

## **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Relation to Our Savior**

The Holy Spirit was clearly involved in the life of our Lord, while on the Earth. We see the Holy Spirit's pervasive and powerful presence throughout the life and ministry of Christ. From His conception to His death and resurrection, we find the Holy Spirit actively at work. We will examine the Holy Spirit's involvement in the life and ministry of Christ in three different areas.

### The Holy Spirit's Involvement in the Birth of Christ

Both the prediction and the record of Christ's birth point to a special work of the Holy Spirit. Both Matthew and Luke emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Christ.

- **Luke 1:35**, *“And the angel answered and said to her, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”**”*

Here we have the prediction of Christ's birth. After informing Mary that she would have a child, the angel explained that the conception would be by the Holy Spirit coming upon her. The terms “come upon” and “overshadow” are not euphemisms for sexual intercourse, but are simply terms used to speak of the Holy Spirit's ministry with regard to Mary in causing the conception of Christ. God's powerful presence will rest upon Mary, so that she will bear a child who will be the Son of God. [Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 262]

- **Matthew 1:18-20**, *“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she **was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit**. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; **for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.**”*

Here we have the record of Christ's birth. After the conception had taken place an angel appeared to Joseph. Matthew clearly states that Mary was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit and that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. This stresses origin. The origin of Christ's birth/conception was not through Joseph, but through the agency of the Holy Spirit. In other words, Jesus had no human father.

### There are at least three results of the conception of Christ:

- 1) *The human nature of Christ came into existence at this point.* The conception/birth of Christ is not the coming into existence of a person, but the taking on of human flesh; the taking on of a human nature. It is the beginning of Christ's human nature. Christ is eternal and has always existed in His deity.

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2) *The human nature of Christ was sinless.* Although Christ possessed a full human nature, it was not stained by sin. The conception by the Holy Spirit guaranteed the sinlessness of Christ. Certainly scripture affirms Christ's sinlessness. In **John 7:18** it is said that “*there is no unrighteousness in Him.*” In **1 John 3:5**, John the apostle says in regards to Christ, “*in Him there is no sin.*”

3) *The human nature of Christ brought human limitations.* Although Christ was sinless, the taking on of a human nature meant that the God-man Christ Jesus submitted to the voluntary limitations of humanity (i.e. He was tired, John 4:6; He became thirsty, John 4:7; He wept, John 11:35 etc...).

Very clearly, the Holy Spirit was actively involved as the agent in the conception of Christ. So that Christ would be 100% man and 100% God; the God-man Christ Jesus, who although would possess a full human nature and would be subject to human limitations, He would not be stained by sin.

### The Holy Spirit's Involvement in the Life of Christ

The Holy Spirit also played an active role in the life and ministry of Christ on the earth. We see the consistent activity of the Holy Spirit from the very beginning of Christ's public ministry at His baptism. Consistently throughout the ministry of Christ the Holy Spirit was there, empowering Him to preach and perform miracles. How was the Holy Spirit involved in the life and ministry of Christ on the earth?

#### ***1) The Holy Spirit descended on Christ at His baptism.***

At the inauguration of Christ's ministry on the earth, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at or just after His baptism. This activity of the Spirit is significant in that it identified Jesus as the long expected Messiah and empowered Him for His earthly ministry.

- **Matthew 3:16**, “*And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending as a dove, {and} coming upon Him,***”
- **Luke 3:21-22**, “*Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and **the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove**, and a voice came out of heaven, “*Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased.*” (cf. Mark 1:9; John 1:32-35)*

#### ***2) The Holy Spirit filled and led Christ throughout His earthly life.***

After the baptism of Christ when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, Christ was filled and led by the Spirit continuously throughout His earthly life. During this time, Jesus submitted Himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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- **Luke 4:1**, “*And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness.*”

The verb “*led*” is in the imperfect tense suggesting a continuous action. Jesus was now continuously under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in His earthly life and ministry.

- **Mark 1:12**, “*And immediately the Spirit impelled Him {to} {go} out into the wilderness.*”

The present tense of “*impelled*” once again emphasizes a continuous/habitual action and thus stresses that the entire earthly life of Jesus was bound up with the Holy Spirit.

These two verses are often viewed as part of Christ's Kenosis, which is a prevailing theological persuasion concerning the relationship between the divine and human natures of Jesus.

The term Kenosis is taken from **Philippians 2:7**, where Paul states that Christ emptied himself when He took upon Himself the form of a bond-servant. The Greek word KENAO translated “*emptied Himself*,” is where we get the English word *Kenosis* (a reference to the self-emptying of Jesus in His incarnation).

In this view, Christ voluntarily surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes. In His incarnation and consequent humiliation, Jesus became totally subservient to the will of the Father; He became a perfect Servant, living to do the Father's will. In thus submitting Himself to the Father, Jesus in His incarnation acquiesced entirely to the guidance, control and empowerment of the Holy Spirit throughout His earthly life and ministry.

