

# The Holy Spirit

## Introduction

1. The two main areas of our study are the *nature* and *work* of the Holy Spirit. It is a failure to understand such that has resulted in many of today's erroneous beliefs and practices.
  - a. Some think of the Holy Spirit as some vague, impersonal force rather than a personal being and a member of the Godhead.
  - b. Many today believe that the Holy Spirit continues to work miracles and enables people to speak in tongues, as in New Testament times.
  - c. The Holy Spirit is believed by many to work directly upon the heart to bring the sinner to God without the need to hear the gospel.
  - d. There is also the question of *how* the Spirit dwells in us – whether by a personal indwelling or by means of the word of God.
2. The aims of this lesson are to (i) bring us to a clear understanding of the nature and work of the Holy Spirit as taught in God's word, and (ii) address and correct common misconceptions in regards to the Spirit's nature and work.

## I. Alternate Titles and Descriptions, and Definition

- A. The number of actual references in the Bible to the Holy Spirit exceeds by far the number of times the expression appears. There are only 3 appearances of the expression *Holy Spirit* in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10, 11) and approximately 90 in the New Testament. Let us consider some of the other names and descriptive titles of Holy Spirit.
  1. The Spirit of God – Genesis 1:2; Romans 8:9.
  2. The Spirit of the living God – 2 Corinthians 3:3.
  3. The Spirit of the Lord – Acts 8:39.
  4. The Spirit – 1 Timothy 4:1.
  5. The Spirit of your Father – Matthew 10:20.
  6. The Holy Spirit of God – Ephesians 4:30.
  7. The Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead – Romans 8:11.
  8. The Spirit of Christ – Romans 8:9; 1 Peter 1:11.
  9. The Spirit of Jesus – Acts 16:7.
  10. The Spirit of His Son – Galatians 4:6.
  11. The Spirit of grace, of truth – Hebrews 10:26, John 15:26 cf. 1 Pt. 5:10; Dt. 32:4.
  12. The Spirit of holiness, of life, of glory – Romans 1:4; 8:2; 1 Peter 4:14.
  13. The Helper/Comforter – John 14:26.
- B. Of all these descriptions, the most commonly used is the term *spirit*; a translation of two Hebrew and Greek words used in the Old and New Testaments, respectively. Despite their wide range of meaning, these are the words used by the inspired writers to refer to the Holy Spirit.
  1. Ruach: “breath; air; strength; wind; breeze; spirit; courage; temper; Spirit... The word occurs about 378 times and in all periods of biblical Hebrew” (Vine's).
  2. Pneuma: “primarily denotes ‘the wind’ (akin to pneo, ‘to breathe, blow’); also ‘breath’; then, especially ‘the spirit,’ which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful” (Vine's).
  3. “We have no way of tracing exactly how the minds of the Biblical writers connected the earlier literal meaning of the word with the Divine Spirit... From the notion of wind or breath... came to signify: (1) The principle of life itself; spirit in this sense indicated the degree of vitality... (2) Human feelings of various kinds, as anger... (3) Intelligence... (4) General disposition... The Spirit of God, therefore, as based upon the idea of the *ru<sup>ah</sup>* or breath of man, originally stood for the energy or power of God... as contrasted with the weakness of flesh” (ISBE).
  4. “The word ‘Spirit’ is Hebrew *ruach*, which also the word for ‘wind’ and ‘breath.’ The context determines which is the correct meaning in any given instance. In Gen. 1:2, there is no doubt that the creative activity requires not a wind but a person of God Himself” (Genesis Record, Morris, pg. 51).

