

Pneumatology Paper

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Introduction and Context

The relationship between Jesus and the Holy Spirit in John is spelled out throughout the entire Gospel of John. As a believer, it is essential to have a solid understanding of Pneumatology.

The word Pneumatology is formed by two Greek words, "*pneuma*" meaning "wind," "breath," or "spirit" (used of the Holy Spirit) and "*logos*" meaning "word," "matter," or "thing."¹ Pneumatology is used in systematic theology and is used to define the personality, deity, and the work of the Holy Spirit as these are found in scripture.²

As we read John, there are many verses and contexts we can unwrap to form our Pneumatological doctrine and view of who the Holy Spirit is – and is not. While as Christians today, we are aware of the Holy Spirit and have some idea about His place in the Trinity and his role in believers' lives through the study of the Bible, when John was written, the people who were around to witness Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection, were just hearing about this mysterious "Spirit" Jesus spoke about and alluded to throughout his interactions and teaching. In this paper, we aim to comprehend the book of John to form a correct view of Pneumatology and the Holy Spirit through the lens of John's Gospel.

Main Body

As stated in the introduction, there exist numerous references to the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John. As we learned in the study of Nicodemus, and his conversation with Jesus in John 3, as Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be "born again," or born from "above" to enter the kingdom of God.

This shows that one of the critical roles the Holy Spirit has is to establish a "redemptive relationship" as we see in this explanation of the Holy Spirit's role in a believer's salvation.

When human persons yield to the Spirit as the Father's love (i.e., the first dimension of grace), they come into union with the Son through the same Spirit who united Jesus' humanity to the Son, and thereby participate in the assimilative dimension of the self-communication of God, or the Spirit as mutual love. Grace involves receiving the Father's

¹ "*Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit*," Bible.org, accessed February 23, 2019, <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-pneumatology-holy-spirit>.

² Ibid

love, which constitutes one a child of God and then participating in the return of love to the Father whereby believers become, along with the Son, children of God who love the Father. Moreover, grace is Pneumatological because the Spirit constitutes the redemptive relationship between the human person and Christ and the Father. Grace is the participation of human persons in the economic self-communication of the trinitarian God, realized in Jesus Christ. Grace is pneumatological because the Spirit is the divine person who inducts human persons into the fellowship of the Son and the Father.³

The explanation that the Holy Spirit “constitutes the redemptive relationship” gives us a picture that the Holy Spirit gives us access to Christ and the Father in a way that we would not know without him. Through his unique attributes, we are given an understanding of God’s forgiveness and Christ’s sacrifice that are essential to our belief.

As explained in another commentary, there are two parts to salvation, and that is repentance and the Spirit. "In other words, entrants to the kingdom must be born from "above" or the place from which Jesus originates. The Christian, as it were, must become like Jesus who is "from above" (v. 31). The theological language for this is brought out in 3:5–8. This birth must consist of water (repentance, baptism, or the ministration of John) and the Spirit (the eschatological endowment brought by Jesus, 7:39; 20:22)."⁴

The Holy Spirit does not only play a part in a believer’s rebirth, as we see through Nicodemus’ interaction with Jesus in John 3, he is also sent to be a helper and friend as we see in the Paraclete passages in John 14, 15 and 16. In these passages, we learn from Jesus as he speaks about the Holy Spirit that "the father sends the Helper in Jesus' name, and his function is to "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."⁵ This shows that the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father, the work of the Holy Spirit is Christ-centered, and its purpose is to bring to mind spiritual things. This can also be interpreted as; “Spirit

³ Studebaker, Steven M. *Defining Issues in Pentecostalism: Classical and Emergent*. Eugene, Or. Pickwick Publications, 2008.

⁴ Kagarise R. *The Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1957), 850.

⁵ Ibid, 223-224.

works in the church as a Paraclete by distributing gifts ... by reminding them of Jesus' words and teaching as well as revealing the hidden facts according to the truth which is Jesus himself."⁶

These passages are rich with explanations that the Holy Spirit will dwell in believers and be a guide as they seek to live out life without Christ on Earth. When Christ was on Earth, believers had someone to see, a physical representation of the Trinity in Jesus. Now, as he prepares to ascend to Heaven that physical representation will no longer be there for people to look to. It is hard to imagine what the believers and disciples surrounding Jesus must have felt as they realized that Jesus was not going to be around for much longer. As A.J. Gordon writes, they must have had many uncertainties as they tried to wrap their heads around what was about to happen.

