The Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels: The Equipment of the Servant

Webb, Barry G.


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EXPLORATIONS 5

Spirit of the Living God
Part One

B G Webb
General Editor
THE SPIRIT IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS:

THE EQUIPMENT OF THE SERVANT

Peter Bolt

Synopsis

Following the current trend which takes seriously the fact that the Gospels are narratives, this paper explores the Spirit's role in the Synoptic Gospels.

It is observed that each Gospel associates the Spirit with the commissioning of Jesus, which provides the narrative explanation of the Spirit's role. The Spirit comes upon the Son of God at his baptism, equipping him for the role he will play in the subsequent narrative. The explicit OT quotations relating to the heavenly voice define his messianic role in terms of Isaiah's Servant of the Lord.

An attempt is then made to read the remaining references to the Spirit in each Gospel against this explanation. In some cases this understanding clarifies some previously difficult texts. In other cases it is suggestive, but no doubt needs more careful explanation. This reading of the Spirit's narrative role has significant implications for the understanding of Jesus and of the kingdom, as explained in the final section of the paper.

Exploring the Spirit in the Gospel Narratives

This exploration seeks to apply the emphasis on literary analysis current in Gospel studies¹ to the Spirit motif in the

¹ For this trend see S.D. Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels: the theoretical challenge (New Haven and London: Yale, 1989).
Synoptics by doing two things: (1) Identifying how the role of the Holy Spirit is explained by the text of the Gospels and (2) Exploring whether the remaining references to the Spirit can be read against this textual explanation.

The Spirit and Mark.

The Spirit and the Servant

The early sections of a narrative set up the parameters by which the ensuing story is to be read, educating the reader to read the story correctly. These early sections introduce the major characters of the story and "commission" them, that is, assign them the role which they will attempt to fulfill by the end of the story (whether they succeed or not depends on the type of story).

Most of Mark’s references to the Spirit occur at the beginning and the end of his "commissioning" chapters (chs 1-3), first in the prologue (in John the Baptist’s prophecy, Jesus’ baptism, and Jesus’ temptation, 1:1-13) and then in the Beezebub controversy (3:20-35). The first appearances of the Holy Spirit are therefore in a significant section of the Gospel.

The prologue

John the Baptist’s prophecy (1:7-8) tells of the coming one who will baptise ἐν πνεύματι ὁ ἁγιός (“in the Holy Spirit”). The future tense (“he will baptise”) generates an expectation of fulfillment which, at least in the first instance, can be expected from within the story itself.

It is commonly thought that John’s prophecy refers to the gift of the Holy Spirit imparted to Christian believers, whether in Christian baptism or Spirit baptism.² However, consistent with similar phrases in Mark, ἐν πνεύματι ὁ ἁγιός could also mean “by the authority of the Holy Spirit,”³ and refer not to gift but to means.⁴ In this case the focus is not on the Spirit, but on the baptising that the coming one will do by the Spirit’s authority. This interpretation moves smoothly into the baptism story in which Jesus is endowed with the Spirit, and so can properly be described as acting ἐν πνεύματι ὁ ἁγιός (“in/by the Holy Spirit”).

John expects a coming Stronger One who, endowed with the Holy Spirit, will baptise. Verse 8 reveals that he will baptise the same group of people as were baptised by John. Since this group has already been identified in verse 5, it is clear that when the Stronger One comes he will baptise “the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem”, that is, the people of Israel.⁵

In the baptism story (vv. 9-11) the Spirit descends upon Jesus, identifying him as the Stronger One. However, the real focus of the account is upon the voice from heaven which gives the authoritative explanation of the baptismal events in terms of the allusions to Psalm 2:7, and Isaiah 42:1. The messianic Psalm 2, while talking of the Anointed One, contains no specific reference to the Spirit. On the other hand, Isaiah 42:1 is a messianic passage that explicitly mentions the bestowal of the Spirit. This factor, plus the patent Isarian flavour of Mark’s prologue (v.2, cf. Isa 40:3; v.7, cf. Isa 49:25, 53:12), makes it clear that the Isaiah allusion is the significant one. At the Jordan, Jesus is endowed with the Spirit as the Son (Messiah). However, his Sonship is to be understood in terms of Isaiah’s Servant: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring justice to the nations” (Isa 42:1).

² For the various options see B.M.F. van Iersel, ‘He will baptize you with Holy Spirit’, MK 1:8. The time perspective of baptism *, Text & Testimony: Essays in Honour of A.F.J. Klijn (T. Baarda and others, eds; Kampen: Kok, 1986), 132-141.
The coming of the Spirit is therefore not simply described, but explained. From this moment on, the Spirit theme cannot be understood as Jesus' "empowerment and inspiration" in general, for the text has offered a specific explanation of what he is empowered and inspired as. The Spirit comes upon Jesus and thereby authorises and equips him as the Servant of the Lord. Of course, the text is at liberty to modify this explanation if it likes, but until there are clear textual indicators that such a modification is required, this explanation will naturally guide the reading of subsequent references to the Spirit.

Although the temptation scene (vv. 12-13) has more connotations than simply those aroused by the Servant, we should note that the desert is the appropriate place for the Spirit to take the Servant, since Isaiah presented his ministry to Jerusalem as "a new exodus ... a new march on the promised land from the wilderness." 6

The Beelzebub controversy (3:22-30)

At the end of the commissioning chapters, Jesus openly clashes with his opponents (3:22-30). He finishes by warning the Jerusalem leaders (v.22) about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (v.29). It is clear from Mark's explanation (v.30), that this consists of radically misreading Jesus' source of authority. This much is generally recognised.

