

The Holy Spirit

Week 3: The Spirit in Creation and the Old Testament -- Genesis 1:1-2; 2

Peter 1:19-21

Go back before the first sunrise. Before there were oceans to catch the light or mountains to throw shadows, before a single bird had ever sung, the earth was, in the Bible's unforgettable phrase, "without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep." Formless. Empty. Dark. And then comes the second verse of the Bible, and with it the first mention of the Person this study is about: "and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." Hovering. The word pictures a bird brooding over its nest, wings spread above something about to come alive. Before God said "Let there be light," the Spirit of God was already on the scene, poised over the chaos like a craftsman leaning over his bench.

That picture should rearrange something in us. The Holy Spirit is not a latecomer to the story, a New Testament addition who first appears at Pentecost. He is there in the Bible's second sentence, present and active when the universe was shaped. Job says it plainly: "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). The psalmist sings it: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host" (Psalm 33:6). Every star you have ever seen, every breath you have ever drawn, has the Spirit's fingerprints on it.

And the Spirit who shaped the world also spoke into it. Across the long centuries of the Old Testament, the Spirit of God came upon judges and kings, craftsmen and shepherds, and above all upon the prophets. David said on his deathbed, "The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). Peter pulls back the curtain on the whole prophetic age in one sentence: "no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Carried along, the way wind fills a sail and carries a ship. When Isaiah thundered and Jeremiah wept and Micah named the little town of Bethlehem seven hundred years early, the breath behind the words was the Spirit's.

Which means something wonderful about the book sitting in your lap. Your Bible is not humanity's best guesses about God collected over centuries. It is the voice of the same Spirit who hovered over the dark waters, a lamp shining in a dark place, Peter calls it, more sure than even the most dazzling experience. This week we trace the Spirit's work from the first verse of Genesis through the last of the prophets, and we learn to hold Scripture the way you hold something Spirit-given: with confidence, with reverence, and with both hands.

Group Discussion: Many Christians think of the Holy Spirit as belonging almost entirely to the New Testament. Before this study, how would you have described what the Spirit was doing between Genesis 1 and the Gospels? Why do you think His Old Testament work gets so little attention?

Personal Reflection: Peter says the prophetic word is “a lamp shining in a dark place” and urges us to pay attention to it. Be honest: how much weight does the Bible actually carry in your daily decisions compared with feelings, advice, and culture? What would it look like for the lamp to get more of your attention this week?

Read Genesis 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:19–21

Study Questions

1. Genesis 1:2 says “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” before the first word of creation was spoken. What does the Spirit’s presence at creation, together with passages like Job 33:4 and Psalm 104:30, teach us about who He is and how far back His work reaches?
2. The Spirit hovered over a world that was formless, empty, and dark, and out of that chaos God brought order, fullness, and light. Where in your life right now do things feel formless, empty, or dark? What does it mean for you that the Spirit of God is not afraid of chaos and has a long history of bringing life out of it?
3. Throughout the Old Testament the Spirit of God came upon specific people for specific work: Bezalel to craft the tabernacle (Exodus 31:1–5), the judges to deliver Israel (Judges 6:34; 14:6), and David as king (1 Samuel 16:13). What do these accounts teach us about how the Spirit worked in that age, and how does His coming “upon” select individuals for tasks differ from what was later promised to all of God’s people?
4. Bezalel was filled with the Spirit not to preach or prophesy but to work with gold, silver, and wood. What does it tell you about God that craftsmanship was Spirit-honored work? How might you offer your own daily work, paid or unpaid, to God this week as something done skillfully for His glory?
5. David said, “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2), and Peter says prophets spoke “as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). What do these passages claim about the origin of the prophets’ words, and why does

“carried along” rule out the idea that prophecy was merely human insight or religious genius?

6. Peter says “no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation” and was never “produced by the will of man” (2 Peter 1:20–21). If the Bible’s words came from God’s Spirit and not from human initiative, what right do any of us have to trim it, soften it, or pick favorites? Where have you been treating part of God’s word as optional?
7. In 2 Peter 1:16–19, Peter says he saw the transfiguration with his own eyes and heard the Father’s voice, and yet he calls the prophetic word “more fully confirmed,” a lamp to which we do well to pay attention. Why would Peter rank the written word of the Spirit above even his own spectacular experience, and what does that teach us about where to anchor our faith?
8. We live in a culture, and sometimes a religious culture, that prizes feelings and experiences over a written word, the spirit of “better felt than told.” Where are you most tempted to let an emotion, an impression, or an experience outvote the Scriptures? What would change if the Spirit’s written word held final authority in that area?
9. Jesus and the apostles treated Old Testament events and words as fully real and fully authoritative, and the New Testament attributes Old Testament Scripture directly to the Spirit (Acts 1:16; 28:25; Hebrews 3:7; 10:15). What do these passages teach about who was speaking through David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and what does that imply about the unity, reliability, and authority of the whole Bible, both Testaments together?
10. Look back across this week, the Spirit hovering over dark waters and breathing through the prophets. The same Spirit’s words are now on your shelf and in your hands. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this truth. What is one concrete change in how you read, trust, or obey the Scriptures that you will make this week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 33:6, the heavens made by the word of the Lord and the breath of His mouth; Psalm 104:30, You send forth Your Spirit and they are created; Psalm 139:7–10, nowhere to flee from the Spirit's presence; Nehemiah 9:20, 30, the good Spirit given to instruct Israel and warning them by the prophets; Acts 28:25–27, the Holy Spirit was right in speaking through Isaiah the prophet