"But what deep questionings must have arisen in their hearts as they heard the Saviour's promise: "If I go not away the Paraclete will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." Did they begin to ask whether the mysterious comer would be a "person"? Impossible to imagine. For he was to take the place of that greatest of persons; to do for them even greater things than he had done, and to lead them into even larger knowledge than he had imparted. The discussion of the personality of the Holy Ghost is so unnatural in the light of Christ's last discourse that we studiously avoid it. Let us treat the question, therefore, from Christ's own words, and try to put ourselves under the impression, which they make upon us. To state the matter as simply and familiarly as possible: Jesus is about to vacate his office on earth as teacher and prophet, but before doing so he would introduce us to his successor. As in a complex problem we seek to determine an unknown quantity by the known, so in this paschal discourse, Jesus aims to make us acquainted with the mysterious, invisible coming personage whom he names the "Paraclete" by comparing him with himself, the known and the visible one."⁷

⁶ Connie Ho Yan. Au, Kagarise R. *Grassroots Unity in the Charismatic Renewal* (Eugene, or: Pickwick Publications, 2011), Page 227.

⁷ A. J. Gordon, *Ministry of the Spirit* (Place of Publication Not Identified: Tradition Classics, 2012), 37-38.

After Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus visits the disciples. As we see in John 20:21-23 "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you.' Moreover, when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.' (ESV) This bestowing of the Holy Spirit on the disciples marks Jesus' transfer of the Holy Spirit to his disciples after the resurrection. "The transfer signals the end of his public, Spirit-anointed ministry. However, this transfer is one episode in a complex series of events."⁸

However, some disagree on what this imparting of the Holy Spirit represents, and if it is a separate occurrence than that of Pentecost as described by Luke in Acts 2:4. Some take the "preoptic" view, which says that the John 20:22 is "part of an acted out parable in anticipation of the fulfillment which occurred on the day of Pentecost."⁹ Another view, popularized during the last 100 years, is that the events stated in John 20:22 and Acts 2:4 are the same. Another opinion suggests that John 20:22 and Acts 2:4 are "two impartations of the Spirit."¹⁰

There exists a dichotomy of opinion about Christ's atonement in the statements of the Gospel of John. According to C.H. Dodd, such concept is absent in the Gospel of John. The argument is, however, refuted by Brooke. According to him the texts in John 8.21-24 echo the belief that the one who believes in Christ attains the eternal life and the eternal life is the same as salvation from sin. Christ's atonement has been stated in John 3.16-17 referring to Christ's death on the cross, as well as John 12.32-33 as an indication that eternal life and forgiveness of sins is bestowed upon the believers.

The Greek word used here for "breathed" in this passage is *emphysáō*, which means "to blow at or on:—breathe on," and is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. However, "in the Septuagint, translators of Gen 2:7: ... There, man's original creation was completed by this act of God;" who, then, can

⁸ Elbert, Paul. "The Rebirth of Prophecy: Trajectories from Moses to Jesus and His Followers." *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* Vol.5 (2013): 19.

⁹ Harold D. Hunter, *Spirit-baptism: A Pentecostal Alternative* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 115-116.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 115-116.

fail to see that here in John 20, on the day of the Saviour's resurrection, the new creation had begun, begun by the Head of the new creation, the last Adam acting as 'a quickening spirit' (1Cr 15:45)!"¹¹

While there may be disagreement about what "Receiving the Holy Spirit" actually means in this passage, and if this was the same event as Pentecost, comprehension of this passage, and the interpretations above, implies that with the word *emphysáō*, Jesus was giving the disciples in that room a new start to their lives as believers, and ultimately their ministry, which would continue on without him soon. As Sam Storms writes, "The point is that the mission of Jesus is not over. It merely passes into a new phase. Jesus continues the mission given to him by his Father by sending forth his disciples in the same power with/by which the Father sent him forth, i.e., the power of the Holy Spirit."

One might try to imagine what it might have been like in the room as Jesus breath on you to receive the Holy Spirit. I can see that moment being a life-changing in many ways. The most personal is receiving the Holy Spirit directly from Jesus.

The way the Holy Spirit is described throughout John, there is no way to deny the Holy Spirit is vital to those who are in ministry. As it says in the Paraclete passages, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, comforter, and convicts us of our sins. So many times, we talk about the Holy Spirit but do not take the time to study His part of the Trinity. As Peter Wagner concludes, "No amount of learning can substitute for ministry done by the operational power of the Holy Spirit."¹²

A good understanding of the Bible and Pneumatology is essential for an active ministry. But while a correct view of what the Holy Spirit is – and isn't – is essential to those who are trying to teach others; it is also important to rely on and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us and reveal to us through Scripture those areas we need to work on through the Spirit's conviction. Ministry is not something that can be done without humbly asking the Holy Spirit for help and guidance.

¹¹ Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 1100.

¹² Wagner, C. Peter. *7 Power Principles I Learned after Seminary*. Minneapolis, MN: Chosen Books, 2014, 25.

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