However, from the prologue we know that the Holy Spirit's role is associated with Jesus as Servant. This then explains Jesus' choice of the riddle of the strong man (v.27; cf. Isa 49:25; Isa 53:12; Mark 1:7). It also explains the threat of no forgiveness (v.29). The Jerusalemites had gone out to John hoping to find forgiveness (1:4-5), 7 and he had promised them the Stronger One who would baptise Jerusalem. Once the

Servant has arrived, if Jerusalem fails to recognise his ministry, then they will miss out on the forgiveness he brings. The blasphemy against the Spirit is the failure to receive Jesus as the long awaited Servant-Messiah.

On either side of the Beelzebub incident, we find the story of Jesus' family seeking to contain his "madness" by taking him home. They too have failed to recognise that the Spirit has "come upon him", and their desire to take him home is a potential reversal of his Servant vocation. Nevertheless, Jesus remains the faithful Servant, 'choosing' to remain amongst those who seek to do God's will (v. 35).

Thus the commissioning chapters plainly associate the Spirit with Jesus. The Spirit designates Jesus the Servant-Son who has a mission towards Jerusalem. This is a divine mission. So to attribute it to Satan, or to madness, is to risk speaking against God and his purposes. The Servant's ministry can be opposed only at the peril of missing out on the forgiveness he brings, and so being left with eternal sin. The implicit recommended option is to be associated with him in his mission, that is, to do the will of God. 8 However, the commissioning chapters close with the expectation of his baptising activity (by now clearly linked to forgiveness) still outstanding.

The Coming Baptism (10:38-39)

In the middle chapters of Mark, Jesus exercises the role of the Servant, in the context of a blind, hard-hearted Israel (Mark 4:12; 7:1-23; 10:5a; cf. Isa 6:9; 10:29; 13:19; 42:16ff.). His disciples hover between following the Servant in doing God's will, and continuing to share in Israel's blindness (4:24; 40; 7:18; 8:14-21). The climax of this section is the explanation of the Servant's coming death in terms of Isaiah 53, the famous ransom saying (10:45).

7 Rather than bestowing forgiveness, John's baptism of repentance prepared for the coming of forgiveness (εἰς δὲσπέραν ἰκανον, "with a view to forgiveness").
8 The study of what it means to do God's will in Mark increases the connection with the Servant, for it means (for Jesus) to go to the cross and suffer for many. See J.R. Donahue, "A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark", JBL 101/4 (1982), 563-594.
In this climactic Servant context, Jesus finally speaks of the baptism which John had promised he would perform (10:38-39), combining it with the image of drinking "the cup" of God's wrath destined for Jerusalem (another allusion to Isaiah's Servant context; cf. Isa 51:17ff). In Mark 10:35-45 both images are plainly associated with the Servant's death as a ransom for many. The cup image sustains the link, through the last Supper and Gethsemane, to the crucifixion (14:23-5, 36). In this way, the expectation generated by John's prophecy finds its narrative fulfilment in Jesus' death. It seems that the baptism of Jerusalem, by the authority of the Spirit, will be when Jesus dies as a ransom for many.

The Spirit and the disciples?

There are two places where the Spirit appears to be associated, not with Jesus as the Servant, but with the disciples. I will suggest that it is possible that both these references can be read against the earlier explanation which associates the Spirit with the Servant.

The Spirit is the speaker (13:11)

In the "apocalyptic discourse" of chapter 13, Jesus prepares his disciples for the opposition and conflict that will be a part of their future. In this setting they are promised the help of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 11 of this chapter is usually interpreted as a promise that the disciples will receive illumination from the Holy Spirit at the time of their need, supplying the words needed for their witness or defence. But if so, it is a new departure for the narrative, which has so far linked the Holy Spirit only to Jesus as the Servant. There is no new explanation offered to signal such a departure and, although this interpretation may well make sense to a post-repentant perspective, it is difficult to see what the disciples would have made of it at the time when they first heard Jesus' words.9

This explanation appears to construe the phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὀρᾷ ("in that hour") as a part of the preceding subjunctive clause ἵνα ἔν αὐτῷ ἢμιν ("whatever is given to you"), which is then taken in a future sense. However, the text has an ambiguity that calls for careful reflection. It is possible to construe ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὀρᾷ ("in that hour") not with what goes before, but with the following imperative: "In that hour, say this..." There are several advantages to this reading:

a. It allows the phrase ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὀρᾷ ("in that hour") to be taken with a following verb, as in the numerous OT prophetic predictions introduced by "in that day..." This language fits extremely well into the apocalyptic context of Mark 13.10

b. It yields a nicely balanced structure, consisting of a time reference and an imperative on both sides of the ἀλλά ("But") which introduces the pivotal line of the saying, namely, ἵνα ἔν αὐτῷ ἢμιν ("whatever might be given to you"). This balanced section is then followed by an explanatory clause:

καὶ ὅσον ἥκωσιν ἢμισὶ παραδόθητε, and whenever they

μη προμεριμνάτε πτι lead you, arresting.

ἀλλα ἵνα ἔν αὐτῷ ἢμιν, Don't worry what you

ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὀρᾷ might say.