## II. The Personality of the Holy Spirit

- A. There are many that contend that the Holy Spirit is merely God’s active influence; an agent or instrument utilized by God to achieve His will. As a consequence, the proponents of this view also reject any notion of the Holy Spirit as a member of the Godhead. This view of the Spirit is shared by a number of prominent religious groups.
1. *“The holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from Himself to accomplish his holy will”* (Reasoning from the Scriptures 1985, pg.81) – **Jehovah’s Witnesses**.
  2. *“In the words of St. John: He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever.’ This Comforter I understand to be Divine Science”* (Science and Health, Mary Baker Eddy, 55:27-29) – **Christian Science**.
  3. *“The Bible reveals the Holy Spirit to be the ‘power’ of God...as well as life force through which He imparts to others, His mind and His very essence”* (David Treybig) – **The United Church of God**.
- B. Nowhere in the Bible is the Holy Spirit called “God’s active force”; nor is there any evidence given in Scripture for arriving at such a conclusion. However, there is an abundance of evidence to the fact that the Holy Spirit possesses personality.
1. What personal attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit?
    - a. 1 Corinthians 2:9-11 –
    - b. Romans 8:27 –
    - c. 1 Corinthians 12:11 –
    - d. Acts 15:28 –
  2. What personal functions are the Holy Spirit said to perform?
    - a. Acts 13:2; 1 Timothy 4:1 –
    - b. John 16:13 –
    - c. Acts 16:6 –
    - d. 1 Corinthians 2:10 –
    - e. John 16:8 –
    - f. Romans 8:26 –
    - g. Luke 2:26 –
  3. How can the Holy Spirit be affected in ways characteristic of a person?
    - a. Matthew 12:31-32 –
    - b. Ephesians 4:30 –
    - c. Acts 5:3 –
    - d. Acts 7:31 –
    - e. Hebrews 10:29 –
  4. What sense would the following verses make if the Spirit is God’s active power?
    - a. Romans 15:13 –
    - b. 1 Corinthians 2:4 –
    - c. 1 Thessalonians 1:5 –
- C. Objection is made to the above on the grounds that these descriptions are a personification of the Holy Spirit and not to be taken literally. In arguing their case, those that object to the personality of the Spirit often point to Romans 5:17 as a so-called proof text.
1. The definition of a personification is, “a figure of speech in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities” (online dictionary).

2. They will cite the passage in Romans and argue that, throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is personified, but in what sense is that “begging the question”?
3. The first rule of interpretation states that “expressions are to be taken literally unless sound evidence forbids.” The second states that “expressions are to be taken figurative when the literal meaning is an impossibility” (from *How To Study the Bible*, Samuel G. Dawson).
4. Explain these two rules in view of the passages attributing personality to the Holy Spirit and the passage from Romans 5.
5. Proverbs chapter 8 is also cited as a proof text. Why is wisdom personified rather than attributed personality?

### III. The Deity of the Holy Spirit and the Godhead

- A. In order to complete our understanding of the nature of the Holy Spirit, we also need to recognize His deity or Godhood. In other words, our knowledge of the Holy Spirit must include recognizing Him as possessing the attributes and characteristics that define God. This obviously raises questions as to the nature of our understanding of God as *one*.
1. Deity/Godhead.
    - a. **Theotes**: “The state of being God, Godhead” (Thayer).
    - b. There is only one occurrence of this Greek word in the New Testament, which is Colossians 2:9 where Vine offers the following comment:
      - c. “Paul is declaring that in the Son there dwells all the fullness of absolute Godhead; they were no mere rays of Divine glory which gilded Him, lighting up His Person for a season and with a splendor not His own; but He was, and is, absolute and perfect God; and the apostle uses *theotes* to express this essential and personal Godhead of the Son”.
  2. What three attributes of God are ascribed to the Holy Spirit as proof of His Godhood?
    - a. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; cp. Psalm 147:5; 1 John 3:20 –
    - b. Psalm 39:7-10; cp. Jeremiah 23:23-24 –
    - c. Hebrews 9:14; cp. Psalm 90:2; 1 Timothy 1:17 –
  3. How do the statements of Peter, in relation to the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira, demonstrate what he understood as to the Spirit being a divine person – Acts 5:3-4, 9?
    - a. “To men so entirely the instruments of the directing Spirit that the lie was rather told to Him: language clearly implying both the distinct *personality* and the proper *divinity* of the Holy Ghost” (JFB).
    - b. “The word ‘God’ here is evidently used in its plain and obvious sense as denoting the ‘supreme divinity,’ and the use of the word here shows that the Holy Spirit is ‘divine.’ The whole passage demonstrates, therefore, one of the important doctrines of the Christian religion that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son, and yet is divine” (Barnes).
    - c. Also compare Matthew 12:28 with Luke 11:20 and notice how the *Spirit* and *God* are used interchangeably.
- B. The consequence of the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit is the Godhead, otherwise called the “Trinity” or the “Three in One”. The doctrine of the Godhead teaches that there is one God existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:
1. The doctrine strongly and undeniably affirms that there is one God; a basic truth of the Bible and one upon which other fundamental truths are founded.
    - a. What did Moses declare to Israel to ward them off from idolatry – Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:28-30?
    - b. How does God Himself reveal this truth to us – Isaiah 44:6, 8, 24; 45:21?
    - c. Is this a fundamental truth for Christians today – 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5?
    - d. What other important truths come from this one understanding – Psalm 51:4; Romans 3:19; 14:12?
  2. It is in recognition of the *oneness of God*, that we understand the Godhead as the co-equal and co-existence of the Father, of the Son, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit; three distinct personalities in complete and immutable agreement.