### ***3) The Holy Spirit anointed Christ for His earthly ministry.***

- **Luke 4:18**, “***THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,***”

This verse clearly indicates that Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit. This anointing most likely took place at His baptism, when the Holy Spirit visibly came upon Christ. This anointing of Jesus is a fulfillment of the prophecy of **Isaiah 61:1**. Just as kings (cf. 2 Samuel 2:4) and priests (Exodus 28:41) were anointed, so also the Messiah would be anointed.

This anointing of Jesus as Messiah would confer power upon Christ to complete His messianic ministry. In fact, the Holy Spirit, Himself would be the anointing, empowering Christ for His earthly ministry and enabling Him to preach the gospel.

- **Acts 10:38**, “*{You know of} Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and {how} He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.*”

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Peter makes a clear statement regarding the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. Once again we see that this anointing of Jesus empowered Him for the purpose of ministry.

The anointing of Christ by/with the Holy Spirit designated Jesus as Israel's Messiah; introduced Him to and empowered Him for His public ministry; and served as a divine authentication of Jesus (cf. Matthew 3:17).

### ***4) The Holy Spirit empowered Christ for His earthly ministry.***

We have already been introduced to the idea that the Holy Spirit empowered Christ for His earthly ministry. Certainly Christ was empowered by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit descended upon and anointed Him at His baptism; and filled and led Him through His earthly ministry.

Jesus is very clearly described as being in the power of the Spirit in **Luke 4:14**, “*And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.*”

But what was Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit to do?

1-He was empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel:

- **Luke 4:18**, “*THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR...*” In fact the people were astounded and amazed at His ability to preach/teach because He did so with such great power and authority (cf. Luke 4:15, 32, 36).

2-He was empowered by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles:

- **Matthew 12:28**, “*But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*”

Certainly Christ did indeed perform the miracle of casting out demons by the Spirit of God. (Cf. Matthew 8:28-34; 9:32-34; Mark 1:21-28; 9:14-29 etc.)

- **Luke 4:18**, “*THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN,*”

Certainly Christ did perform miracles of giving sight to the blind through the power of the Spirit. (Matthew 9:27-31; 15:30; Mark 8:22-26; John 9:1-7 etc...)

- **Acts 10:38**, “*{You know of} Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and {how} He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.*”

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Certainly Christ did perform a wide range of healing miracles through the power of the Spirit. (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 1:40-45; 5:21-43; Luke 7:1-10; John 4:46-54 etc...)

The Holy Spirit was dramatically and actively involved in the life and ministry of Christ on the earth. He descended upon Christ at His baptism; anointed, filled and led Him; empowering Him to preach the Gospel and perform many miracles during His earthly ministry. Rather clearly we see that Christ subjected Himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit throughout His earthly life.

**EXCURSES: THE UNPARDONABLE SIN: THE BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

- *What is the unpardonable sin? What is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?*

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THIS SIN:

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not the quenching of the Spirit found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19; nor is it the grieving of the Spirit found in Ephesians 4:30. It has to do with a particular conflict between Christ and the Pharisees recorded for us in **Matthew 12:22-32**.

*(22) Then there was brought to Him a demon-possessed man {who was} blind and dumb, and He healed him, so that the dumb man spoke and saw. (23) And all the multitudes were amazed, and {began} to say, "This {man} cannot be the Son of David, can he?" (24) But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." (25) And knowing their thoughts He said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand. (26) "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? (27) "And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Consequently they shall be your judges. (28) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. (29) "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong {man} ? And then he will plunder his house. (30) "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters. (31) "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. (32) "And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age, or in the {age} to come.*

Jesus had ministered publicly to the nation of Israel through His teachings (i.e. Matthew 5-7) and His miracles (i.e. Matthew 8-10). The religious leaders were coming to Christ and investigating Him for themselves. They needed to determine who this Jesus of Nazareth was. Was He the Messiah? How would they be able to explain His miracles?

In Matthew 12:22 they brought a demon-possessed man to Jesus and Jesus healed him. According to verse 23, the people were amazed and began to ponder whether Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. However, the way the people responded suggests that they had been heavily influenced by the Jewish leaders. The wording of verse 23 suggests a likely "no" answer.

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The possible doubt of the people gives the Pharisees an opportunity to sway the people in their direction and they thus make the blasphemous accusation that Jesus casts out demons by the power of Satan (verse 24).

Jesus responds to the Pharisees blasphemous accusation. The Lord's reply consisted of a three-fold response:

- 1) "If Satan casts out demons, his house is divided against itself; he is using his power to destroy himself" (12:25-26).
- 2) "There is a double standard here; you Pharisees have disciples who claim to cast out demons, and yet you never accuse them of partnership with the demons they supposedly drive away. What is it about me that forces' you to conclude that I have such a partnership?" (12:27)
- 3) "Only God is greater than Satan; if I do not cast demons out by Satan - and I have shown that it is foolishness to suggest that I do, then I must do it by God. And if that is so, I must be truthful in all that I say. And if that is so, the kingdom has indeed come upon you, just as I have insisted" (12:28-29).

