

What is spirit? We all know the word *spirit*, and we all bring to it our own understanding. Unfortunately, to many, *spirit* is an indefinable term, meaning anything metaphysical, anything beyond the realm of our five senses. For the most part, modern man scoffs at the spiritual realm, preferring to assign such things to the beliefs of “unenlightened” cultures, to past or “primitive” societies. This is lamentable, for, as the Bible tells us, “God is Spirit” (John 4:24); the Supreme Being is a Spirit.

But what does the Bible mean when it says that God is a Spirit? Our word *spirit* comes from a Latin word that means “to breathe.” The words for *spirit* in the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, also come from words meaning “to breathe.” Of course, to human existence, breath is the most basic item. It is significant that God has revealed Himself to mankind as Spirit, for by doing so He indicates that He is as important to man’s existence as man’s very breath. But from another perspective, as Spirit, God is wondrously available to man, as available as the very air that man breathes. No one should be without God, for He is available to all who will “breathe” Him in.

Understanding that God as the Spirit is both important and available to man, we should consider what the Bible tells us about God the Spirit. The revelation in the Bible concerning God the Spirit is not merely doctrine for philosophers of religion; it is more the good news of God’s availability to man. God is the Divine Being and God is the available Spirit; hence, God’s divine nature is available for man to partake of. As the apostle Peter said, we who believe in Christ can “become partakers of the

divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4). It is through God as the Divine Spirit that this can be so.

In the Bible God the Spirit is referred to in many ways, but here we need only consider three of these titles to see God’s availability. These three titles all refer to Him as the Divine Spirit, but specifically they show us an aspect of His being which is of great import and of great relevance to man. Among His many titles in the Bible, the Divine Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, and the Holy Spirit. These three titles tell us much about how God intends to be related to man and are hence worthy of our consideration.

The Spirit of God

According to the revelation of the Bible, God is triune; that is, God is at the same time one and three. This is beyond human comprehension, as certainly God should be. There is but one God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4), yet He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). These distinctions are not a theological complexity but the divine reality. The Father is God as the source in the Trinity, the Son is God as the expression of the Trinity, and the Spirit is God as the transmission and realization of the Trinity. God is not only a self-existing Being, but wondrously the Divine Being who makes Himself available to us His creatures as the Spirit. The Spirit of God is God reaching us and applying Himself to us as our portion and supply.

The term *the Spirit of God* is a common designation of God in the Bible, but it is primarily used in the Old Testament. At the very beginning of the Bible, we find the Spirit of God in God’s creation: “And the earth was without

form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). When God began to restore the universe from its chaotic condition, He moved as the Spirit of God. Throughout the Old Testament the Spirit of God appears, in every case referring to God coming to man and applying Himself to man’s situation.

In the New Testament the instances of His title *the Spirit of God* refer even more pointedly to the application of His divinity to man’s situation. He is the Spirit of God because He is the Spirit of the Divine Being, bearing His divinity to man and applying it to man’s situation. The apostle Paul says, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9). Those who believe in Christ are no longer mere flesh but are now spiritual, as God is spiritual, because the Spirit of God—the Spirit that bears the divine essence to them—dwells in them. This alone is a happy fact: The Spirit of God, as the bearer of the divine essence to man, uplifts man from the fleshy state and makes him a partaker of God’s divine nature.

The Spirit of Jehovah

In the Old Testament there is another particular designation of God as the Spirit, the Spirit of Jehovah. (Most English translations render this term as “the Spirit of the LORD,” with the word *LORD* in small capital letters.) *Jehovah*, meaning “I am who I am,” is the personal name of God, revealed to Moses before the children of Israel were led out of Egypt by God. Only the people chosen by God and in covenant with

Him knew Him as Jehovah. Hence, *Jehovah* designates God in His personal relationship with His chosen people, and *the Spirit of Jehovah* designates God as the Spirit coming to man in that personal relationship. The prophet Isaiah spoke of the Spirit of Jehovah resting upon the coming Messiah, the coming Christ, when He comes to restore Israel, His chosen people (11:1-16). As the Spirit of Jehovah, God is even more intimate with His people than He is as the Spirit of God. As such, He is not only the Divine Spirit but also the Spirit of all that God is, covenanted to His chosen people and applied to them. Again, as the Spirit of Jehovah, God reaches man and applies Himself to man as man's portion and supply.

The Holy Spirit

Perhaps the most wonderful title of God the Spirit is *the Holy Spirit*. This title occurs exclusively in the New Testament. (The three instances of *Holy Spirit* in the Old Testament—Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10 and 11—are to be translated more accurately as “the Spirit of holiness.”) The Holy Spirit is first mentioned when God came in to prepare the forerunner of the Lord Jesus, John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), and to prepare a body for the Lord Jesus (Luke 1:35). Hence, the Holy Spirit is related to the incarnation of God in man.

We often think of holiness as religious piety, but as applied to God, holiness is the unique attribute of God that separates Him from all else. God alone is holy (Rev. 15:4) because He is unique in who He is. Everything in the universe shares something in common with everything else; all things are at least created by God. But God is unique. That which makes Him unique is

His holiness. The Holy Spirit is God the Spirit coming to man to apply God's holy, divine nature to man that man may be holy as God is. In the incarnation of Christ, through the Holy Spirit God became man. The God-man Jesus Christ was frequently called the Holy One (John 6:69; Acts 2:27; Mark 1:24; 1 Pet. 1:15) because, being conceived and born of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20), He too was holy. The Holy Spirit is active in the believers, supplying God's nature to them and making them holy as well. The apostle Paul speaks of God's intention to make the believers holy when he writes: “He chose us...to be holy...predestinating us unto sonship” (Eph. 1:4-5). Those who believe in Christ were chosen to be holy, that is, to have God's divine life and holy nature and therefore be God's sons.

To all who believe in Christ and repent of their sins, God is available as the Spirit. He is as available as the air that we breathe, and He desires to make men holy as He is holy. When we open to Him as the Holy Spirit, He enters us and bears God's divine life to us, regenerating us and granting to us His holy nature that we may be like Him.

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The Divine Spirit

*Concerning
the Spirit of God,
the Spirit of Jehovah,
& the Holy Spirit*