τοῦτο λαλεῖτε But whatever might be
given to you

οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ἢμεῖς, oi λαλοῦντες For you are not the ones

ἀλλα τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον speaking

But the Holy Spirit

9 Although John 2:22 shows that this is not an insurmountable problem.
10 v. 24; also cf. v. 21, 28. The prophetic examples are too numerous to list, but see, e.g., Isa 5:20; 3:18; 4:2; 7:20, 21, 25; 10:20 etc; also in Jer, Ezek, Hos, Joel, Zec 12-14, Amos, Obad, Mic.
The Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels

The willing Spirit (14:38)

Commentators almost unanimously explain 14:38 as a reference to the spirit resident in the disciples, whether their own human spirit (cf. 2:8, 8:12) or the Holy Spirit imparted to them. But this too can be read, with good contextual support, as a reference to the Holy Spirit who is upon Jesus. He is the only bearer of the Spirit in the story so far, and certainly the only willing Spirit in the garden (Mark 14:36). The disciples on the other hand, are examples of the flesh—humanity in all its weakness. Jesus knows the strain of this hour, and he assures them that although their flesh is weak, he is willing to bear with them through this last trial. He has adequately prepared them for it (cf. 13:11); all they need to do is watch and pray (13:35-7). This saying is, therefore, an encouragement to stick with him to the end and not to give in because of their natural human weakness.

The Spirit and the Suffering Servant

Although 14:38 is the last reference to πνεῦμα ("spirit"), some find a "Markan Pentecost" in 15:37, 39, by taking the word ἐκπνεύω ("expire") as Jesus giving the Spirit. But this verse is...
hard pressed to be a Pentecost, anticipatory or otherwise. However, it does form a narrative inclusio with 1:9-11. Whether ἐρχεῖται signify Jesus giving up the Spirit, or merely expiring, it amounts to the same thing: this is the moment when Jesus dies. What began with the Spirit equipping him as Servant, ends with the final expiration when his ministry as the Suffering Servant is over.

Conclusions: Spirit and Servant in Mark

In conclusion, the references to the Spirit in Mark can be reasonably read against the background explanation of the role of the Spirit given in 1:9-11, namely, that the Spirit equipped Jesus for his role as the Servant of the Lord. Even though this ministry fell largely on deaf ears, blind eyes and hard hearts, his role was to suffer and die on behalf of Jerusalem. This was their baptism in the Spirit.

The Spirit and Matthew

Birth to temptation

Matthew opens with two perspectives on Jesus’ origins (1:1, 18). After giving his human connections with the Messianic line (vv. 1-17), the story then emphatically informs us that Jesus’ conception was due to the Holy Spirit (vv. 18, 20).

No clear explanation for this activity of the Spirit is offered at this stage. The angel’s word to Joseph (v.20) suggests that the unusual conception signifies a heavenly origin for the child. Matthew’s explanation in terms of “Emmanuel”, “God with us” (vv. 22-23), perhaps hints at an even greater significance. But these vague notions await the clarification given by the heavenly voice at the baptism (3:17). Here Jesus’ considerations it as an intended paronomasia because it is an unusual word.

For the details see S. Motyer, “The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?”, NTS 33/1(1987), 155-167. Also van Iersel, “Time Perspective”, the connection of Jesus’ baptism with his death has often been recognised.


15 This promise is also in keeping with Isaiah’s Servant expectations: J. D. W. Watts, Word Biblical Themes: Isaiah. (Word, 1989), 44-46. The “two-edged sword” (v.12) may well be an allusion to Isa 41:16.

16 This is the explanation for the two nouns (“Spirit” and “fire”) having only one preposition. Cf. also the double edged nature of Emmanuel in Isaiah 7, who was a sign of both judgment and salvation: W. Dumbrell, “The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah”, Tyb 36 (1985), 117.


18 The two uses of τινὶ ἐπὶ ("and behold") in vv.16-17 draw particular attention to the heavens being opened, and the voice from heaven,
led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted as the Son of God (vv. 3, 6), it is not surprising to find him resisting "the temptation to be Messiah in any other way than that of the obedient Son and Suffering Servant".20

The pre-resurrection mission to Israel

The significance of Beelzebub

The next major teaching on the Spirit occurs in chapters 9-12. These chapters give obvious prominence to the Beelzebub controversy. Two earlier references to it (9:34; 10:25) guide the story towards towards 12:22ff., where the detailed account will be given.

We first hear of the Beelzebub charge after Jesus gives sight to the blind and speech to the dumb (9:27-34; cf. Isa 35:5-6). His action elicits wonder from the crowds (v.33), and the Beelzebub charge from the Pharisees (v.35). Jesus then responds to this lack of leadership in Israel (9:36) by requesting prayer for more workers for the harvest of Israel which now stands ready (9:35-38; cf. 3:7-12). The mission discourse follows closely (10:1-42) and, given 10:25, appears to be Jesus' response to the Beelzebub charge.

Help for the disciples? (10:19-20)

The twelve are given authority to be involved in Jesus' mission to Israel (vv. 5-6, 23, 34). This mission will be cut short by the coming of the Son of Man (v.23) which, I take it,

which once again quotes Isa 42:1. Three things improve the connection with Isa 42:1. Firstly the change to "This is" is not simply for an objectifying purpose; it brings the quote more into line with the "here is" of Isa 42:1. Secondly, it is significant that it is the "Spirit of God", as in Isa 42:1. And thirdly, the preposition is also brought into line with Isa 42:1 (di' aπó, "upon him", v.16). Hill, 'Son', 8-9. Hill also points out that Matthew repeats this quote at the transfiguration; yet more evidence that the Servant theme is his special concern.

refers to Jesus' resurrection.21 They will experience opposition like that which Jesus experienced (v.25) and see deep division within Israel (vv. 34-39). As predicted by John (3:7-12), the Servant's ministry brings a separating judgment to Israel (vv. 21, 34-42). In this pre-resurrection mission context, the disciples are promised help from the Holy Spirit (vv. 19-20). 22

Although usually taken as the promise of God's special help in the situation of being on trial for the faith, it may be possible to read this saying in the same way here as suggested for Mark 13:11, given the same ambiguity. The situation of speech may well be in the future (bdi'ησται, "will be given"), but it is obvious that there is no need for a future giving of the words to be spoken, for Jesus has already told them what to say (10:7). In view of this, 10:19-20 encourages them to be faithful to the commission they have received from Jesus. There is no cause for worry—they are not the speakers, he is. Despite the harvest being ready, Israel has misread the Servant, and will continue to misread his disciples. Nevertheless, they are authorised by the Spirit (v.20; cf. 10:1, 40)23 and they only need remember to speak the message (vv. 16-20, openly and without fear (vv. 26-31).

