

## **The Holy Spirit**

We've been looking at the doctrine of the Trinity. We've seen that the New Testament affirms that the Father is a distinct person from the Spirit and the Son, and that the Father is God. Secondly, we saw that similarly the Scriptures say that Jesus Christ is a distinct person from the Father and the Spirit, and that Jesus Christ is God. Today we want to turn to the third person of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. Again, we will see that the New Testament affirms both that the Holy Spirit is a distinct person from the Father and the Son, and that the Holy Spirit is likewise God.

First, the Holy Spirit is a distinct person.

Luke 11:13: “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Here the Father is spoken of as distinct from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given by the Father to those who ask him.

John 14:26: Jesus says, “But the Counselor, 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 have said to you.” Here all three of the persons are distinguished. There is the Holy Spirit who is given by the Father in the name of the Son. The three persons are mentioned in this single saying as distinct persons.

Turn to John 15:26 – a very interesting verse. Again Jesus is speaking: “When the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.” Again you have all three of the persons mentioned. There is the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the Son to whom the Holy Spirit will bear witness. What is especially

interesting about this verse is that John emphasizes the personhood of the Holy Spirit by using the masculine pronoun for him even though the word “Spirit” (*pneuma* in the Greek) is neuter. So when he says “the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father” he actually violates Greek grammar. Instead of saying “the Spirit which proceeds from the Father; *it* will bear witness to me,” he uses the masculine pronoun “he” - “*he* will bear witness to me” - in order to underline that we are talking here about a person, not a thing. The Holy Spirit is a person just like the Father and the Son. Romans 8:26-27. Paul says,

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Here Paul describes the intercessory ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Father on our behalf. We don't know what to pray for many times. We have limited wisdom and insight. But the Holy Spirit intercedes with the Father on our behalf, and the Father knows the mind of the Spirit and knows how to answer our prayers because the Spirit intercedes according to God's will. So here you have this very interesting ministry of the Holy Spirit on our behalf in prayer and intercession before the Father, so that he converts, as it were, our prayers into God's will.

Matthew 28:19 is one of the famous trinitarian verses in the New Testament where all three of the persons are mentioned. Jesus says to them, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Here you have a formula for baptism where all three of the persons are mentioned. Converts to Christianity are to be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14 also mentions all three of the persons of the Trinity. A wonderful benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Here you have the grace of Christ, the love of God (that is, the Father), and then the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. So all three of the persons are mentioned in this benediction, just as they are in the baptismal formula.

Finally, 1 Peter 1:1-2 also mentions all three of the trinitarian persons.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Here you have all three of the persons: God the Father, who has chosen and destined the believers, and the Spirit who sanctifies them for obedience to Jesus Christ.

So we have a number of passages, I think, in which the Holy Spirit is distinguished from both the Father and the Son. He is a distinct person.

Here we also need to make a note about New Testament terminology for the Spirit. We saw that very often the word “God”

simply refers to the Father. When it comes to the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come in his place and in his name. He would continue to carry out the ministry of Jesus in the absence of Jesus after Jesus had ascended to the Father. Look at John 14:26: “The Counselor, 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 have said to you.” Here the Holy Spirit is sent in the name of Christ, and he serves to bring Christ's teaching to recollection on the part of the disciples.

Also look at John 16:13-14: Jesus says,

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Here we see the subordination of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation to the Son. The Holy Spirit doesn't speak on his own authority. We've seen rather he comes in the name of the Son – in the name of Christ – and then he will declare to the disciples the things that he receives – the things concerning Jesus Christ. The role of the Holy Spirit is that of attesting to and continuing the ministry of Jesus, acting in his name and authority, and in his place.

So in the New Testament the Holy Spirit becomes so closely identified with Jesus Christ that he is often spoken of as the Spirit of Christ – not the Spirit of God but the Spirit of Christ, or even sometimes he is simply called Christ. Look, for example, at the very interesting passage in Romans 8:9-11. Here Paul says,

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

Did you notice the progression in the terminology here? It goes from “the Spirit of God” to “the Spirit of Christ” to simply “Christ”: If Christ is in you (meaning the Spirit of Christ, that is to say the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit). Here you have the identification of the Spirit so completely with Christ that he is actually referred to as Christ.

So very often today, people will say that, in order to be born again, you need to receive Christ as your Savior and that it is receiving Christ that will produce the new birth and a relationship with God. Technically, it is really the Holy Spirit that you receive. When a person places his faith in Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit who now continues the ministry of Christ, and that will produce the spiritual re-birth – the new birth – that will put him into a relationship with God. But because the Holy Spirit is so closely identified with Christ, we will often talk about receiving Christ. There is nothing the matter with that, so long as we keep in mind and understand that Christ in terms of his human nature is with the Father. He is absent from this world. Some day he will return, but in his absence it is the Holy Spirit who continues his ministry to the world and to the church as well.

When we come to our later section on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, we will look more at the manifold ministries that this third person of the Trinity has in the world today. But for now we simply want to note that the Holy Spirit is not the ghost of Jesus Christ. When people talk about the Holy Ghost they don't mean it is the ghost of Jesus. Nor do they mean by the Holy Spirit some sort of it – a thing, a neutral force or impersonal object. The Holy Spirit is a person just like the Son and the Father who is now at work in the world and in the church to carry on the ministry of Jesus.

That is the first point: the Holy Spirit is a person who is distinct from the Father and the Son.

Moreover, to state the obvious, the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit, like the Father and Son, is God.

Look at Matthew 12:28 for example. We read the words of Jesus: “But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” Here he refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God who brings the Kingdom of God to Earth.

Acts 5:3-4 is a very interesting passage from the story about Ananias and Sapphira and God's judgment upon them. Here Peter is rebuking Ananias for his deception. Peter says,

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

Notice in verse 3, Peter says to Ananias, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit,” and then in verse 4 he says, “You have not lied to men but to God.” So the equation is made of the Holy Spirit with God. The Holy Spirit is deity.

Romans 8:9. We have already read this verse: “You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.” Here the Holy Spirit is, again, referred to as the Spirit of God.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 6:11. Paul says, “You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

So the Holy Spirit is God and yet at the same time the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Father and the Son. We have the same truths about the Holy Spirit that we saw with regard to the Father and the Son. He is a distinct person, and he is divine.

Next time we will begin to look at how the early church reflected on this biblical data in order to make sense of it.