

“Spirit” and “Paraclete” in the Gospel and Epistles of John

Greek	English	Mt	Mk	Lk	John	Acts	Paul	Heb	Cath	1Jn	2,3Jn	Rev	NT
πνεῦμα	spirit, breath, wind	19	23	36	24	70	146	12	13	12	0	24	379
πνεῦμα ἅγιον	Holy Spirit	5	4	13	3	41	15	5	3	0	0	0	89
πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας	Spirit of Truth	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
πνευματικός	spiritual	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	2	0	0	0	26
πνευματικῶς	spiritually	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
παράκλητος	Paraclete (Advocate, Comforter, Consoler)	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
παρακαλέω	to call to one's side; to comfort, console	9	9	7	0	22	54	4	4	0	0	0	109
παρακλήσις	appeal	0	0	2	0	4	20	3	0	0	0	0	29

A) In the New Testament, “pneuma” can refer to many different things:

- *something divine*: the Spirit of (our) God, Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of your Father, Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead; the Spirit of His Son, Spirit of Jesus, Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit of God, Spirit that is from God, Spirit of Truth, eternal Spirit; seven spirits of God (Rev)
- *something demonic*: evil spirit, unclean spirit, demonic spirit, foul spirit, spirit of an unclean demon, spirit of error, spirit of cowardice, spirit of divination, spirit of slavery, spirit of the antichrist, spirit of the world, sluggish spirit
- *something human*, but coming from God: spirit of adoption, spirit of faith, spirit of gentleness, spirit of glory, spirit of grace, spirit of holiness, spirit of life, spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline, spirit of prophecy, spirit of wisdom and revelation, spirit of your minds, spirits of the prophets, spirits of the righteous, spirit of Elijah
- *something in nature*: wind, moving air, breath

B) The Gospel and Letters of John have some interesting and significant usages of the Greek word *pneuma*:

- “Pneuma” can refer to “wind” (John 3:8); the animating force of human life (3:6); Jesus’ own life force (11:33; 13:21; 19:30); something Jesus gives the disciples (20:22); something that comes from God (1:32-33; 3:5-8; 15:26)
- The phrase “Holy Spirit” is *rarely* used in John (only 3x), in contrast to its frequent use in Luke and Acts
- Yet the phrase “Spirit of Truth” appears only in John (14:17; 15:26; 16:13) and 1 John (4:6), nowhere else in the NT
- In the Fourth Gospel, the “Holy Spirit” is present near the *beginning* (Jesus’ baptism; 1:32-33), the *middle* (the Last Supper discourse; 14:26), and the *end* (the first appearance of the resurrected Jesus; 20:22)
- It might seem curious that the Spirit is not mentioned already in the Prologue; yet the “Logos” in John 1:1-5 has much the same role as the “Spirit” in the creation accounts of Gen 1-2

C) John gives the Holy Spirit an unusual but highly significant title, “Paraclete”:

- The Greek verb παρακαλέω (*parakaleo* - “to call to one’s side”) occurs often in the NT, esp. the letters of Paul; but the derived noun *parakletos* occurs only in John and 1 John
- Outside of the NT, *parakaleo* and *parakletos* are used mostly in juridical/courtroom contexts
- The Holy Spirit is “another Advocate” (John 14:16), implying that Jesus himself was the first “Advocate” (cf. 1 John 2:1); thus, the Paraclete does many of the same things that Jesus said and did

D) The Spirit/Paraclete has several different roles or functions according to John’s Gospel:

- As a companion, to be with the disciples “forever,” after Jesus is gone (14:16-18; cf. 1 John 3:24; 4:13)
- As a teacher, who will “remind” the disciples of Jesus’ own words and teachings (14:26)
- As a legal witness, who will give “testimony” to the disciples and the world about Jesus (15:26)
- As a judge, who will “convict” (or “convince”?) the world “about sin and righteousness and judgment” (16:8-11)
- As a revealer, who will “guide” the disciples to the “truth” about God and Jesus (16:13-15; cf. 1 John 5:6-8)

E) Yet the relation of the Spirit/Paraclete to God and to Jesus is complex. Reflect and discuss:

- Is the Paraclete sent by the Father (John 14:16; 14:26) or by Jesus himself (15:26; 16:7)?
- Why can the world not “receive” the Spirit/Paraclete (14:17)?
- Why can the Spirit/Paraclete not be sent until after Jesus’ departure (16:7)?
- What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins (20:21-23)?



“Spirit” and “Paraclete” in the Gospel and Epistles of John (NRSV texts)

Gospel of John:

1:32-34 – And John (*the Baptist*) testified, “I saw the **Spirit** descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the **Spirit** descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the **Holy Spirit**.’ 34 And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

3:5-8 – Jesus answered (*Nicodemus*), “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and **Spirit**. 6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the **Spirit** is **spirit**. 7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ 8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the **Spirit**.”

3:31-34 – The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks about earthly things. The one who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his testimony. 33 Whoever has accepted his testimony has certified this, that God is true. 34 He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the **Spirit** without measure.

4:21-24 – Jesus said to her (*the Samaritan*), “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. 22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. 23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. 24 **God is spirit**, and those who worship him must worship in **spirit and truth**.”

6:61-63 (*end of Bread of Life discourse*) – But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, “Does this offend you? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the **spirit** that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are **spirit and life**.”

7:37-39 (*in Jerusalem*) – On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 Now he said this about the **Spirit**, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no **Spirit**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

11:33 – When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in **spirit** and deeply moved.

13:21 (*after the foot washing*) – After saying this Jesus was troubled in **spirit**, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

14:14-17 – “If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. 15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another ADVOCATE**, to be with you forever. 17 This is **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

14:25-26 – “I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But **the ADVOCATE, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name**, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

15:26-27 – “When **the ADVOCATE** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.”

16:7 – “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, **the ADVOCATE** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”

16:12-15 – “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When **the Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

19:30 – When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up **his spirit**.

20:21-23 – Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the **Holy Spirit**. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

First Letter of John:

2:1-2 – My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an **ADVOCATE** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

3:24 – All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the **Spirit** that he has given us.

4:1-3 – Beloved, do not believe every **spirit**, but test the **spirits** to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the **Spirit of God**: every **spirit** that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every **spirit** that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the **spirit of the antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world.

4:6 – We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the **spirit of truth** and the **spirit of error**.

4:12-13 – No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his **Spirit**.

5:6-8 – This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the **Spirit** is the one that testifies, for the **Spirit** is the truth. 7 There are three that testify: 8 the **Spirit** and the water and the blood, and these three agree.