A second Servant quote (12:15-21)

Just prior to giving the details of the Beelzebub story,

21 It is not the place to argue this at length. In the first instance, this saying would have been understood in terms of the apocalyptic day of judgment (Dan 7: 13-14)—"the last day" expected in the OT. However, following the line set by J. A. T. Robinson, T. F. Glasson and others (see J. A. T. Robinson, The Second Coming - Mark xiv.62, Expl 67/11 (1956), 33-34) it makes most sense of the Son of Man theme in the Gospels to consider this coming "last day" to be Jesus' resurrection-ascension-exaltation.

22 If Matthew was one of Mark's first readers, then his relocation of Mark 13:11 into the pre-resurrection Israel mission context adds weight to the interpretation of that saying offered here.

23 ἐν/βυ πνε παῖς ("in/you") need not be taken as indwelling language for there is no indication that this has occurred, or that it will until Pentecost. The use of ἐν πνε παῖς is an analogy with 10:1; they are now the authorised representatives of the Father.
Matthew strengthens his Servant emphasis by quoting at length Isaiah 42:1-4, at what is a crucial narrative location (12:15-21). This clearly reinforces the baptismal explanation that Jesus is the Servant, and that the Spirit is what equips him for this role. 

The Servant's mission is to bring justice to the nations (v.20). As Isaiah had foretold, the Servant's ministry will eventually issue in a victory that will have consequences beyond Israel, to the nations. But, in the meantime, his pattern is that of the unobtrusive Servant, upon whom God has put his Spirit (12:18). The Beelzebub controversy (12:22ff.)

An obviously significant part of Jesus' reply to the charge that he operates by Beelzebub is his counterclaim: "If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (12:28).

24 "It would be difficult, in my view, to overestimate the significance of the citation of Isa 42:1-4 in Matt 12:18-21. Not only does it express Matthew's conception of the role of Jesus as Servant and the nature of his ministry in obedient lowliness and mercy: it contributes to the structuring of all of chapter 12 by the evangelist, and, as we have hinted, what it says about Jesus' vocation as Servant underscores much else that comes to expression in various parts of the Gospel." H. Hill, "Son", 12.

25 Far from subsuming Servant under Son, Matthew omits Mark's reference to Son (cf. Mark 3:7-12) and "here makes the servant motif pre-eminent" (Carson, 286 with Hill).


27 Hill, "Son", 10; following Copes. Thus the significance of chs 9-12 is to establish Jesus as the Spirit-appointed Servant in spite of Israel's rejection of him.

28 "Kingdom of God" is an equivalent for Matthew's preferred term, "kingdom of Heaven". Here it is used as a suitable contrast to Kingdom of Satan in v. 26. Contrast Pannen: "kingdom of Heaven", at this point, who distinguishes them, understanding the kingdom of God as a general concept—God's reign.

29 For example: "What is certain is that Jesus knows that his exorcisms, performed by the Spirit of God, prove that the Kingdom age has already dawned" (Carson, 288). This verse (and its counterpart in Luke 11:20) has borne most of the entire burden for this understanding of the kingdom.

30 E.g., "Where the Spirit is, there is the Kingdom." J. D. G. Dunn makes much of this (for example in "Spirit and Kingdom", Expl. 32 [1970-71], 36-44), although it was coined in 1886 by H. Gunkel. See M. M. B. Turner, "The Significance of receiving the Spirit in Luke-Acts: A survey of Modern Scholarship", Tr and T 2/2 (1981), 135. Carson, 289, rightly argues that Dunn has overstated his "Spirit Christology" and provides a critique.


32 "The logic of the placement of chs 54 and 55 suggests that all this has been achieved by the suffering and death of Yahweh's Servant... He will do nothing less than usher in the new era, the age of the new creation." Dumbrell, "Servant," 113.
remains is for the Servant to complete his course by his suffering and death, and then the kingdom of God will arrive.

Thus ἐφάνετο ("has come upon", NIV) is to be understood in the same sense as ἔγενε, ("has drawn near", cf. 3:2; 4:17) meaning, not that the kingdom has arrived in any definitive way, but that it is imminent indeed now that the Servant has begun his ministry. The saying does not talk of the actual arrival of the kingdom, but instead underlines the inevitability of the Kingdom's arrival now that the Servant of the Lord has come to Israel.

