

The Nature of the Holy Spirit – 'The Spirit of Holiness'

Why is it important for us to understand the nature of the Holy Spirit?

*“There are several reasons why the study of the Holy Spirit is of special significance for us. One is that **the Holy Spirit is the point at which the Trinity becomes personal to the believer.** We generally think of the Father as transcendent and far off in heaven; similarly, the Son seems far removed in history and thus also relatively unknowable. But the Holy Spirit is active within the lives of believers, he is resident within us. He is the particular person of the trinity through whom the entire Godhead currently works in us”*

*“A second reason why the study of the Holy Spirit is especially important is that we live in the period in which the Holy Spirit’s work is more prominent than that of the other members of the Trinity. The Father’s work was the most conspicuous within the Old Testament period, as was the Son’s within the period covered by the Gospels and up to the ascension. **The Holy Spirit has occupied centre stage from the time of Pentecost onward**, that is, the period covered by the book of Acts and the Epistles, and the ensuing periods of church history.”*

*“A third reason for the importance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is that current culture stresses the experiential, and **it primarily through the Holy Spirit’s work that we feel God’s presence within and the Christian life is given special tangibility.**”*

(Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, pp. 862-63).

To show from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is personal and that he is God.

If we don’t understand that the Holy Spirit is personal, and that he is God, then we won’t be able to understand how God sanctifies us (i.e. how we can live a holy life in relation to God and to each other).

If we don’t understand how God sanctifies us then we will not be able to live in the full light of the gospel.

The Holy Spirit is God – The Biblical Evidence

The Holy Spirit exhibits the following attributes that are only attributes of God.

1 Life (inherent) – the source of all life

Romans 8:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of **the Spirit of life** set me free from the law of sin and death.”*

2 Eternal

Hebrews 9:14 [NIV] *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

3 Omnipresence

Psalms 139:7 [NIV] *“Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”*

4 Omnipotence – the source of all power

1 Corinthians 2:4 [NIV] *“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a **demonstration of the Spirit’s power,**”*

5 Omniscience – the only source of all truth

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, **the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

6 Truthfulness – the One, being God, who leads us into all the truth of God

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, **the Spirit of truth,** comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

7 Holiness – only God is Holy, set apart from all His creation

Romans 1:4 [NIV] *“and who through **the Spirit of holiness** was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

8 Grace – is what only God offers freely to humanity

Hebrews 10:29 [NIV] *“How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the **Spirit of grace?**”*

9 Love – God is love

Romans 5:5 [NIV] *“And hope does not disappoint us, because **God has poured out his love** into our hearts **by the Holy Spirit,** whom he has given us.”*

10 Sovereignty

1 Corinthians 12:11 [NIV] *“**All these are the work of one and the same Spirit,** and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*

1 Various references to the Holy Spirit are interchangeable with references to God

Acts 5:1-4 [NIV] *“Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that **you have lied to the Holy Spirit** and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have **not lied to men but to God.**”*

The statement in verse 4, however, was apparently intended to make it clear that the lie was told not to humans, or to someone less than God, but to God himself.

Thus, we are led to the conclusion that the second statement is an elaboration of the first, emphasising that the Spirit to whom Ananias had lied was God.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 [NIV] *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”*

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [NIV] *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.”*

It is clear that, to Paul, to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be indwelt by God.

By equating the phrase ‘God’s temple’ with the phrase ‘a temple of the Holy Spirit’, Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is God.

2 The omniscience of the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:10-11 [NIV] *“but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. **The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.** For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way **no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.**”*

If the Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God He must be God. Physical example: to know all my thoughts you would have to be me!

3 The Holy Spirit has power that only God has

Luke 1:35 [NIV] *“The angel answered, **“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.”***

Jesus the Son of Man conceived by the Holy Spirit.

So if Jesus is the Son of God, Holy Spirit must be God.

Romans 15:19 [NIV] *“**by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.** So from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.”*

Paul acknowledged that the accomplishments of his ministry were achieved by the power of the Holy Spirit in him.

