

Who Is The Holy Spirit?

Who is the Holy Spirit? Notice that our question is not “*What* is the Holy Spirit?” but rather “*Who* is the Holy Spirit?” Some religious people think of the Holy Spirit as a lifeless entity or an inanimate influence, but the Word of God describes Him as a person—a divine member of the Godhead.

HIS DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS

In John 14:16 Jesus told His disciples, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.” This verse describes the Holy Spirit as a divine Helper, dispatched from heaven to earth for the express purpose of providing eternal companionship to the disciples of Jesus.

Not only did Jesus refer to the Holy Spirit as a “Helper,” but He further described Him as a “Teacher.” In John 14:26 Jesus promised His apostles, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will *teach* you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (Emphasis mine.) A true disciple must depend upon the Spirit’s instruction, help, and strength to live a Christian life to the glory of God. Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a Teacher and Helper, and He always used the personal pronouns “He” and “Him” in reference to the Spirit.

As our “Helper” and “Teacher,” the Holy Spirit has a mind (Romans 8:27), a will (1 Corinthians 12:11), and emotions (cf. Romans 15:30;

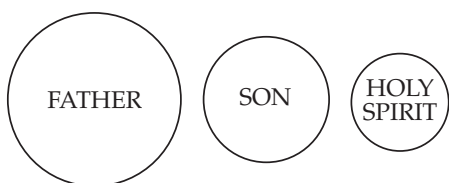
Ephesians 4:30). We find that on many occasions He spoke directly to the early disciples. He told the prophets and teachers of Antioch, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). Later, the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to speak the Word in Asia (Acts 16:6, 7).

As one with a personality, the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed (Matthew 12:31, 32), lied to (Acts 5:3), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), insulted (Hebrews 10:29), and resisted (Acts 7:51). Such activities only affect people, so we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is more a “person” than a “thing.”

HIS DIVINE NATURE

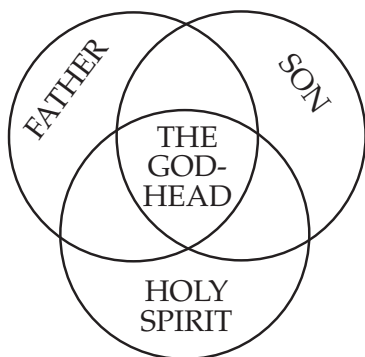
While the Holy Spirit is a person, He is more than “just a person,” because He shares the characteristics of deity with the Godhead. He is “the eternal Spirit” (Hebrews 9:14), who “searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10). He is all-powerful (Luke 1:35; Romans 15:19) and ever-present (Psalm 139:7–10). These are all characteristics of God. When Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, Peter accused him of lying to God Himself (Acts 5:3, 4).

The Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead, sharing the divine nature with the Father and the Son. The fact that three persons make up the divine nature has caused some to conclude falsely that three distinct Gods make up the Godhead. We might illustrate this false concept with three circles:



The above concept maintains that the Father is fully divine (as illustrated by the larger of the three circles) and suggests that the Son and the Spirit have less of the divine nature than God. While it is true that the Father is fully divine, we are not to conclude that the Son and the Holy Spirit are any less divine. The Son submitted to the Father's authority in coming to this earth (cf. Philippians 2:5-8), and the Holy Spirit was sent to earth by the authority, or in the name, of Jesus (John 14:26). Nevertheless, the facts that Jesus submitted to the Father's will and that the Spirit submitted to Jesus (as suggested by the smaller circles) do not make the Son or the Spirit any less divine in their nature than God the Father. In other words, Jesus was still God as He lived in the flesh (Matthew 1:23), and the Holy Spirit remains God (fully divine in nature) as He does His work on earth (cf. Acts 5:3, 4). Based on this evidence, we can conclude that the circles in our illustration can only be accurate if interpreted as varying degrees of authority within the Godhead. The Father's authority is greater than the Son's, and the Son's is greater than the Spirit's; yet each person of the Godhead is equally divine in His nature.

A more biblically accurate concept of the Godhead may be illustrated with three interlocking circles:



As illustrated in the diagram above, three members make up the Godhead; yet there is only one God (not three separate Gods). Each member of the Godhead is equally divine in His nature (as illustrated by the equal size of each circle). Their

existence and works are so interrelated that they cannot be separated from each other. (This is indicated by the interlocking of the circles.) While three members make up the Godhead and each of these members has assumed unique roles in the past, distinctions must be made between the three (cf. Matthew 3:16, 17; Luke 1:35; John 15:26). For example, it was Jesus who lived upon this earth as a man and who died upon the cross for our sins. This was His distinctive role. However, as Jesus lived in the flesh, He was in the Father, and the Father was in Him (cf. John 14:10, 11). Jesus referred to the interrelationship He had with His Father by declaring, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

HIS DISTINCTIVE ROLE

The role of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament church is also a distinctive role in that He is the representative of the Godhead in the Christian Age. Such an interrelationship exists between the Spirit and the other two members of the Godhead that Jesus declared that through the indwelling Spirit we would "know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

All three members of the Godhead function in perfect harmony to make up the one eternal God. No divine member can separate Himself from the other two members and continue to function as the one true God. Where one member is, the other two members are.

The only exception to this truth is the death of Jesus upon the cross. As Jesus carried our sins to the cross, the Father looked upon His perfect Son as sin itself! At that moment, Jesus, "who knew no sin," was made "to be sin on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The result of that terrible moment in history was that the Father and the Spirit were forced to withdraw their holy presence from Jesus. "Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, . . . 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'" (Matthew 27:46). For this one and only time in eternity, a fractured relationship existed between the three members of the Godhead.

CONCLUSION

As we conclude, let us notice some practical lessons which should encourage us all.

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a person rather

than an impersonal influence should give us a greater appreciation of the interest that all heaven has in our eternal salvation.

The Holy Spirit abides in the Christian. This should be of great encouragement to us in our battle against the spiritual hosts of wickedness.

The Holy Spirit's love for us and His intercession for us in prayer should encourage us to pray

with greater frequency and confidence.

The Holy Spirit is given only to those who obey God (Acts 5:32); thus all non-Christians should repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, so that they, too, can receive the Holy Spirit as God's gift of salvation (Acts 2:38). ▲

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