The blasphemy against the Spirit (12:31-32)

This reading also solves the puzzle of Matthew's version of the blasphemy against the Spirit. Usually, in verse 32, "the Son of Man" is understood to be referring to Jesus in his earthly ministry, and "the Holy Spirit" to be referring to the post-resurrection situation. However, if the Holy Spirit is explained in relation to Jesus as Servant, then this usual understanding should be reversed. The Son of Man is the still future item (10:23; cf. 12:40), and so a word spoken against him could be forgiven. But the Holy Spirit is already active in the Servant (vv. 28-29), and so there can be no neutrality towards him (v. 30). His opponents need to be warned: a blasphemy such as the one they have hurled at him already, will remove them from the forgiveness he has come to bring (vv. 31-32). If Israel fails to recognize that Jesus is the Servant, then they will be with the chaff and not the wheat in the final harvest harvest (cf. 3:7-12; 6:26; 9:35ff.; 13:3-43).

It seems that "this generation" amongst whom Jesus moves, is especially culpable if it rejects the Servant-Son. It is fruitless and evil (vv. 33-37; cf. 3:7-12; Isa 5:1-7; 3:13-15), and its "idle words" about Jesus (v. 36; cf. v. 24) will bring condemnation. Unless this generation accepts the Servant's ministry now that he stands amongst them by the Spirit of God, there will be no forgiveness for them. This "wicked and adulterous generation" will be roundly condemned at the judgment day (12:38-45; cf. 11:20-24; 16:1-4). In this way, the "fire" of eternal judgment is brought by the "Spirit" through the Servant's ministry. Israel's time has run out because the Spirit has come upon the Servant in "this generation". This generation, therefore, has a special opportunity to repent, before its last state becomes worse than the first (vv. 43-45).

Although there is no equivalent of Mark's baptism saying (Mark 10:38-9), the image of the cup is still prominent (20:22; 26:27, 39, 42), and it is clear that Jesus dies as the Servant (20:28), and that his commission to serve and save his people is fulfilled. on the cross (v. 37). His death is therefore linked to John's promise (of baptism by Spirit and fire), not so much verbally (as in Mark) but thematically. Matthew's passion story contains the same ambiguous references to the Spirit as Mark (26:41; 27:50) and I will pass them by.

33 The expression "must mean that the Kingdom of God has come upon you" prophetically, in anticipation of the future Kingdom which still lies ahead. D. Daube, "The Messiahic Age", Expl. to 12:4-21, 1940-41, p. 572, although his position, too, requires a bit of fine tuning. This is the sense whenever the verb appears in the NT: Rom 9:31; 2 Cor 10:14; Phil 3:16; 1 Thess 4:15, and especially 1 Thess 2:16 which, like Matt 12:28 (Lk11:20), uses the preposition επί ("upon"). D. Daube, The Sudden In Scripture (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964), 35-36, points out the disastrous nature of "being overtaken", as it translates it, by the kingdom of God, (cf. LXX Judg 20:34; 20:42; Eccl 8:14; Dan 4:21, 28).

34 This view then comports well with Matthew's teaching on the kingdom of Heaven, which consistently places the kingdom in the future with respect to Jesus' ministry. Cf. M. Pamment, "Kingdom of Heaven".

35 Jesus does refer to himself in his earthly ministry as the Son of Man (16:20; 9:6; 11:19; 12:8) but also to the unambiguous coming of the Son of Man as an event still future to his earthly ministry. I am proposing a re-classifying of this saying into this latter category.

36 Especially if his age was peculiarly the age of forgiveness, whereas the Servant's time was the age of judgment, cf. 5:6. Chapter 13 will explain further that the Servant exercises a temporary hardening ministry,
The post-resurrection mission to the nations

The last mention of the Spirit is in 28:18-20 as the mission to the nations is launched. The Servant has completed the baptism of Israel, and now his ministry will be extended to all nations. They too will be baptised, only their baptism will not simply be that of the Servant, it will be in the name of 'the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'. Presumably through this means Jesus' commission to be Emmanuel is at last fulfilled ('I am with you always', v.20). But exactly how Jesus will be present is not stated in terms other than this promise.

Conclusions: Matthew

Others have noticed the close link between the Spirit and Jesus in Matthew. This link is explained by Matthew's

The Spirit and Luke

The birth narratives and the Spirit of prophecy

In the birth narratives the Spirit is associated six times with what is often called 'the spirit of prophecy' (1:15, 46, 67; 2:25; 26, 27). Elizabeth (1:41); Zechariah (1:67) and Simeon (2:25, 26, 27) all speak by the Holy Spirit, and this phenomenon is often labelled 'prophetic inspiration'.

John too is announced as a prophet (1:15, 17), although plainly in a class of his own since he is filled with the Spirit from the womb (1:15), and he appears as the last great prophet who comes before the Lord himself (1:17; cf. Mal 4:5).

In each of these cases it is not the bare fact of the Spirit's presence that is the focus. These references do not, therefore, signal the outpouring of the Spirit of the new age: after hundreds of years of prophetic drought. The focus, as with all 'prophetic inspirations', is not upon the means but upon the message. The role of the Spirit is to endorse the speaker with the authority of God, with the consequent requirement that the message be attended to carefully. When the message is attended to it is apparent that these people who speak by the Spirit in Luke's Gospel prepare for the ministry of the Servant. However, the role of the Spirit is not explained by

early narrative (even more clearly than Mark's) in terms of Jesus' role as the Servant of the Lord. Subsequent references to the Spirit can be reasonably read against this textual explanation of the Spirit as that which equips the Servant for his ministry.

1. Those who argue this way have to connect them with Joel 2, and the belief in later Judaism that prophetic inspiration had ceased in the time of Artaxerxes I (the time of Ezra and Nehemiah).

