

Meet The Holy Spirit

The third person in the godhead is a revealed mystery of The Bible and is of supreme importance to our eternal salvation.

It is well worth every effort to know more about the third member of the godhead as Christian doctrine describes him.

The threefold nature of God is a mystery [religious truth divinely revealed that is beyond human reason] but capable of being understood with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

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.”*

This is a promise from Jesus Christ Himself which we can all claim.

1 Timothy 3:16 [NIV] *“Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory.”*

What we are studying bears directly on any sound teaching on salvation.

The mission and ministry of the Holy Spirit, an essential offshoot of Trinitarian teaching, has been lost and clouded by Satan because of its great importance to personal salvation.

Quotation from ‘*Knowing God*’ by J.I. Packer [pages 65-68]:

“The average Christian is in a complete fog as to what work the Holy Spirit does ... it is often assumed that the doctrine of the Trinity is a piece of theological lumber we can very happily do without.”

Not so, argues Packer.

“One wonders what the apostle John would say for according to him the doctrine of the trinity is an essential part of the Christian doctrine.”

The Holy Spirit is fundamental to our understanding of God and the working out of our salvation.

Why?

Quotation from ‘*Systematic Theology*’ by Louis Berkhof:

“It is the Holy Spirit that takes up His abode in the hearts of believers, that separates them unto God [makes them holy] and that cleanses them from sin [empowers them to resist sinning].”

Is anything more important?

I am quoting Christian theologians in this article as well as scripture because I feel their deep understanding of scripture, which is given them by the Holy Spirit, can help us to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Theologians such as J.I. Packer, Jurgen Moltmann, Louis Berkhof and Christian writers such as C.S. Lewis can guide us into a deeper comprehension of scripture.

It was the great preacher C.H. Spurgeon who advocated “*the most excellent study is the knowledge of the godhead in the glorious trinity.*”

This is what Spurgeon powerfully preached as part of the gospel, the good news of what God has done and is doing for all humanity.

Quote from ‘*The Spirit of Life*’ by Jurgen Moltmann:

“We know so little about the Holy Spirit because He is “too close”, not because He is so far away ... to a certain extent, the Father and Son can be visualised as being “out there”, almost as objective presences away from us. For example, even scripture pictures the Father as sitting on a throne, with the Son at His right hand. [Revelation 4:1-7 and Acts 7:56]. But the Holy Spirit? The favourite Biblical symbols of the Holy Spirit, wind, water, fire, are elemental forces, not personal examples. This fact has misled many across the centuries to construed the Holy Spirit as a force, not a person.”

But, as we shall see, that is **not** the full story, **not** by a long shot.

In the Spirit

A further complication is the wonderful truth that the Holy Spirit can, if we invite Him, do His work from inside us.

The Holy Spirit unites with our spirit.

Job 32:8 [NIV] “*But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.*”

It is this spiritual entity within human beings that separates us from other created animals.

1 Corinthians 2:9-16 [NIV] “*However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” 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. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment: “For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*”

The union of our spirit and the Holy Spirit is how God reveals Himself and His will to us, [**Proverbs 20:27**].

In the scriptures the Holy Spirit is equated many times with intellectual or mental traits.

Acts 6:3 [NIV] “*Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them*”

Converted people can be “*full of the spirit.*”

Acts 6:8-10 [NIV] “*Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.*”

Stephen's opponents were "flooded" by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as He spoke through Stephen.

Romans 8:16 [NIV] *"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."*

A powerful testimony can be given as the Holy Spirit speaks through us, our spirit.

Romans 8:27 [NIV] *"And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."*

The Holy Spirit can reveal the mind of God to us, because He is God!

Isaiah 11:2 [NIV] *"The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him, the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD,"*

Describing how the Holy Spirit would work in Jesus the Son of Man, in His incarnated form.

The important point here is that such mental or intellectual traits, as quoted in these scriptures, cannot easily be described, explained or portrayed.

This has often placed preachers and teachers at a slight disadvantage in explaining the Holy Spirit.

Scripture therefore gives us physical symbols to portray the Holy Spirit, something "concrete."

Romans 1:20 [NIV] *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

This is the way God teaches physical human beings.

Matthew 3:16 [NIV] *"As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."*

The symbol of a dove is used.

John 3:8 [NIV] *"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

Wind that is invisible and powerful is used.

Acts 2:3-4 [NIV] *"They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."*

Tongues of fire.

John 3:12 [NIV] *"I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"*

It is first through physical symbols that God leads us to understand spiritual principles and truths.

The Holy Spirit teaches us from inside

John 14:6 [NIV] *"Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."*

All truth is God's truth, Jesus Christ is the personification of all truth.

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.”*

The Holy Spirit is vitally concerned with expanding our minds.

Luke 12:11-12 [NIV] *“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”*

All true Christian teachers know this total dependency of the Holy Spirit instructing us and then speaking through us.

Truth is not what we discover.

Truth is a gift from God.

It is the truth of God that the Holy Spirit brings to us.

Truth is **not** something that we create by the process of our mind.

Truth is something that is waiting for us to discover, something we acquire, but do **not** create.

At the back of all truth is God.

Revelation of the truth comes to us, **not** from any book, or creed, or printed word.

Revelation of the truth comes to us from a living person, the Holy Spirit.

We receive the truth **only** through our intimate relationship with Him.

To enjoy the peace of mind that the revelation of the truth brings to us we must submit to the lordship of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Submission to the Holy Spirit and the knowledge of God go hand in hand.

The nearer we live to Jesus the better we will know God.

How do we do this?

John 14:15-20 [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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ and God the Father live in us.

This is a love relationship.

What condition is our part in this loving relationship

John 15:12-17 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to*

you. You did not choose me, **but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.** Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”

The laying down of our life [our time] and our will [selfish desires] is the condition that God places on this relationship with Him and other human beings.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, **to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.**”

This is our loving surrender to God.

Philippians 2:1-4 [NIV] “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

This is our loving surrender to other human beings.

The subject of the Holy Spirit and our relationship with Him is difficult for many Christians to comprehend because it is hard to see someone who is inside you.

In our Christian life we are **not** usually looking at the Holy Spirit, in the same way we may see the Father and Jesus Christ His Son sitting on a throne in heaven, as scripture describes them.

The Holy Spirit is mostly acting in us and through us out to others.

John 7:38-39 [NIV] “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, **streams of living water will flow from within him.**” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”

This is not something we actually see with our eyes, only the effect of this indwelling and flowing out from us to others can be seen by their reaction.

John 3:5-8 [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. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

Wind cannot be seen, only the effects it has on us and others can be seen.

Remember to be born again we first have to die!

Romans 6:3-4 [NIV] “Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **we too may live a new life.**”

This is the new life we experience.

Romans 6:16-18 [NIV] “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey, whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. **You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.**”

This new life is then offered to God, that is surrendered [sacrificed] to the will of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17 [NIV] *“I keep asking that the **God** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, the glorious **Father**, may give you the **Spirit** of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”*

Paul reveals this marvellous three-fold working of the godhead in our lives.

Remember the scriptural description of what eternal life really is.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now **this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.**”*

It will take all eternity to merely “*scratch the surface*” as far as knowing God, a wonderful ever more exciting adventure of discovery.