

The Holy Spirit

The fact that the One True God is a Trinity has confused the minds of man for ages, and it still does today; it's not easy to understand. However, the Bible does give us information on this subject. We serve a God-head of three persons who are completely united in purpose that they are one. Each has His distinct, divine role in the eternal [everlasting] plans for each believer, but in carrying out these responsibilities act as one.

[Matthew 28:19] Jesus the Christ, told his disciples to baptize everyone into the name – not names – of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The three persons together constitute one God. This makes us face one of the most unfathomable truths of all: The Trinity.

What are we to make of it? In itself, the concept is a mystery to us in our feeble, human attempts at understanding; indeed, all truths about God exceed our comprehension for the most part. How the singular is plural and the plural is singular; How the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are personally distinct, yet one entity is more than we can truly know or explain. Any attempt to explain it is feeble at best. Often, any attempt to “explain” it or dispel the mystery by reasoning is bound to falsify it. Here, as elsewhere, God is too big for our little minds!

Yet, history shows us that Jesus the Christ, a man who was God, prayed to His Father and promised that He and His Father would send another comforter to continue His divine ministry. This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, working within you, prompts you to worship the God above and to know the fellowship of God the Son with you. This working within us points inescapably to the Trinity, as does the cooperative activity of the three in saving us: The Father planning, the Son procuring or obtaining and the Holy Spirit applying. Many scriptures point to this truth; the truth of the Trinity proves to be the foundation and framework for the Gospel of Christ. (Luke 10:21, 1 Corinthians 8:6, 2 Peter 1:17, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, 2 Peter 1:1, Acts 5:3-4, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Mark 12:29-30, 1 Corinthians 8:4)

One of the reasons the Trinity is so difficult to grasp is that we have no analogy for it in our experience. It is found only in the Bible. This is one reason so many have shown great skepticism. Thomas Jefferson said it is “incomprehensible jargon”. Many think it's a fairy tale. We can look to the heavens and see the proof of the existence of God, but not the Trinity. It cannot be proved. This uniqueness has great implications. Any attempt to put away the notion of a Trinity is an attempt to make God like man; at least from man's perception. However, man *is* made in God's image; God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; man is also a trichotomous (or three-part being); body, soul and spirit. The teaching that man is a dichotomous or two-part being is the teaching of evolutionists. They teach that man has a body and a soul or spirit (life force). The Bible teaches that man has three parts and God has three parts. I believe the Bible.

God's unity in the Bible is stressed so that we might not fall into polytheism (poly; belief or worship of many gods). Deuteronomy 6:4 tells us, “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is

one Jehovah;” Here, a plural name is a single entity (Hebrew and Greek both have three number: singular, dual, plural). As soon as we speak of separate persons, it is easy to think of separate gods, but the Bible warns us against that.

Furthermore, God is not one person showing Himself to humans in three forms. (This is an error called Sabellianism; A follower of Sabellius, a presbyter (elder or priest) of Ptolemais, which was a maritime city of Galilee (Acts 21:7) in the third century. He maintained that there is but one person in the God-head, and that the Son and Holy Spirit are only different powers, operations, or offices of the one God the Father.) There are three separate Persons comprising one God. The unity and equality of the God-head is taught throughout the Scriptures in places such as Genesis 1:26, which says, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” Matthew 3:16-17 tells us, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” and John 10:30, which succinctly says, “I and ~~my~~ the Father are one.”

[Philippians 2:5-8] What about passages such as Philippians 2:5-8 where it appears that one member of the Trinity can be dominant? This just indicates that in God’s program dealing with humanity, there are certain things He does that distinguish each member of the Trinity. In Philippians 2, we see that the incarnate second person (Jesus) subordinated Himself to the will of the Father to go to the cross for human beings. The Holy Spirit did not become joined to humanity, nor did the Father; the Father never appeared to individuals, nor did the Holy Spirit. Neither the second person (the Son) nor the Father is said to have directed the writers of Scripture; the Spirit did.