2. They have this preparatory role both within history and within the narrative. John will prepare a people for the coming of the Lord (1:15-17) by preparing his way (1:67-75; cf. Isa 40:3). Jesus is announced both as one who is 'baptised' (1:25) and who will be the Servant (2:29-34).
the Spirit and Jesus

The Spirit associated with Jesus' conception (1:35). It must be noted, however, that the text links the Holy Spirit's activity with Mary, not with Jesus directly. Hence it is reading too much into this verse to say that Jesus was filled with the Spirit from the womb. All that can be said of this description of the Holy Spirit (= the power of the Most High) is that "in conjunction with v. 34, the angel's statement indicates that the child is to be conceived without human agency." This miraculous conception will result in the child being called holy. This is not explained in terms of him being the bearer of the Spirit, but the Son of God ("so the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God"). Thus, even at this early stage it is obvious that the text has a much higher view of Jesus than that he is simply a prophet. No matter how much birth is, therefore, welcomed by those faithful Israelites still awaiting the fulfilment of Isaiah's hopes. Simeon was waiting for "the consolation of Israel" (2:25). Anna and those like her were awaiting for "the redemption of Jerusalem" (2:38).


44. C. B. Craig, Luke, 53; Marshall, 70; Dunn, although distinguishing his own Spirit-Christology from that of the Fathers ("Rediscovering the Spirit" [2], Expt 94/1 [1982], 15) talks here of the Spirit creating Jesus ("Spirit & Kingdom", 38; "Rediscovering the Spirit", Expt 64 [1972-73], 10). Schweizer (Spirit, 3) is happy to talk of creative power, but rejects the notion that a creation/new creation pattern is being alluded to, since he feels that from the beginning Jesus is the one in possession of the Spirit, and that he is therefore not an object of its activity.

45. Considered as equivalents. See Creed, 19f. for early interpretations which distinguished between these two as Holy Spirit vs logos.

46. Marshall, 70, my italics. The use of ἐνσωπάω ("overshadow"), which recalls God's presence in the tabernacle cloud, lends weight to this conclusion.

Preparation

The Baptist

The Baptist gives his prophecy to answer the query of the Jews as to whether he was the Christ (3:15; he has already identified himself as the one who prepares for the Servant, vv. 4-6). The Stronger One will baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire (3:16), once again meaning the fire of the last judgment (vv. 7, 9, 17). Since Luke also wrote Acts, the fulfilment of this prophecy is often taken to be Pentecost. But before jumping to that conclusion, the Gospel must first be allowed to speak for itself.

The Baptism and the Temptation

In 3:21-22, the baptism is played down and the events surrounding the voice from heaven are played up ("opened... descended... came..."). Since it is already explicit that Jesus is God's Son (1:35), the allusion to Isaiah 42:1 perhaps gains some emphasis as the new piece of information which now makes previous hints plain. Jesus, God's Son, is endowed with the Spirit because he is the Servant of Isaiah. Fully equipped by the Spirit, this Son-Servant is led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted (4:3).
In Luke's earliest chapters it is probably true to say that the Servant theme appears to take a subordinate place to the presentation of Jesus as Son of God. This Servant theme really only becomes prominent as Jesus begins his public ministry in Nazareth.

The Nazareth manifesto

In 4:14 Luke reports Jesus returning to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. This enigmatic statement is clarified when Jesus enters the Nazareth synagogue and announces that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me." (4:18).

This "Nazareth Manifesto" is often recognized as not only climactic for the narrative so far, but also programmatic for Jesus' entire ministry, and in particular the narrative to follow. Through the quotation from Isa 61:1-2, Jesus reveals that the Spirit is upon him, not because he is simply a prophet, but because he is the Servant of the Lord. Despite his subsequent rejection (v.22ff.), Jesus has been anointed with the Spirit "to preach good news to the poor ... to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Isa 61:1-2).

### The journey to Jerusalem

As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, the sense of urgency increases. It is the time for the final harvest of Israel to begin (10:2). Jesus sends out the seventy-two to preach the imminence of the kingdom of God (10:9, 11), and they return with joy that the demons are falling before them (v.17). Jesus comments that Satan's downfall is assured (v.18ff.) and then thanks God (vv. 21-22) and "rejoices in the Holy Spirit." (v.21).

This strange expression is not simply a truism (e.g., "Jesus was filled with joy and the Spirit before an inspired saying") but serves to recall the quote at 4:18-19, and hence the relationship between the Spirit and the Servant. In the mission of the seventy-two Jesus sees his Servant ministry being fulfilled as good news is preached to the poor, as prisoners find release from their captivity, as the blind receive sight, and as the oppressed are released. Jesus rejoices that his Servant mission has begun to be successful (cf. vv. 23-24 and Isa 52:15; 60:3), and that some at least (i.e., the disciples) have perceived what is going on (10:21-4).

### The Spirit and the Disciples?

In 11:1 the disciples ask to be taught how to pray and Jesus gives them a prayer which focuses upon God's kingdom.

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49 Because the anointing of Isaiah 61 is "clearly that of a prophet," and because Jesus uses a parable concerning a prophet about himself in 4:23, some have argued that the motif of Jesus as prophet is central here (Marshall, 183). But Dumbrell, "Purpose," 127, calls the speaker in Isaiah 61 "a servant personage". Cf. J. Mullenberg, "Isaiah 40-66" IB V (1956), 706-709: "Its affinities with the servant passages have naturally suggested that the servant is speaking." Despite the fact that this is disputed, it is quite clear that Jesus and Luke considered the relationship obvious. Marshall, 178, identifies Jesus here as 'a figure who is to be identified as the Messiah and the Servant of Yahweh.'
50 Marshall, 433. Note that the strangeness of it has prompted several variant readings.
51 Cf. Marshall, 438. The next series of stories reveal people who fail to rightly perceive what is happening: the scribe (10:25-37) is in the dark about the true way to "justify himself"; Martha (10:38-42) fails to make the right choice, unlike her sister Mary; and "this wicked generation" fails to see the greatness of the one in their midst (11:14-54).
Since the time that Jesus decided to head for Jerusalem, the kingdom has been near, and yet Jesus tells them to keep praying for its coming. A parable follows, encouraging them to pray (whether in a simple sense, or in a persistent manner). Finally, the promises (vv. 9-11) and comparisons (vv. 11-12) provide assurance that these prayers will be answered. In v.13 the answer that is promised is that "the Father in heaven will give the Holy Spirit to those who are asking him".

