

DEREK PRINCE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

Self-Effacing Servant, Consuming Fire



Part 3/6

Who Is the Holy Spirit?
By Derek Prince

In our study thus far, one truth has become clear: there is a profound sense of mystery surrounding the Holy Spirit. Even so, He has chosen to reveal Himself extensively through the Scriptures. This is the starting point for all of our interaction with the Holy Spirit. What do the Scriptures tell us about Him?

So far in this series, *Who Is the Holy Spirit?*, we have learned that He is the third Person of the Trinity, in which "oneness" and "plurality" are mysteriously combined. Although He is the third Person of the Godhead, He is the first to be referred to individually in Scripture:

> And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

The Bible also reveals that He is eternal, existing from age to age; omniscient, knowing all things; and omnipresent, everywhere at all times. These attributes, which evoke in us a deep sense of wonder, can also produce a deep longing in us to know Him better.

I believe, however, that the primary revelation of the Holy Spirit is contained in His title: He is Holy. This is the standard by which we must judge every message, every manifestation, and every movement that claims to be of the Holy Spirit: Is it compatible with His holiness?

From "Pentecostal" to "Charismatic"

It is a well-known saying that "familiarity breeds contempt." Unfortunately, this adage may also be applied to the things of the Spirit. To a certain extent, a degree of familiarity occurred at some point during the development of the Pentecostal movement.

It was not present when the baptism and the gifts of the Spirit first impacted the Church in the early years of the 20th century. At that time, it was neither fashionable nor popular to be labeled "Pentecostal." There was a stigma attached to that label, and as a result, there was a lack of respect for these significant beginnings of an historic move of the Holy Spirit.

To a degree, this stigma was somewhat a "class" issue. The early Pentecostals, for the most part, were not highly educated, and they often came "from the wrong side of the

tracks." Some of what they did and said seemed foolish, and their concept of holiness was often legalistic.

Over the course of time, much of this negative perception changed—particularly with the advent of the Charismatic Renewal. Substituting the word "Charismatic" for "Pentecostal" somehow seemed to bring in a measure of respectability, making it almost fashionable to be "charismatic." In fact, the word was no longer confined to Christians. (I remember my astonishment the first time I heard the media apply the term to a rather unscrupulous politician!)

The shift to respectability had both a plus and a minus side. On the plus side, the baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit became accessible to the whole Body of Christ. But on the minus side, there developed some ministries and practices to which the word "holy" could no longer be applied. Here are just a few examples:

1. Flippant and irreverent language applied to the sacred things of God.
2. Public ministries motivated by barefaced covetousness, and bolstered by unsubstantiated claims and unfulfilled promises.
3. Bizarre and unseemly manifestations attributed to the Holy Spirit.

That these issues continue to be found in ministries which claim to be Christian does not surprise me. After all, covetousness and self-service are deeply rooted in human nature. What astonishes me, however, is that millions of professing Christians apparently accept such behavior as compatible with the holiness of God. In view of this improper attitude, it is necessary for us to take a fresh look at the Holy Spirit. What kind of person is He?

A Humble, Self-Effacing Servant

Servanthood is part of the divine nature. I can still recall what a shock it was for me when I first realized this truth. Most people today regard being a servant as something to be avoided—something menial and degrading. This attitude has become one of the most corrupting influences poisoning our contemporary culture. Furthermore, it is false. Servanthood did not originate in time, but in eternity; not on earth, but in heaven. Eternally, Jesus the Son is the joyful, willing, obedient servant of God the Father. The Holy Spirit, in turn, is the obedient, self-effacing servant of the Father and the Son. He does not complain of "victimization" or demand His "rights." He perfectly fulfills His appointed role. He is the Servant God!

This truth is beautifully illustrated in the 24th chapter of Genesis, which describes how Abraham commissioned his servant to find a bride for his son, Isaac. There are four unique "types" in this account. Abraham is a type of God the Father; Isaac is a type of God's Son, Jesus; Rebecca is a type of the bride of Christ, the Church.

But what about Abraham's servant? Although never given a name, he is actually the main character in this story! He is a "type" of the Holy Spirit. As a servant, he had one supreme objective: to find the young woman who was to be the bride. Having found her, his task was then to equip and adorn her; and to escort her safely to the bridegroom.