John 16:7-10 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, **the Counsellor** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, **he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin** and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;”*

Jesus attributes to the Holy Spirit the ability to change human hearts and personalities.

John 3:5-6 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, **“I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.** Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit impregnates our human hearts and personalities to create a new spiritual child of God in us.

Matthew 19:26 [NIV] *“Jesus looked at them and said, **“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”***

This was in response to the great difficulty a rich person faces in his personal attempt to enter the created family of God.

While these verses do not explicitly affirm that the Spirit is omnipotent, they certainly indicate that he has power that presumably only God has, and scripture confirms that there is only one God.

4 The Holy Spirit has eternally existed

Hebrews 9:14 [NIV] *“How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

Only God is eternal.

Hebrews 1:10-12 [NIV] *“He also says, “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. [Genesis 1:1] They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”*

All that is created is temporal. So the Holy Spirit must be God, if He is eternal without end or beginning.

5 The Holy Spirit performs works that are commonly ascribed of God

The Holy Spirit was and continues to be involved with the creation, in both originating it and providentially keeping and directing creation in its spiritual form.

Genesis 1:2 [NIV] *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”*

The Spirit of God was brooding over the face of the waters, God’s physical creation.

Job 26:13 [NIV] *“By his breath [spirit] the skies became fair; his hand pierced the gliding serpent.”*

Note that the heavens were made fair by the Spirit of God.

Psalms 104:30 [NIV] *“When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.”*

All creation done through the Holy Spirit.

First the physical creation now the spiritual creation of our re-birth.

There is abundant biblical testimony regarding the Holy Spirit’s role concerns his spiritual working upon or within humans, regarding our re-birth.

Titus 3:5-6 [NIV] *“he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,”*

Romans 8:11 [NIV] *“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus [the Son of Man] from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*

The Holy Spirit resurrected Jesus the Son of Man as the first fruit of the Kingdom of God. Our resurrection will be through the work of The Holy Spirit.

6 The Spirit's association with Father and Son on the basis of apparent equality

One of the best known evidences for this is the baptismal formula prescribed in the Great commission.

Matthew 28:19 [NIV] *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**,”*

2 Corinthians 13:14 [NIV] *“May the grace of the Lord **Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.”*

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 [NIV] *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same **Spirit**. There are different kinds of service, but the same **Lord**. There are different kinds of working, but the same **God** works all of them in all men.”*

As Paul discusses spiritual gifts, he co-ordinates the three members of the Godhead.

1 Peter 1:2 [NIV] *“who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through the sanctifying work of **the Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”*

Peter likewise in the salutation of his first epistle, links the three together, noting their respective roles in the process of salvation.

7 The ‘replacement’ for Jesus

John 14:26 [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the **Father** will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

John 15:26 [NIV] *“When the **Counsellor** comes, whom I will send to you from the **Father**, the **Spirit of truth** who goes out from the **Father**, **he will testify about me.**”*

John 16:7 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: **It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.**”*

The term *parakletos* [counsellor] is applied to the Holy Spirit.

In each of these contexts it is obvious that it is **not** the same sort of abstract influence that is in view.

1 John 2:1 [NIV] *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one **who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.**”*

Jesus is also expressly spoken of as a *parakletos*.

John 14:16 [NIV] *“And I will ask the **Father**, and he will give you **another** Counsellor to be with you for ever”*

Jesus says that he will pray to the Father who will give the disciples another *parakletos*.

The word for ‘another’ here is *allos*, which means ‘another of the same kind’.

In view of Jesus' statements linking the Spirit's coming with his own going away means that the Spirit is a replacement for Jesus and will carry on the same role.

The similarity in their function is an indication that the Holy Spirit, like Jesus, must be a person, and that person must be God.

If we deny the Holy Spirit is God we then automatically deny Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and Son of God.

Luke 12:8-10 [NIV] *“I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.”*

1 John 4:1-3 [NIV] *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognise the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”*

Test what spirit is influencing you when you believe that the Holy Spirit is only a power and not one person of the Triune Godhead.