

Who or What is the Holy Spirit?

College Life Class, FBCG

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- Isaiah 1:18 “Come let us reason together..”
- I Peter 3:15 “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence”

- Our question should be:
- “What is the identity of that which is referred to with the words “the holy spirit” in the Bible?
- To ask, “What is the holy spirit?” implies an inanimate thing.
- To ask, “Who is the Holy Spirit?” implies a personality.

- Interpretive approach:
- The Bible is the Word of God
- New Testament explains the Old Testament (John 1:18)
- Scripture explains Scripture
- Clear verses explain unclear verses
- Context is the final arbiter of the meaning of a word
- We need to define terms

- Definition of terms:
- Power: control, might, authority, influence, etc.
- Personality: the totality of an individual's behavioral and emotional tendencies; having attributes of mind, emotions and will

- Powers and things, such as, energy, physical force, blood, electricity and radar beams are commonly known not to have personal characteristics. When one refers to an inanimate object or power as having a personal characteristic it is called 'personification.' To assume that the Bible personifies the 'holy spirit' without first inquiring as to whether the Bible actually attributes personality to the 'holy spirit' is to commit the logical fallacy called 'circular reason,' which is to assume what one is trying to prove.
- Therefore, we may ask, "Does the Bible actually attribute personal characteristics to the 'holy spirit'?"

- The three primary attributes of personality are mind, emotions and will.

- Does the 'holy spirit' have a mind/intellect?

- I Cor. 2:10 “the Spirit *searches* everything” (cf. Isa. 11:2 & Ephesians 1:17)
- Same word used in John 5:39, “You *search* the Scriptures because you think...”

- I Cor. 2:11 “...the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”
- Thought processes require the presence of a mind.

- Romans 8:27 “and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”
- “mind” = way of thinking, mind, mindset, aim, aspiration, striving (A&G, p.874)

- Does the 'holy spirit' have emotions?
- Ephesians 4:30 "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,..."
- Grief is an emotion. It was experienced by the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 2:2 & 5 "sorrow"

- Does the 'holy spirit' have a will?
- I Cor. 12:11 "But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."
- "will" = "decisions of the will after previous deliberation" (A&G, p. 146)
- James 1:18 concerning the Father "In the exercise of His will..." (same word)
- Acts 16:6 "...having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia..." "Forbidding" is an act of one's will.
- Therefore, the 'holy spirit' is seen from Scripture to have the three **primary attributes of personality.**

The 'holy spirit' is treated as a person.

- The 'holy spirit' can be grieved. Ephesians 4:30

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,...”

The 'holy spirit' is treated as a person.

- The 'holy spirit' can be blasphemed. Matt. 12:31-32 “...but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him...”
- Also, Mark 3:29-30
- The Father can be blasphemed (Rev. 13:6 and 16:9)
- The Son can be blasphemed (Matt. 27:39 and Luke 23:39)
- Only a person can be blasphemed.

The holy spirit is treated as a person.

- The 'holy spirit' can be lied to. Acts 5:3-4 Ananias lied "to the Holy Spirit." How does one lie to a force, electricity or radar beam? Lying can only be done to a person.

The 'holy spirit' is treated as a person.

- The 'holy spirit' can be obeyed. Acts 13:2 “And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”
- Also, Acts 10:19-20: “...the Spirit said to him, “Behold, three men are looking for you...for I have sent them Myself.”

The 'holy spirit' is treated as a person.

- The 'holy spirit' is **contrasted** with unclean spirits. Mark 3:29-30; Acts 19:15 – “And the evil spirit said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” The ‘unclean’ or ‘evil’ spirits aren’t necessarily given personal names, but are none the less recognized as personal entities.

Question.

- Is Satan a personal being? How do you know this? What scriptural evidence shows it?
- Is Gabriel a personal being? How do you know this? What scriptural evidence shows it?
- Is God a personal being? How do you know this? What scriptural evidence shows it?

- You mentioned being “filled with the holy spirit” and how that could be if the holy spirit is a person. Consider these verses:
- Eph. 3:19 “and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.”
- Eph. 1:23 “...which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”
- Eph. 4:10 “He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill all the universe.”
- Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”
- Colossians 1:27 “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

- God and Christ are said to fill all things, but that does not negate their personhood!
- This “filling” can take place by a person because we are talking about an omnipresent being.
- Omnipresent: Psalms 139:7 “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”
- Omniscience: I Cor. 2:10 “...The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”
- Omnipotent: Romans 15:19 “by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit.”

- Also, in John 14 – 16, John uses masculine personal pronouns to refer to the ‘holy spirit’. The Greek word for ‘spirit’ is neuter and to be grammatically correct John should be using neuter pronouns, but he violates this rule to stress the personality of the Holy Spirit. {As in German, the three genders of nouns in Greek are not indicators of sex.}

- Jesus prays for “another comforter.” In John 14:16, Jesus says, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”
- “Another” (allos) means another of the same kind. Just as Jesus was a personal advocate who helped the disciples, so the Holy Spirit will be a personal advocate.

Therefore...

- ...if it can be demonstrated that :
- the Holy Spirit has the essential characteristics of a person
- the Holy Spirit manifests actions consistent with personhood
- and, is treated as a person like other spiritual entities
- then it can safely be concluded that the identity of that which is referred to with the words “Holy Spirit” is indeed a person, and not simply a power.

additional thought...

- The Spirit has power:
- Luke 4:14 “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,...”
- Acts 10:38 “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,...”