It was for a similar purpose that the Holy Spirit came down to earth at Pentecost. He is here with one supreme objective: to find, equip, and adorn the bride of Christ, the Church. He is the one who will escort her safely through this world and present her to Jesus—a pure and spotless bride.

One main characteristic of the Holy Spirit, like Abraham's servant, is that He never attracts attention to Himself. Here is a literal translation of some of the statements Jesus made about Him:

- He will testify of Me. (John 15:26);
- ... He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak. .... (John 16:13);
- ... He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:14).

More remarkable still, in all the revelation provided for us in Scripture, there is no record that anyone ever addressed a prayer to the Holy Spirit. The pattern prayer Jesus gave to His disciples commences with these words: "Our Father" (Luke 11:2–4). To this, Jesus added His own promise: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). The destination and centerpiece of all scriptural prayer is God the Father. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to help us to reach the Father with our prayers—not to offer us an alternative destination. We are to pray in the Spirit, not to the Spirit (see Ephesians 6:18).

Cause for Concern

In recent years, however, some sections of the Church have deviated from this scriptural pattern. The focus has shifted from the Father and the Son to the Spirit. Many songs—some with little scriptural content—are directed to the Holy Spirit. Often the main emphasis has been on subjective experiences that cater to the ego of the person singing the

song. This subtle shift of emphasis has opened God's people to spiritual dangers which many fail to discern.

We need to keep two basic principles in mind. First, the Holy Spirit never caters to the human ego. Second, the Holy Spirit never attracts attention to Himself. He always directs our focus to Jesus.

Whenever these principles are set aside, the result may be a lot of fleshly excitement and emotional self-indulgence, without any genuine holiness. This can make us vulnerable to a satanic counterfeit and demonic activity. Like the Holy Spirit, we must always focus our attention toward Jesus.

A Consuming Fire

One way in which the Holy Spirit at times manifests Himself is fire. In fact, the last time the Holy Spirit appears visibly in Scripture is as "seven lamps of fire ... burning before the throne ... of God" (Revelation 4:5).

The writer of Hebrews makes a simple, but profound statement:

> For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29)

He does not say that God is like a fire, but that God is a fire. For this reason, "We may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). Not slavish fear, but "The fear of the Lord, [which] is clean, enduring forever" (Psalm 19:9).

The writer of Hebrews is not speaking of God the Father, or of God the Son, but of God the Holy Spirit. He actually is a fire—a consuming fire.

At various points in the history of Israel, the Holy Spirit came down among the people as a fire. One of those times was in the tabernacle in the wilderness, when Aaron had offered all the appointed sacrifices:

> Fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. (Leviticus 9:24)

When the fire came down and the people fell on their faces, they were not simply moved by a spiritual manifestation. They were responding to the presence of God—God the Holy Spirit—who had come down among them as a consuming fire. In His presence, they were physically incapable of standing.

To Purify or to Destroy?

There are, however, two opposite attributes to fire. Fire can be beneficial, but also dangerous. Fire can purify, but also destroy. So, it is with the fire of the Holy Spirit. He can minister God's blessing and favor on those who are obedient. But He can also minister God's wrath and judgment on those who are presumptuous and self-willed.

Immediately after the account of the fire that fell on Aaron's sacrifice in the tabernacle, the record continues:

> Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. (Leviticus 10:1–2).

What a solemn lesson! The same fire that brought God's blessing on Aaron's appointed sacrifice brought instant death to his two sons when they went into God's presence with "profane [unholy] fire."

God has already defined the way in which we are to approach Him: "with reverence and godly fear," (Hebrews 12:28) "... we both [Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit [the Holy Spirit] to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18).

To offer "profane fire" is to approach God with presumption and self-will. It is to come to Him in a spirit that is not the Holy Spirit. It is therefore a matter of vital importance—in fact, of life and death—to recognize the Holy Spirit as He manifests Himself, and to distinguish Him from any other counterfeit spirit.