- a. How do the following scriptures demonstrate the equality of Jesus and the Holy Spirit equally with the Father – Matthew 28:19; Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 13:14?
- b. Is the doctrine of the Godhead, as a plurality of divine beings existing co-equally, unique to the New Testament?
  - 1) Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27 cp. Jn. 1:1-2; Col. 1:15-18; Job 26:13 –
  - 2) Genesis 3:22 –
  - 3) Genesis 11:7 –
  - 4) Isaiah 6:8; cp. Acts 28:25; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:11 –
  - 5) Psalm 110:1; cp. Mark 12:35-37 –
- c. Is the Godhead a plurality of manifestations of God or of three separate persons – Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 13:32; John 8:17-18?
- d. How is the unity of the Godhead to serve as the ideal for the unity among Christians – John 17:20-21; cp. Matthew 19:5; Acts 17:26?

#### IV. The Work of the Holy Spirit

- A. The work of the Holy Spirit must be seen in the context of the different roles of the individual members of the Godhead in respect to the plan of salvation; with the part that each one plays as crucial to our salvation as the other. In general terms, the plan was devised and orchestrated by the Father, executed by the Son, and revealed by the Spirit (Note 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:10-12).
  1. The work of revelation (John 14:26; 16:13-14; cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21; Mark 12:26).
    - a. As under the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit serves the primary function of revealing God's word; that is, communicating through inspiration knowledge from God. The apostles were to be chief recipients of God's truth; other men, prophets, also spoke and wrote from God (Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11). How was Christ's promise to the Apostles fulfilled?
      - 1) Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 33 –
      - 2) Ephesians 3:5 –
      - 3) 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 –
      - 4) 1 Peter 1:12 –
      - 5) 2 Peter 1:2-3 –
      - 6) Jude 3 –
      - 7) 2 Thessalonians 2:14-15 –
  2. The work of confirmation (Hebrews 2:3-4 cp Exodus 4:1-10; cf. Deuteronomy 18:21-22).
    - a. The revelation of God's truth and its confirmation through miracles and signs is something that we see even in Old Testament times, as when God sent Moses to the children of Israel with the message of deliverance. The purpose of miraculous gifts was, therefore, to validate that both the speaker and the message were sent from God; to reject both was to reject God.
    - b. How does Scripture explain this aspect of the Spirit's work and the reason it gives for the cessation of miraculous gifts?
      - 1) John 3:2; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22 –
      - 2) Matthew 10:1, 7-8; Mark 16:19-20; 2 Corinthians 12:12 –
      - 3) Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 33-36, 43 –
      - 4) Acts 8:14-18; Romans 1:11 –
      - 5) 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; Jude 3 –
  3. The work of conviction and conversion (John 15:26; 16:7-8).
    - a. Through the revelation of God's truth, the Holy Spirit would argue and prove man's guilt before God, the offer of righteousness by faith in Jesus, and the judgment to come on those whose sin was not forgiven. It would be through the instrumentality of the word of God being preached that the Spirit executed this work (Matthew 10:20; cf Acts 4:8; 1 Peter 1:12).
    - b. One of the errors of Calvinism is that the Holy Spirit works upon the heart of the spiritually and morally depraved, personally, directly and separately apart from the gospel:

