

Holy Spirit – His Personhood

Introduction

The first order of business, vis-à-vis this study, will be to discuss why we think that God's Holy Spirit should be considered a Person of the Trinity. This idea was more or less nailed down back in the fourth century A.D. (council of Nicea, I believe), but we still see a large contingent of "believers" who maintain that God is a Unity, not a Trinity. And as I pointed out in the course introduction, people have lost their lives over their beliefs on this subject.

So we want to honor those who have preceded us and get it right. Given this, there are two main questions we need answered.

- 1), how do we know that the Holy Spirit is God? And,
- b), how do we know that He has personhood (or personality)?

In the ensuing paragraphs I propose to address these questions.

Holy Spirit as God

There is only one spot in the Bible that speaks of Father, Son and Spirit together. We find this in;

Matthew 28:17-20

¹⁷ When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NASB)

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Seems pretty clear. But many unitarians will argue that this does not confer godhead to those named, that only the Father is God, and that the other two are respectively; God's human Son, and His power. At which point all the Trinitarians begin to bristle.

But every Bible disagreement we've ever encountered has only served to deepen our understanding of who God is, and what He wants of us. Every one. If it weren't for the disagreements over His Triune nature, we wouldn't be where we are today. And so, no, Matthew 28:19 doesn't tell us that the Holy Spirit is God, but there are many more Biblical references that lead us that direction. Take, for instance;

Genesis 1:1-3

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving

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over the surface of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (NASB)

At the very beginning of God's Word we see the close relationship between God and His Spirit. God created everything, and His Spirit moved over it. This word for Spirit, רוח (ruach), means life, or breath, or wind. You can see where naysayers would take this, right?

In New Testament terms we might look at the story of Ananias and Sapphira. Acts 5.

The story goes along the lines that all those in this budding Christian community were living together, were worshiping and praying together, were sharing all they owned. People sold houses and property and came in and laid it before the feet of the apostles there in Jerusalem. Then comes Ananias and Sapphira;

Acts 5:1-6

¹ But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, ² and kept back *some* of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? ⁴ "While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." ⁵ And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. ⁶ The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. (NASB)

When Peter confronts his wife some hours later he asks her;

Acts 5:9

⁹ ... Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? (NASB)

Spirit, as used here, is πνεῦμα (pneuma). It means breath (life), or wind, or spirit.

The story is heartbreaking in that, even at the beginning of the church age we see deception and lies enter into the scene. This couple undoubtedly thought that they could keep some of the price back, maybe as a hedge against later trouble. And they had every right to do so. It was their money! And yet, it's apparent that they decided to tell the church that the amount of money they contributed was the selling price of the property (**in other words, they gave it all away**). A blatant lie! Maybe they thought it would increase their stature within the body of believers.

But notice how Peter confronts the man; *Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?* If the Holy Spirit were the power of God. If He were the breath/life of God. He would be without personality. He would be an object, not a Person. In other

words, you can't lie to a rock, or to a tree, you can only lie to a sentient being (to a **Person**).

Moving back to the Old Testament we find;

Isaiah 63:8-13

⁸ For He said, "Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Savior. ⁹ In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. ¹⁰ But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. ¹¹ Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, ¹² Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, ¹³ Who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble ... (NASB)

We often see short histories of Israel presented to bring them up short. And in this one we find; *they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit*. A breath, a wind, a power, is not grieved. A person can be grieved, but not a *thing*.

King David wrote;

2 Samuel 23:1-3

¹ Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse declares, The man who was raised on high declares, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel, ² "The Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, And His word was on my tongue. ³ "The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me ... (NASB)

Note that the *God of Jacob*, the *Spirit of the Lord*, the *God of Israel*, the *Rock of Israel*, are all equated one with the other. As being co-equal. As being one and the same.

In a confrontation between a false prophet, and one of God's true prophets, we find;

1 Kings 22:24

²⁴ Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?" (NASB – also 2 Chronicles 18:23)

God's prophets, His true prophets, receive their prophecies from His Spirit. He speaks with them. He gives them visions. He directs them in His will.

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In Nehemiah's prayer of national confession we find two references;

Nehemiah 9:20, 30

²⁰ "You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst. ... ³⁰ "However, You bore with them for many years, And admonished them by Your Spirit through Your prophets, Yet they would not give ear. Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. (NASB)

The Spirit instructed them, He admonished them.

King David writes of God's leading;

Psalm 143:10 ¹⁰ Teach me to do Your will, For You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground. (NASB)

Here's an interesting verse! Do we have references to Father, Son and Spirit here?

Isaiah 48:15-17 ¹⁵ "I, even I, have spoken; indeed I have called him, I have brought him, and He will make his ways successful. ¹⁶ "Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, From the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit." ¹⁷ Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you to profit, Who leads you in the way you should go. (NASB)

God, Spirit, Lord, Redeemer, Holy One of Israel ... sent Me ... sent His Spirit. He teaches, He leads you in the way.

Isaiah 63:10, 14

¹⁰ But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit: Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. ... ¹⁴ As the cattle which go down into the valley, The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people, To make for Yourself a glorious name. (NASB)

God's Spirit is impatient at times;

Micah 2:7

⁷ "Is it being said, O house of Jacob: 'Is the Spirit of the LORD impatient? Are these His doings?' Do not My words do good To the one walking uprightly? (NASB)

Let's complete this section with the following;

Mark 3:28-30

²⁸ "Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹ but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin "-- ³⁰ because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." (NASB)

You can't slander an object (**animate or inanimate**). It would take no offense. It just wouldn't care. But you can slander a person.

Came Upon Him

Here's an interesting observation; in the Old Testament we find many verses that basically say; *the Spirit of God came upon him*. There is a doctrine in Christendom that tells us that only New Testament believers received the Holy Spirit. Here are but a few references; Exodus 31:3, 35:31, Numbers 11:17, 11:25, 11:26, 11:29, 24:2, 27:18, Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:25, 14:6, 14:19, 15:14, etc., etc., etc.

What do you think?

Questions

Let's try a few questions on for size:

1. How do we know that the Holy Spirit has a personality (**is a Person**)? (**Genesis 1, Acts 5, Isaiah 63, etc.**)
2. Who is the Holy Spirit?
3. How do we know that He is God?

Memory Verses

I feel that it is important to memorize as much of the Bible as possible. So each lesson will include a set of memory verses. Maybe we will include prizes for those who memorize the most verses each week. Here is an example:

Genesis 1:1-3 ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. ³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. (NASB)

Read Your Bible

The intent of this study is to encourage each student to ***Read Your Bible!*** Most of the material in this study may be read in just a few minutes (**some will take more time, some less**). You're your time, think about what you have read, and why it was included in this study. This can be accomplished each week if you set aside just a few minutes each day.

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Please remember, this study is not a substitute for a thorough reading of the Bible. ***Read your Bible!*** Your Bible contains the authoritative, inerrant, infallible and non-contradictory Word of God! Often there is no other source for this information than in your Bible!

Further, if something in this study seems wrong, then it probably is because the author made a mistake! This is another reason to read your Bible, check statements made in this study against that stated in the Bible. ***Read your Bible!***

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we freely admit that this Bible Study is not about us, it is about You. So we ask, Lord, that You plant the seed of Your Gospel News within us that it may flourish and bloom, that others may see and wonder. We ask You, Lord, that You nurture this knowledge within us that we may grow in wisdom and maturity in Your Word. We pray that with each passing week You lessen us that You may grow, increase our knowledge that You may be glorified, fill us with Your Spirit of Truth that we may mature. We pray this in the Name of Christ Jesus, amen.