Two Important Requirements

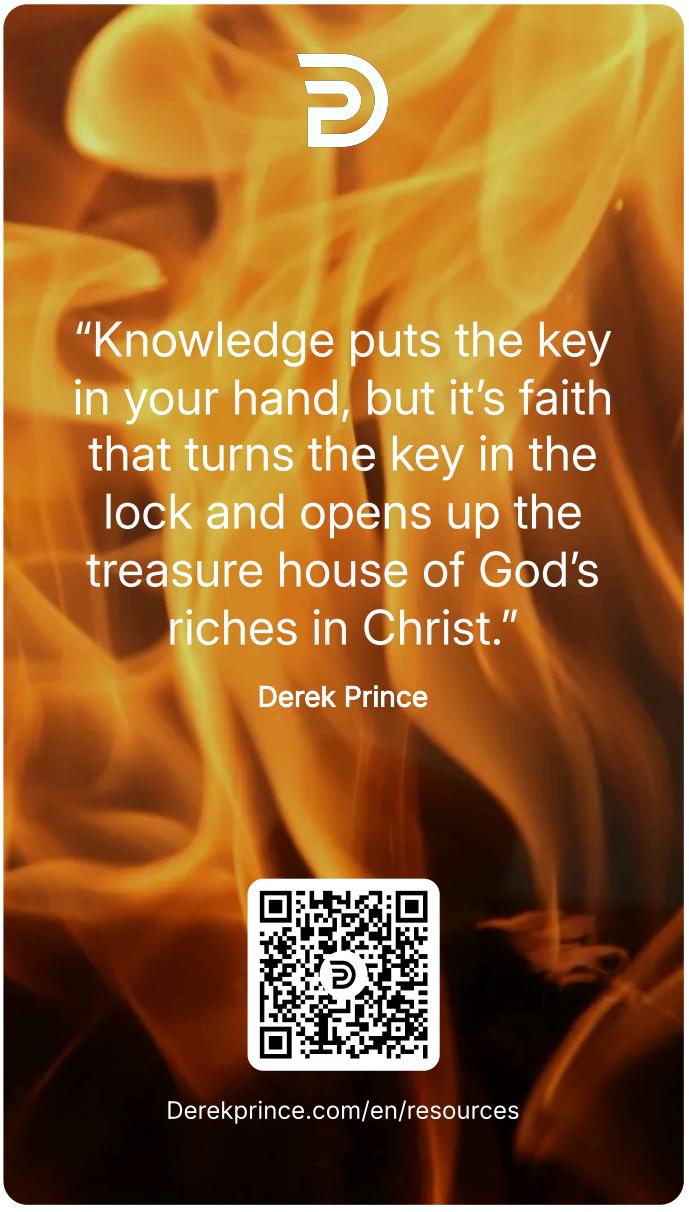
Of all the Israelites, Nadab and Abihu (Aaron's sons) might have presumed to have a special privilege to enter God's presence by a way of their own choosing. By right of birth, Nadab should have succeeded Aaron as High Priest. But there is no substitute for obeying God's Word—neither denominational status, nor dramatic miracles, nor crowd appeal. God does not have a special privileged "elite" who can ignore His requirements without suffering the consequences.

God's judgment on the self-exaltation of Nadab and Abihu is a solemn reminder to us to avoid the familiarity warned against earlier. It reminds us that the Holy Spirit only imparts His blessing to selfless servants like Himself, who meet His requirements. His first requirement is to focus on exalting and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. The second requirement is to carefully follow the directions and attitudes which the Spirit Himself has transmitted to us in the Scriptures.

In closing, let's ask the Lord's help now in meeting these two important requirements: to exalt the Lord Jesus, and to obey the Holy Spirit.

Dear Heavenly Father, I am surrounded in this culture by the spirit of Nadab and Abihu—of pride and entitlement—and I don't want it to creep into my life. Please, Lord, raise a standard of holiness within me by the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit. Teach me to walk humbly before You. Grant me wisdom and discernment—and help me stand strong against the enemy. I open myself fully to Your precious Holy Spirit, that I might serve You better, and encounter You in new and powerful ways. I ask all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Teaching Letter
Transcript: TL-L127-100-ENG
Last Updated: 23 Nov 2026
Website: Derekprince.com/en/resources



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