- 1) “*The Holy Spirit, in order to bring God’s elect to salvation, extends to them a special inward call in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith. The inward chance wrought in the sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth...*” (The Five Points of Calvinism, by Steele & Thomas, pg.48).
- c. This Calvinistic view of the direct operation of the Spirit upon the heart of the sinner to produce faith and repentance renders both the gospel ineffectual and runs contrary to the examples of conversion recorded in the Book of Acts.
  - 1) What is revealed in Luke’s accounts of conversions about the *direct* involvement of the Holy Spirit in converting souls?
    - a) 8:26, 29 –
    - b) 10:3, 19-22 –
    - c) 13:2 –
    - d) 16:6-10 –
  - 2) How is the word of God described in the relation to the work of the Spirit by Paul in Eph. 6:17?
    - a) “The revelation given by the Spirit... is the instrument the Holy Spirit uses to convict... mankind of their sins and to persuade them to come to Christ...” (Dunagan).
  - 3) How might the Spirit be seen to be operating through the word in the following instances?
    - a) John 3:5; compare 1 Peter 1:23-25 –
    - b) 1 Corinthians 6:11; compare Ephesians 5:25 –
    - c) 1 Corinthians 12:13; compare Acts 16:31-33 –
    - d) Romans 15:13; compare Titus 1:2-3 –
    - e) Romans 5:5; compare 1 John 2:5 –
    - f) Ephesians 5:18; compare Colossians 3:16 –
4. The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14; Rom. 5:5).
  - a. There can be no doubting the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, as affirmed in the apostolic gospel. The question is *how* He does so; which none of the above scriptures tell us. Perhaps, the following is better way of phrasing the question:
    - 1) Does the Holy Spirit dwell in us in a literal sense in which He bodily inhabits our bodies or in a figurative sense in which language is used to express or signify the intimacy and closeness of relationship?
    - 2) What have we already established concerning the Spirit’s personal nature that would rule out the former?
    - 3) “The Holy Spirit is a “Person” of divine nature. Personality, however, requires individuality, individuality demands locality, and locality necessities and distinction” (Basic Bible Doctrines Part 3, Robert Harkrider).
  - b. In fact, the Holy Spirit is not the One said to dwell in a Christian. Who else is described as dwelling in us and *how* are they said to do so?
    - 1) Ephesians 3:17 –
    - 2) Galatians 2:20 –
    - 3) John 14:23 –
    - 4) 1 John 4:15-16 –
  - b. If the Father and the Son are said to dwell in us as we reflect their characteristics in our lives, as taught in the word of God, can the Holy Spirit not also dwell in us by virtue of us following the dictates of His teaching and lead in all we do, think and say? The following interesting remark is taken from Mark Dunagan’s Commentary on Romans 8:9-10:

- 1) “Specifically 'how' does the Spirit dwell in one? Many advocate a ‘personal indwelling’. And yet, we need to recognize that all of Deity is said to 'dwell' in the Christian... Commenting on John 14:23, Robert Turner says, 'Does this necessitate the conclusion that after we have loved the Lord, and kept His words, then, as a third happening, the indwelling takes place? Could not the love, the obedience, and the indwelling be inseparable?', i.e., doesn't God 'dwell' in the faithful when His word is influencing the way they live?”
- 2) “This verse confirms to me that the ‘in-dwelling’ in the context is to be understood as the person who is allowing themselves to be influenced and regulated by the message from God. For the man that hath the 'Spirit of Christ' in the context is the man who is minding the things of the Spirit, who has his mind set on spiritual things. The man whose God's word has a place in... But if the 'in-dwelling' is personal, something apart from the Word of God, then some serious questions arise”.

### **Conclusion**

1. Much of the confusion concerning the Holy Spirit is a result of a lack of proper and honest studying of the scriptures. The scriptures clearly demonstrate the Holy Spirit to be, not only a personal being, but a member of the Godhead. They also clearly outline the role of the Spirit as Revealer of God’s word through which He wields His power.