There have been several names for the different Persons of the Trinity used, but the Bible never actually speaks of the first Person, second Person and third Person of the Trinity. The word “Trinity” is never used in the Bible. But, all of these terms are convenient in helping us understand this concept. The Bible does speak of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The word “God” can refer to the Trinity or to each of the three Persons individually. The word “Lord” is used often of both the Father and the Son.

[John 14] While stressing the equality of the three Persons, each has a complex and extensive role, especially toward believers. We ought to cultivate, for example, the special presence of the Holy Spirit to teach and encourage us. [John 14:26] Every believer has the Holy Spirit within him! We’re all baptized in the Holy Spirit!

[Genesis 1:2; “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”] Because the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, many have doubted His existence or relegated Him to simply an influence or a feeling; maybe an emotion or conscience. However, His role in creation demonstrates His intelligence and purposefulness; these are qualities attested by His interaction with individuals. Many err in thinking that the Spirit is somehow less of a deity than the Father and the Son (a view held by some cults). If we take the Biblical

record seriously, we have to accept that creation is something only God can do and the Holy Spirit did it.

The Holy Spirit is also intimately connected with God in other areas such as [1 Corinthians 2:11-12]. Just as the spirit of man and the spirit of the world lets us know about man and the world, the Holy Spirit knows and imparts to believers the things of God. We have His instruction book and we know His spirit. If we are obedient and filled with the Spirit of God, the spirit of the world should offend us.

Pauline theology provides an extensive discussion of both the Person and the work of the Holy Spirit. Let's look at a few of these passages.

[1 Corinthians 2:10] The Holy Spirit has intellect as is evidenced in 1 Corinthians 2:10 in which He investigates the deep things of God, and then teaches them to believers. [1 Corinthians 2:12]

[Ephesians 4:30] The Holy Spirit has emotions in that He can be grieved.

The Holy Spirit is deity; He is God.

[Titus 3:5; regeneration is literally "again-becoming"] The Holy Spirit regenerates.

The Holy Spirit indwells. [1 Corinthians 3:16] The Holy Spirit lives in each and every believer.

[Ephesians 1:13-14; Ephesians 4:30; And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.] The Holy Spirit seals each believer who is being faithful (the brethren; Matthew 12:50), to help him attain entrance into the coming Kingdom. He Himself is the seal, as an earnest or promise of our inheritance. ("Earnest" is "arabon"; Semitic in origin; a dowry or down payment on the total obligation; earnest money.)

[Galatians 5:16] The Holy Spirit enables you to live by His power.

So, we see that the Holy Spirit has intellect, he has emotions, he is God, he regenerates, he lives in each and every believer, and he seals faithful brethren to help them attain entrance into the coming Kingdom; he's their "earnest money".

However, one of the least understood principles of Scripture is the infilling and the baptism in the Holy Spirit. [1 Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..."] So many people miss the greater blessing of experiencing God because they believe that salvation is the baptism and that's all there is. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we receive the Holy Spirit at the moment we surrender our hearts to Christ. (Romans 8:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:19) God puts His Spirit within us and we are born as a child of God; we're born from above.

However, when a child is born, is that the end? No, it's just the beginning. The same is true of our Christian lives.

[John 20:20-22] v.20 "Showed" - This body that he showed them is not yet glorified, and retained the marks of the nails and of the soldier's spear, ample proof of the bodily resurrection; This goes against the modern view that only Christ's "spirit" arose and against the Gnostic notion that Jesus had no actual human body. Luke 24:39 adds feet to hands and side.

