read Isaiah 63:7-14

How did God work through his spirit in the experiences of the people of Israel? What effect did it have on them?

The holy spirit at work in special ways at particular times

The term 'holy spirit' tends to be used in scripture for occasions when God worked in special ways through his spirit. This is not a different power, simply a special use of the same spirit.



Look at Exodus 31:1-6. What special abilities were given by the spirit of God?



Look at Numbers 12:6; 2 Samuel 23:1-3 and 2 Peter 1:21, and summarise what happened when the prophets were inspired to speak for God.



Read John 3:34; 14:9-11. What do these verses tell us about the Lord Jesus and about his relationship with God?



Read Acts 2:1-11; 5:12-15. What special abilities were given to the apostles?

The Time Chart

Now try to summarise the times and occasions when God used miraculous powers, and note them in the chart on the next page. What conclusions would you draw from this exercise?



BC		Miracles and other gifts of the spirit
?	Adam	
3000	Noah	
2000 1500	Abraham Moses and the Exodus	
1000 500	King David Israel go into exile Return from exile	
0	Jesus and the apostles	