In conclusion, Jesus publicly turns the accusation back upon the Pharisees - 12:30-32 and accuses them of the unpardonable sin; blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

### THE EXPLANATION OF THE SIN:

There are two sins mentioned here by Christ: 1) the sin against the Son of Man & 2) the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The first is forgivable, but the second is not. The sin against Christ involved rejecting Christ in unbelief. This sin is forgivable provided that the individual eventually repents and believes (i.e. Saul of Tarsus; Acts 9).

However the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. It demonstrates a permanent rejection of Christ and the power by which He worked, the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin rejected both Christ's words and the works of Christ done through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is considered blasphemy, because they attributed the works of God, which they had witnessed to being works of Satan.

Such rejection in the presence of Christ demonstrated a hardness of heart that could not be turned. There was no opportunity for these individuals to come to repentance; it was unpardonable and they would never be forgiven.

**Question:** *Can the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit be committed today?*

“To commit the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would require the physical presence of Jesus Christ in which He would teach and perform miracles while the hearers and onlookers would reject His ministry and attribute it to the power of Satan.” [Enns, p. 265-266]

This sin could only be committed in the time of Christ on the earth, when one could personally witness the words and works of Christ.

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The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not the same as unbelief. Certainly individuals can reject Christ in unbelief, but later repent and believe. When one turns in faith to Christ, although they previously were unbelieving, rejecting and un-forgiven, now they are believing and forgiven. However, if a person permanently persists in unbelief throughout their life, then they will not be forgiven either.

### The Holy Spirit's Involvement in the Death and Resurrection of Christ

Not only was the Holy Spirit responsible for bringing the humanity of Christ into existence at His birth; Not only was the Holy Spirit responsible for empowering Christ in His earthly life and ministry; but the Holy Spirit also played a role in the death and resurrection of Christ.

#### ***1) The Holy Spirit was involved in the death of Christ.***

• **Hebrews 9:14**, *“how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”*

There is some question whether the phrase “the eternal Spirit” in Hebrews 9:14 is a reference to the Holy Spirit or not since there is no article in the Greek text. However, it is necessary to understand that in the Greek, proper names often do not include the Greek article because they are considered definite without it. The Greek phrase “eternal Spirit” [PNEUMATOS AIONIΟΥ] in Hebrews 9:14 is likely a proper name referring to the Holy Spirit.

With this being the case, then we can clearly see that the Holy Spirit played a role in Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The Holy Spirit likely guided and empowered Christ to move through this time of sacrifice and suffering.

The author of Hebrews may have had the suffering servant of Isaiah in mind when he wrote this verse. If this is the case then the Spirit who comes upon the Servant in Isaiah 42:1 is the one who leads the Servant to bear the sins of many in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. [cf. Enns, p. 264]

#### ***2) The Holy Spirit was involved in the resurrection of Christ.***

It seems clear that each member of the Trinity was involved in the resurrection of Christ. According to Ephesians 1:19-20 and Psalm 16:10, Christ was raised by the power of God the Father. According to John 10:18, Christ had the power to raise Himself. The Holy Spirit was also involved in effecting the resurrection of Christ:

• **Romans 1:4**, *“who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,”*

This once again is a controversial passage. Some say the phrase “Spirit of holiness” is a reference to Christ's deity or His spiritual nature, while others say it is a distinct mention of the Holy Spirit. The problem once again involves the omission of the definite article in the Greek. However, once again if “Spirit of holiness” is taken as a proper name, then the article is not necessary. In addition, in this

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verse “Spirit of holiness” is the object of the preposition, “according to.” In Greek grammar, the definite article is not always used with the object of the preposition to make it definite. (cf. Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, p. 247]

It seems most likely that Romans 1:4 is a reference to the Holy Spirit and thus speaks of the Spirit's role in the resurrection of Christ. Just as Christ was raised by the power of the Father and by His own power, so also He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit.

• **Romans 8:11**, “*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.*”

There seems to be less confusion over this verse. It very clearly speaks of the Holy Spirit as being instrumental in raising Jesus from the dead. It is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead who indwells believers. The Holy Spirit certainly played an active role in the death and resurrection of Christ.

### CONCLUSION

The Scripture shows the Holy Spirit to be involved in the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ. From conception to resurrection, the Holy Spirit was clearly involved in the life of Christ. Being conceived by the Holy Spirit, Christ would take on a sinless human nature. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit would descend and come upon Christ to guide Him and empower Him in His earthly ministry. Even in His suffering and death, Christ would submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and by the power of the Holy Spirit as well as the power of the Father and The Son, Jesus was raised from the dead.

Certainly we can conclude with J. Dwight Pentecost regarding the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Life of Christ, “I would question whether there is any great work of God revealed in the Word of God in which all of the members of the Godhead do not work together to accomplish God's purpose.” [J. Dwight Pentecost, Divine Comforter, p. 100]

### APPLICATION

As Christ submitted Himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in His earthly life, so we should submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, striving to obey His commands and live our lives in manner that is pleasing to God.