



# We Believe in the Holy Spirit

*“...who has spoken through the prophets.”*

## Lesson 3

---

**Review.** What truth do we confess when we say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son?

## Introduction

There is a lot of confusion today concerning how God communicates with human beings. A proper understanding of who God is essential to understanding how God communicates. Consider how the following misunderstandings of *who* God is could impact the understanding of *how* God communicates:

- “God is a vague force that permeates his creation.”
- “God created the world and has left things to run on their own. He is generally unconcerned with us mere human beings here on earth.”
- “Many different cultures call God by different names or they have different ways of viewing God, but really it’s all the same God.”
- “A supreme force mysteriously works to bring revenge upon those who do wrong, but to reward those who do their best to live an upright life.”

Now consider this: From where do all those ideas about God originate?

## “In the past God spoke in various ways...”

The writer to the Hebrews says, *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways”* (Hebrews 1:1). Consider the following passages in which God spoke to his people in the past:

**Genesis 28:12-15** – He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup> There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

**Exodus 3:1-4** – Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. <sup>3</sup> So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” <sup>4</sup> When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.”

**Numbers 22:28; 23:5** – Then the Lord opened the donkey’s mouth, and she said to Balaam, “What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?” ...The Lord put a message in Balaam’s mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this message.”

**Isaiah 1:1, 3** – The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. <sup>2</sup>Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken:

**Jeremiah 1:4** – The word of the Lord came to me, saying... (This phrase repeats throughout the book of Jeremiah and other prophets).

**Jeremiah 23:28-32** – Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the Lord. <sup>29</sup> “Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? <sup>30</sup> “Therefore,” declares the Lord, “I am against the prophets who

steal from one another words supposedly from me. <sup>31</sup>Yes," declares the Lord, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The Lord declares.' <sup>32</sup>Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," declares the Lord. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the Lord.

**Luke 1** – (The Angel Gabriel announced the births of John the Baptist and Jesus)

**Matthew 1:20,21** – But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Even though God spoke to people of the past in different ways, how did he communicate in each of the examples above?

### **Discuss.**

- Evaluate this statement, "I really feel like God is telling me to take this new job and move my family halfway across the country."
- Evaluate this statement, "I really feel like God is telling me to start a new church in which there is a more complete revelation of his word beyond what the Bible says."
- Respond, "I had a really strange dream... what do you think God is trying to tell me?"
- How do people in your life communicate with you? What are some potential barriers to healthy communication? What helps foster healthy communication?
- Now consider how God has chosen to communicate with us. What are some potential barriers to that communication? What helps foster healthy communication?

## **A special outpouring of the Holy Spirit**

Just as Jesus promised, he sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in a very special way:

**Acts 2:1-11** – When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. <sup>5</sup>Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup>Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup>(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

The gift of speaking in tongues appears to have been a special gift of the Holy Spirit that occurred in the earlier church.

**1 Corinthians 12:7-11** – <sup>7</sup>Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup>To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup>to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

**1 Corinthians 14:19** – "But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue."

Even though the Spirit endowed the Apostles with the special gifts of speaking in tongues on Pentecost, how did he communicate on that day?

**Discuss.**

- The charismatic movement in the church has led to an emphasis on speaking in tongues and other visible/emotional responses as an indication that the Spirit is in an individual Christian. While we may not go to that extreme, how might we be tempted to emphasize our own personal feelings or experiences over God's Word?

## The Spirit Speaks

With the history of the Nicene Creed in mind, what important truth(s) are we confessing when we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit ...who has spoken through the prophets?"

**1 Peter 1:23-25** – You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

The Holy Spirit is the Lord the giver of life. The Holy Spirit creates faith in a sinner's heart. He brings one who was dead in sin to spiritual life. By what means does he do this?

**2 Peter 1:16-21** – We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. <sup>19</sup> And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

What point is Peter making about Scripture when he references the Transfiguration of Jesus and then says, "We have the words of the prophets made more certain?"

Why did Peter have to emphasize scripture *did not* originate in the will of man?

How can the Bible be God's Word if human writers were involved?

**2 Timothy 3:16,17** – All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What is the source of Scripture?

What is the purpose of Scripture?

**Discuss.**

- Consider how the Bible was written over the course of centuries (1500 B.C. to about 100 A.D.). If the Bible were merely the words of men, what would you expect it to look like over that period of time?
- Evaluate: "We need to make the Bible more relevant so that younger generations don't leave the church."
- Do you think your faith would be stronger if God had spoken to you directly like he did with certain people of the past? (**Consider Luke 16:19-31**)
- Words are powerful. The Word is powerful. What impact does the Holy Spirit have in the life of a Christian through his Word?