Now, presumably the content of the praying (v.2)—the asking, seeking, knocking (v.10) and asking again (v.13)—is defined by the kingdom prayer at the beginning (vv. 2-4). It seems, therefore, that the request for the kingdom to come is related to the giving of the Spirit. From a post-Pentecostal perspective this promise could be understood of Pentecost, or even of a personal endowment with the Spirit for all those who ask for it. But in view of the quotes explaining the Spirit in terms of the Servant, cannot this saying too be read from this perspective?

The mention of John the Baptist in v.1 implicitly recalls his prophecy of Spirit/fire baptism which is still outstanding. Is it too much to suggest that John taught his disciples to pray for the fulfillment of this event, especially given the story in 7:18-35 which shows their eager quest for fulfillment? Also, the verbs in vv. 9-10 are in the present tense. Does this perhaps indicate that those who are asking, seeking and knocking are in some sense already receiving, finding and having the door opened to them? In 10:21-24 Jesus rejoiced that God had begun to reveal his Servant ministry to the disciples. Is it that in chapter 11 they are told to keep praying for the coming kingdom, with the assurance that they will be given the Spirit, not in any sense of post-Pentecostal indwelling, but in the sense that the Spirit ministry promised by Isaiah and already glimpsed by the disciples, will eventually be brought to completion for their sake?

Whether there is indeed a relationship of the Spirit to the Servant here is unclear from this passage in itself. However, the least we can say from 11:1-13 is that the Spirit appears to be somehow related to the kingdom. If the relationship is to be explained we will need more information. That information is given in the following story.

The promised Spirit and Beelzebub

The question that has been left hanging turns on how the expected kingdom is related to the expected Spirit. In the very next story, the Beelzebub controversy, this is exactly the issue. As we have already seen in Matthew, so now with Luke, the kingdom is imminent because the Servant is already present. Jesus' reply recalls the Baptist's Servant-orientated prophecy (vv. 21-23; cf. 3:16). The Servant is amongst them, working by "the finger of God", and that means the kingdom of God is just around the corner; their prayers are already on the way to being fulfilled. Since the Strong One is present, he has made the day of judgment imminent. The promised baptism by Spirit and fire is well on its way to completion. Now is the time for repentance without delay and for the disciples to continue to pray.

The Spirit and opposition.

After receiving a scathing attack from Jesus (11:37-52), the leaders of Israel begin to oppose him fiercely (vv. 53-54). This theme of opposition is maintained into chapter 12, and Jesus warns the disciples to be ready for it. They mustn't fear men, but God (vv. 5-7), and must not disown Jesus, or they will be disowned by the Son of Man when he comes with his kingdom (vv. 8-9).

The meaning of Luke's blasphemy saying (12:10) is

52 9:51; 10:9, 11. Notice that the request is for daily assistance in this urgent journey to Jerusalem, which also requires daily commitment (11:13 cf. 9:25), and that the present tense is used, stressing the continuous nature of the activity.

53 See K. Bailey, Poet and Peasant (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 119-141, for the two alternatives.

54 The same arguments for this reading apply here as for Matt 12:28.
clarified by the same reversal proposed for the Matthew saying. At this present time there is no forgiveness for resisting the Spirit who is at work upon the Servant. In this wicked and unperceptive generation who oppose Jesus, the disciples need to remember that his ministry as Servant must be recognised and received. If 12:11-12 can be understood in the same way as suggested for Mark 13:11, then it follows logically that the Holy Spirit is their teacher and that he will teach them what they must say in that hour. They have already been given the message (9:2; 10:9, 11) and he will teach them more about this before too long (eg 12:22-34, 35ff) so they will be well prepared by the time the hour arrives. With this assurance, they need to be ready to face the opposition that will only increase from now on.

As Jesus continues to teach, he urges his disciples to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man (12:35-48), and then he mentions the fiery baptism he still has to undergo (12:49-53). The reference to baptism (v.50) and "fire upon the land" (γόν, v.49) and separation (v.52-53), all refer to the Baptist's promise (3:16-7) that is still outstanding, and whose expectation has been sustained at various points in the story so far. It is obvious that its fulfilment is still in the future, for Jesus is in great distress until it is complete."

Given this connection with 3:16-17, some interpret v.49 as a reference to the Pentecostal Spirit, while still maintaining that v.50 is a reference to Jesus' death. However, both sayings are plainly linked together, and are best taken as two metaphors of the same event, namely, the coming judgment at the cross. Jesus is in great distress because he knows that in Jerusalem he will bring about the new exodus (9:31) and the new covenant (22:20), and this will involve him suffering "the judgment which is to come upon the world". The fact that 3:16 is an obvious retrospection from this verse suggests that, as with Mark, the Baptist's prophecy will find its fulfillment in Jesus' death.