"Were glad" - Jesus had said in John 16:22 that it would be so. Luke adds in 24:41 that they "disbelieved for joy". It was too good to be true; though terror had first seized them when Jesus appeared in Luke 24:37 because of the suddenness of his appearance and their highly wrought state.

v. 21 "Even so send I you..." Jesus has often spoken of the Father's sending him using both "apostello" and "pempo". Here he employs both words in practically the same sense. Jesus still bears the Commission of the Father. (John 6:57 has a similar "even...so" event.) This is the first of the three commissions given by the Risen Christ.

v. 22 "He breathed on them..." It was a symbolic act with the same word used in the Septuagint when God breathed the breath of life upon Adam in Genesis 2:7. It occurs also in Ezekial 37:9, which says, "Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live". He breathed on them.

Receive ye the Holy ~~Ghost~~ Spirit.

Let's look at some of the things we know about the Holy Spirit.

First, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is unique to the church age. The basic reference is 1 Corinthians 12:13. (It's still future in Acts 1:5, but Acts 11:15 tells us it began on the day of Pentecost.) The baptism in the Holy Spirit includes all believers in this age. (Galatians 3:27-28)

[Romans 6] The baptism in the Holy Spirit brings believers into union with Christ. [Romans 6:3, 5] The very ones that were "baptized into Christ" (Romans 6:3) were also "united with Him" (Romans 6:5). This truth prohibits the baptism in the Spirit from being a work subsequent to salvation.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not experiential. Since this is a work done to the believer and not by the believer, and since the baptism occurs simultaneous to salvation, it is not experiential; it's not derived from experience.

[Acts 5] The Holy Spirit is a gift and it's given at salvation. But, we are filled, as we are obedient. [Acts 5:32] The Holy Spirit indwells carnal believers; all believers are

baptized into the Holy Spirit. The carnal Corinthian Christians, who were guilty of incest, lawsuits against fellow believers, and other sins, were nonetheless indwelt by the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost Spirit [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” If only the Spirit indwells a select group, then the Corinthians would not all have been indwelt. Romans 8:9 and 2 Corinthians 1:22 demand a conclusion that all believers, regardless of their spiritual condition, are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

[John 14] The Holy Spirit indwells believers permanently. Not only does the Holy Spirit indwell all believers, but also it is a permanent indwelling unto the age. [John 14:16; for ever – age-lasting]

One of the greatest assurances of the eternal security of the believer is the fact that the Father has sealed every believer with the Holy Spirit. We saw that in 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 4:30; look with me also in [Ephesians 1:13]. All are sealed (including the carnal Corinthians!) and it occurs when we believe. [Ephesians 1:13 should be translated “in whom having believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise”]

The concept of sealing includes the ideas of ownership, authority, and security. Since God has sealed us, we are His possession, secure until the day of redemption (unless there were someone with greater power than God Himself!). [Romans 8:38] But, notice the context of Ephesians 4:30 (grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption). Sealing is the basis for an exhortation not to grieve the Spirit by committing sins, especially with the tongue. A proper understanding of security never breeds license to sin. We’re still supposed to be obedient. We have accountability!

1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us that the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit may be defined as that work whereby the Spirit places the believer into union with Christ and into union with other believers in the Body of Christ.

What then are the signs that the Holy Spirit is at work? We talked about this before. Not mystical raptures, nor visions and supposed revelations, not even healings, tongues, and apparent miracles; for Satan, playing on our psychosomatic complexity and our fallenness, can produce all these things. (2 Thessalonians 2:9ff; Colossians 2:18) The only sure signs are that the Christ of the Bible is acknowledged, trusted, loved for his grace and served for his glory, and that believers actually turn from sin to the life of holiness, which is Christ’s image in his people. (1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 3:17) These are the criteria by which we must judge, for instance, the modern “charismatic renewal,” and Christian Science (reaching, perhaps, different verdicts in the two cases).

So when I say, as a Christian, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” my meaning should be, first, that I believe personal fellowship, across space and time, with the living Christ of the New Testament to be a reality, which through the Spirit I have found; second, that I am open to be led by the Spirit, who now indwells me, into Christian knowledge, obedience, and service, and I expect to be so led each day; and, third, that I bless him as the author of my assurance that I am a son and heir of God. It is glorious to believe in the Holy Spirit!