

Chapter 2

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

INTRODUCTION

As we study the Holy Spirit it is very important that we understand the nature of our subject. It is important to know whether we are talking about a *living being* or a *non-living thing*. It is important to know whether we are talking about someone or something that is *higher* than ourselves in authority, or *lower*. It is important to know whether we are talking about the *spiritual* or the *material*. It is important to know whether we are talking about *reality* or *fantasy*.

The Bible answers all these questions, so we will turn to the Bible to learn the identity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is the “Comforter.” What does that mean? In what other ways is He described to us?

Granting that the Bible is truth, we know we are talking about *reality*, and not *fantasy*, because the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit actually exists. In this chapter we will learn that ...

1. the Holy Spirit is a *living being*.
2. the Holy Spirit is a *spirit*.
3. the Holy Spirit is *God*, and therefore is above us in authority.

A LIVING PERSON

Job referred to the “person” of God (Job 13:8), not that God is human, but that He is a living being as surely as man is. When describing to someone that which is known to us, but unknown to them, we begin with reference to something that is similar, then describe the differences. For example, to one who had never seen an airplane, we might begin by saying, “It is like a bird, but...” In trying to define or describe God we are forced to relate Him to something familiar to our own experience. We have classed physical things in the world as animal, vegetable and mineral. God is more comparable to man than to a rock or a tree, so we speak of the person – or personality – of God.

By the same definition, the Holy Spirit is a living person, not a thing. The Bible always says “he” – never “it.” As recorded in John 16:13-14 Jesus said..

1. When He is come
2. He will guide
3. He shall hear
4. He shall speak
5. He will shew
6. He shall glorify
7. He shall receive

Jesus spoke of *the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send*, and added, *he shall teach* (John 14:26). The references identify a sentient being, not something like a rock or a tree. Without doubt, when He spoke to His apostles Jesus knew the Holy Spirit. He knew the truth of Heaven. He knew His Father and the angels. He knew Himself to be the eternal Son of God. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as a person, just as He Himself was a person in the flesh. Is Jesus a trustworthy witness? Can we believe His evidence? The Son of God said that the Holy Spirit is a person.

The Holy Spirit can be tempted (Acts 5:9), and He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), neither of which is possible of the non-living. The words do not indicate emotional instability, but rather logical evaluations of the behavior of God’s children. When Ananias and Sapphira agreed to tell the church a lie, they lied to God (verse 4). Their lie was intended to bring praise to themselves. As such, they were urging (tempting) the Holy Spirit to bless them for doing what is contrary to the righteousness of God (*thou shalt not bear false witness*,

Exodus 20:16; ...all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, Revelation 21:8). One does not speak to a non-living thing and expect an intelligent response. Grief is a response to loss. If a Christian turns from Christ and holiness, he gives up what he had gained as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. (The work of the Spirit is the subject of the next chapter, but here we refer to His revelation of the word, by which obedient souls are saved from sin.) Thus the Holy Spirit of God has lost a soul that had been redeemed from the fold of Satan. Non-living things do not know a sense of loss: they cannot be grieved. The Holy Spirit is a living being.

SPIRIT - DEITY

The Holy Spirit is, of course, a spirit; He does not have a fleshly or material body. Jesus said, “A spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:36-39). It is the consideration of this point that begins to give most of us confusion. Man is a physical entity dwelling in time and space. The poet and dramatist in us imagines, especially in childhood, ghosts and monsters that cannot be seen. The mature mind, however, does not linger long at the attempt realistically to define spiritual beings, simply because we have never seen the unseen. This, of course, is not proof that God and angels to not exist.

In His night-time discussion with Nicodemus Jesus compared the Holy Spirit with the wind: you hear it, but you can't tell where it came from or where it is going (John 3:8). Where did a particular thunder originate? In a storm, did you ever try to predict where the next lightning strike would be? Even with the finest scientific instruments precisely calibrated that is little more than a guess. The inability to detect a thing with man's five physical senses (sight, sound, taste, touch and smell) is not proof that the thing does not exist. Your understanding of these words, and the thoughts produced by the reading, cannot be detected with the senses, but they exist. Since the days of Moses God has told us that there are truths that we cannot know because *the secret things belong unto the Lord our God* (Deuteronomy 29:29). Jesus further told Nicodemus that *no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven* (John 3:13). Jesus came from Heaven, and put on flesh, to show us what we could not otherwise know empirically. Before He left us He said, *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?* (John 14:9).

The Holy Spirit is God. The eternal Father is God – *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ* (Ephesians 1:2). The Son is God – *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13; John 5:18; 17:21). The Holy Spirit is God – *Why hath Satan put in thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.* Lying to the Spirit is lying to God (Acts 5:3-4).

The Holy Spirit is, of course, holy. God is holy – *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy* (I Peter 1:15-16). Holiness is purity or cleanness. There is no impurity or imperfection in God: neither in the Father, the Son nor the Holy Spirit.

Being God, and perfect in the holiness of God, The Holy Spirit is superior to man, because:

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Psalm 14:2-3).

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you (Isaiah 59:2).

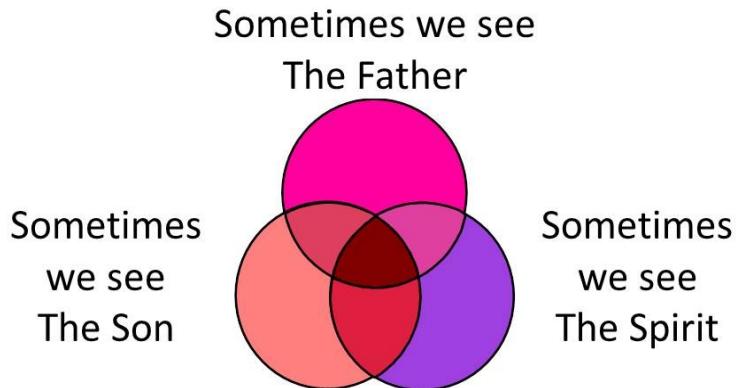
For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

As God, the Holy Spirit is above us in authority. We cannot teach Him, but He can – and does – teach us with the authority of God, the final judge of our eternal spirits:

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? (Isaiah 40:13-14).

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (I Timothy 4:1).

The Holy Spirit is one of three faces of God by whom God reveals himself to the world: Father, Son & Holy Spirit – Matthew 28:19. Chart 3 illustrates the three-in-one nature of God. It is to this completeness of God that Paul refers in his use of the term “Godhead” (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). John says of the nature of God that “*there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*” (I John 5:7). To the fact of this 3-in-1 nature Moses also testifies in the grammatical construction of the first sentence of the Bible: *In the beginning God* (Hebrew “Elohim” - a plural noun) *created* (Hebrew “bara” – a singular verb) *the heaven and the earth* (Genesis 1:1). God is seen in three persons, but acts as one force.



Yet each is nothing but God, and God is complete only in the working of the 3

Chart 3: God, the 3-in-1

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit is a living being, is holy, is spirit, and is God. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the “Comforter.” That tells something of the work He does. In our next chapter we will answer more fully the question, “What is the Work of the Holy Spirit?”