Jerusalem and beyond

Although Luke has no ransom saying in his presentation, Jesus undergoes his baptism in Jerusalem by dying as the Suffering Servant. The same ambiguity exists at 23:46 as in the Matthew and Mark parallels, but in any case the role for which he was equipped by the Spirit has come to an end.

Beyond Jerusalem, once he has risen again, he tells the disciples to wait for "the promise of my Father" (24:49). Although there is no mention of the vocabulary of the Spirit, this is regularly taken as a reference to him. The alternative is that it refers to the promise of forgiveness of sins.

If it does refer to the Holy Spirit, it would refer neither to the promise of John the Baptist (which has already been fulfilled at the cross) nor to a word of Jesus, but to an OT promise (which would be entirely apposite in this context; cf. 24:44, 45), and Joel 2:28-32 is the obvious candidate.

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55 Marshall, 545, finds the connection with what precedes and the line of thought within this unit unclear. On my analysis it is now clear.
56 ycz is best read as "the land", i.e. of Israel. Note that this echoes the misguided Zebedee Brothers (8:51ff), and contrasts with them as well, for Jesus comes with judgment, not on Samaria, but "the land of Israel." (see Morris, 219).
57 Marshall, 545-547; Goldschuys, 366. The event is described as the purpose for which Jesus came into the world (vv. 49, 50, 51), which is too exalted a description of Pentecost. But it is clearly the fact that he came to suffer and die as the Servant of the Lord (4:18-19; 4:34; 5:32; 9:3, 51; 55; 13:23; 22:20).
58 Because this promise is to come upon you, an OT reference to the general distribution of the Spirit is needed, and the promise of Joel 2 fits this criterion.
Everything concerning Jesus has been fulfilled (24:44-47). Now the implications of his ministry must be fulfilled for his disciples. In other words, now that the Servant's ministry is complete, the new age can come, and the sign of the new age is the general distribution of the Spirit. Thus this is a "hinge text", bridging the story of the Gospel and the story still to come in Acts. The movement has been towards Jerusalem and the paschal events; now the movement from Jerusalem to the world begins. This is exactly what you would expect once the Servant's ministry is over, for now he begins to take his light to the nations.

Luke's Gospel, too, explains the Spirit as the equipment for Jesus' ministry. Luke's infancy narratives stressed the filial significance of the Spirit, but from the baptism onwards the Spirit was associated with Jesus' ministry as Servant. Subsequent references to the Spirit can reasonably be read against this textual explanation of the Spirit's role.

Some implications.

If the references to the Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels can be understood in terms of the Son-Servant role of Jesus, certain implications follow.

The Spirit and Christology.

The Spirit in the Synoptic Gospels is a subset of Christology. The Spirit is not explained "in general terms, but is specifically presented as the equipment of Jesus the Son as the Servant. The Spirit upon Jesus does not, therefore, identify him as a prophet. "Spirit-Christology": whether ancient or modern, is a false trail.

Neither does the Spirit upon Jesus identify him as the first "man of the Spirit". Jesus' experience of the Spirit is not presented as archetypical Christian experience, but as the unique experience of the Servant. Although his Servant role does have significant implications as a model of Christian discipleship (e.g. Mark 10:35-45, there is no evidence in the Synoptics that the Spirit designates the disciples for that role. The relationship between the Spirit and the servants of the Servant needs to be explained elsewhere.

There is no, or at most minimal, reference to the Spirit indwelling the followers of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Any "eschatological outpouring" on the analogy of Joel 2 must await Pentecost, after Jesus has received the Spirit a second time, and in a new capacity (Acts 2:33). If some of the references to the Spirit are not read against the explanation offered by Jesus' baptismal scene (which needs far more exegetical justification than it is usually given) there may be some hints of Pentecost in the Synoptics, but their focus is certainly elsewhere. The gift to the disciples that is portrayed by the Synoptic Gospels is not the indwelling Spirit, but the gift of the Servant's life, which alone gives access to the coming kingdom.

The Spirit and the kingdom.

The relationship between the Spirit and Servant allows a more precise understanding of the kingdom.

Spirit and kingdom are not virtual equivalents in the Gospels. The statement, "Where the Spirit is, there is the kingdom," is anachronistic if applied to the Synoptic Gospels. The Spirit comes upon, Jesus and designates him as the Servant. The kingdom follows the Servant's ministry, and is related to the coming of the Son of Man.

The activity of the Spirit in Jesus' ministry does not mean that the kingdom of God had arrived at that time. The Spirit designates the Servant, whose entire ministry prepares for the new age. The kingdom is not inaugurated in his ministry, but by his ministry. That is, once the Servant suffers on the cross, the kingdom of God can arrive. In Gospel
Explorations further


2. The view of the Spirit presented here has explanatory power to solve several exegetical puzzles. Does it create other exegetical problems? If so, can these be solved?

3. If Jesus' death was the baptism in the Spirit promised to the people of Israel, are the Gentiles also included? If so, how?

4. What implications does the relationship between Spirit and kingdom in Jesus' ministry have for a modern understanding and experience of the Spirit and the kingdom?

Conclusion

This exploration has discovered that the Gospel narratives offer a clear explanation of the Spirit's narrative role. The OT quotations from heaven when Jesus is anointed with the Spirit firmly link the Spirit with Jesus' messianic "Son of God" role understood in terms of the Servant of the Lord.

Despite the fact that further reflection is no doubt required at several places, the remaining references to the Spirit can conceivably and fruitfully be read against the backdrop of this textual explanation. If the contours of this exploration are largely correct, this view of the Spirit as the equipment of the Servant has fruitful exegetical results at several points and helpful implications for the understanding of Jesus and the kingdom.