

Who Is The Holy Spirit? Pneumatology – The Doctrine Of The Holy Spirit (Also a Look at the Trinity)

"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 19:1-2)

The Holy Spirit is one of the least known and most misunderstood persons of the Godhead. On the one hand there is much emphasis on Him in some "Christian" circles (e.g. Pentecostalism), though not all this attention has been scripturally based. On the other, in order not to be confused or "contaminated", if you will, with some of the "excesses" of Pentecostalism or the Charismatic movement, many otherwise biblical churches have essentially shunned even mentioning His name. Given that every genuine Christian has Holy Spirit dwelling within us (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19), we would be very wise to get to know Him.

Question: Why is studying the doctrines of the Bible important? We may not understand completely all the doctrines or teachings of the Bible (I don't, I'm still learning) but knowing what we believe and why believe is very, very important as Christians. Your faith will be tested, what is it based on? Your faith will be challenged by others – including those who are a part of cults – what do you believe, and why? To grab hold of the critical doctrines of the Bible helps us to know the relevance and reliability of Scripture. It also helps us to get a handle on "true truth" that we might live our lives in the light of God's Word. It really does matter what you believe!

I. The Holy Spirit and the Trinity.

That the Holy Spirit is God is clear from Scripture. But, before we focus on the Holy Spirit, it would be wise to briefly examine the doctrine of the Trinity. As some are very quick to point out, the word "trinity" does not appear in the Bible, yet it is one of the most fundamental of truths, and is clearly taught throughout God's Word. Arguably, it is also one of the most difficult of all doctrines to wrap our minds around, let alone teach or explain; but it is one of the essentials of the Christian faith. For example, if Jesus is not God, then He cannot be your Savior.

The Trinity is a mystery that goes beyond human reason but not against reason, and is known only by divine (God's) revelation (1 Cor. 2:14).

The "*Shema*", the Jewish confession of faith begins with, "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*" (Deut. 6:4) There is one God; and yet throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible we find it clearly articulated that there are three distinct persons that are God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In Gen. 1:1, "*In the beginning God...*", "God" is in the plural form – *Elohim*. Consider also Gen. 1:26, "*The God said, 'Let **us** make man in **our** image, according to **our** likeness...'*" These were all glimpses of what would be revealed in more detail in the New Testament. Consider Matt. 28:19, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the **name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.***"

Consider Acts 5:1-11 - Who were Ananias and Sapphira lying to? A: the Holy Spirit (v. 3), God (v. 4), and "*the Spirit of the Lord*" (v. 9). Here in this text the Holy Spirit and Jesus ("LORD") are clearly identified as God (cf. Phil. 2:10-11).

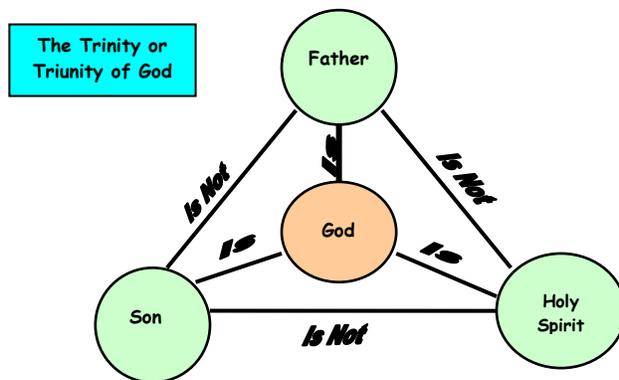
The Trinity is not three Gods (tritheism); it's not three manifestations of God; and it doesn't teach that the Father *created* the Son and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity Defined: "There is one only and true God, but in unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence." - B.B. Warfield. (Also see: *Baptist Faith and Message*, "II. God", pg. 9)

"We worship one God, in Trinity, and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the subsistence." - "Athanasian Creed", cir. A.D. 250.

In his excellent work, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Norman Geisler wrote: "That the three members of the Trinity are distinct persons is clear in that each is mentioned in distinction from the others. The Son prayed to the Father (cf. John 17). The Father spoke from Heaven about the Son at His baptism (Matt. 3:15-17). Indeed, the Holy Spirit was present at the same time, revealing that they coexist. Further, the fact that they have separate titles (Father, Son, and Spirit) indicates they are not one person. Also, each member of the Trinity has special functions that help us to identify them. For example, the Father planned salvation (John 3:16; Eph. 1:4); the Son accomplished it on the cross (John 17:4; 19:30; Heb. 1:1-2) and at the resurrection (Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:1-6), and the Holy Spirit applies it to the lives of the believers (John 3:5; Eph. 4:30; Titus 3:5-7). The Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28), and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son (John 16:14)." ... "God is one in His substance. The unity is in His essence (what God is), and the plurality is in God's persons (how he relates within Himself). This plurality of relationships is both internal and external." (pgs. 731-732)

Below is a visual illustration of the Triune God:



Other passages that speak to the Trinity include: Num. 11:25; Jud. 3:10; Ps. 110:1; Prov. 8:22-31; Isa. 6:3, 8; 48:16; 59:20-21; 63:9-10; Matt. 3:13-17; John 1:1-3, 14; Acts 7:55; Gal. 4:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 13:14; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 5:7.

II. Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is as much a person as God the Father, and God the Son. The Holy Spirit is not an "it", nor is He simply a force or influence. The Greek and Hebrew words for "spirit" mean essentially "breath" or "wind", and came to be used for the unseen reality of living beings, especially God and man. "

Some of the misunderstanding about the role and person of the Holy Spirit is due to the fact that His work is not as visibly prominent or as out front as that of the Father and of Jesus. His work is not to call attention to Himself, but lift up and point people to the Father and Son (John 16:13-14 KJV).

A. That the Holy Spirit is a "person" versus an "it" is clear from Scripture; for example:

1. He has intelligence (1 Cor. 2:10-11, 13; Rom. 8:27)
2. He shows feelings (Eph. 4:30)

3. He has a will (1 Cor. 12:11; Acts 16:6-11)
 4. He is to be obeyed (Acts 10:19-21)
 5. He can be lied to (Acts 5:3)
 6. He can be *blasphemed* (Matt. 12:31)
 7. He can be insulted (Heb. 10:29)
 8. And more...
- B. As the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is also God, coequal with the Father and Son (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). As deity, He possesses all the power and attributes of God, for example:
1. He is omnipresent (Ps. 139; note v. 7)
 2. He is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10)
 3. He is omnipotent (Gen. 1:1-2; Job 33:4)
 4. He is eternal (Heb. 9:14)
 5. He is "Holy" (Isa. 63:10; Rom. 1:4)

In one of the defining passages on the Holy Spirit, John 14:16-17 and 16:7, Jesus speaks of a "*another helper*", which means "another of the same kind", or in this case, someone just like Jesus, who will come and take His place and continue His work. Only God can do that. We see here that the Holy Spirit has the same essence of deity as does Jesus, and is in perfect accord or unity with Him.

III. The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

1. The Holy Spirit was active in Creation, both of the universe and of man (cf. Gen. 1:1-2; Job 33:4).
2. The Holy Spirit came upon people, enabling them for specific responsibilities (cf. Ex. 31:2-5; Num. 11:25; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:6; 15:14-16; 1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13).
3. The Holy Spirit inspired the prophets of God (cf. Num. 11:29; Ezekiel 2:2).
4. The Holy Spirit even came upon non-believers to do His will (cf. Num. 24:2; Jer. 51:11).
5. The Holy Spirit inspired and produced moral living (Psalm 51:10-11).
6. As testified in 2 Pet. 1:20-21, the Holy Spirit of God inspired the Scriptures, OT and NT alike.

IV. The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ

From the pages of Scripture we see the intimacy of the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit. In His humanity, Christ was dependant upon the Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit was the agent of the incarnation of Christ (Luke 1:34-35). Jesus was *conceived* by the Holy Spirit. He had God as His father, and Mary as His mother.
2. The Holy Spirit was at Christ's baptism; so was the Father (Luke 3:21-22).
3. He led Jesus into the wilderness where He was tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1). Mark said He drove Him.
4. Christ was "anointed" and empowered by the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 4:14; 18-21; Acts 10:38).
5. The Holy Spirit was present at the death of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 9:14 & 24).
6. The Holy Spirit was present at the resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4; 8:11; 1 Pet. 3:18-19).

7. Jesus commanded us to baptize in the name of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).
8. Jesus commanded His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 24:49).

V. The Work of the Holy Spirit in our Present Age.

One of the most remarkable of the blessings given to us by Christ was His gift of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us (John 14:16-18). When Jesus uttered these words, this was yet a future event. In Old Testament times the Spirit came on some believers for special enablement or particular tasks. Some, like David, had an intimate relationship with Him, but fellowship was not as personal as it is today, nor was it permanent. On that Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit not only filled the disciples present, but came to abide with them and all subsequent believers permanently. *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."* (Rom. 8:9) (cf. Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19)

Below is just some of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of believers and in the world around us:

1. The Holy Spirit enables men to understand truth (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15; 1 Cor. 2:10ff; Proverbs 1:23).
2. The Holy Spirit exalts and glorifies Christ (John 15:26-27; 16:13-14; Rev. 22:17).
3. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (cf. John 16:7-8).
4. He calls men to the Savior and affects our salvation (John 3:5-8; 16:7-8).
5. At the moment of our salvation, the Holy Spirit baptizes every believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
6. He cultivates Christian character (Gal. 5:16,18,25).
7. He sanctifies the believer, transforming us to be more and more like Christ (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thes. 2:13).
8. He comforts believers (John 14:16-18; 26-27).
9. He bestows spiritual gifts to believers by which we serve God through His church (1 Cor. 12:1-11).
10. It is the Holy Spirit that calls us to ministry (Acts 13:2-4; 20:28).
11. He confirms and seals (or secures) the believer in salvation unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; Rom. 8:16; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).
12. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service (cf. John 4:24; Acts 1:8; 8:29; Rom. 12:11).
13. He aids the believer in their prayer life, interceding on our behalf (cf. Rom. 8:26-27).
14. The Holy Spirit produces "fruit" in the believer (Gal. 5:22-23).

Note: Above based on "Baptist Faith and Message, 2000".

Conclusion and Application:

It is interesting that Scripture never commands us to be "baptized in the Spirit", but we are commanded to be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18; also cf. Luke 4:1; Acts 2:4). *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation [i.e. wasteful, sinful living that leads to ruin; e.g. sin is in control]; but be filled with the Spirit."* What's more, we're commanded, *"Do not quench the Spirit."* (Thes. 5:19); *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* (Eph. 4:30)

It is through the Holy Spirit that we come to know Christ, and by the Holy Spirit's power we live and grow in Christ. Do you know Him?