



“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26).

Power or Person?

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit is a divine person who acts according to intelligence and will.

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The Holy Spirit of God is a person, not just a power, an object, an influence, or a manifestation. He is as personal as God the Father or God the Son. He must be recognized as a person, respected as a person, responded to as a person, and worshiped as a divine person.

The personality of the Holy Spirit is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Christians must never think of Him as an “It” which one is to get and use.

Never ask, “How do I respond to *It*?” But ask, “How do I respond to *Him*?” Never ask, “How do I get *It* that I may use *It*?” But ask, “How can I yield to *Him* that *He* may use me?”

To understand and accept the truth of the personality of the Holy Spirit is to rejoice in the personal presence and work of God in your life.

I. WHY THE SPIRIT SEEMS IMPERSONAL

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning” (John 15:26, 27).

A. The Holy Spirit is unseen and incorporeal; therefore, He seems impersonal. It is easy for us to attribute personality to God the Father, for

we know fathers who are personal. It is easy for us to attribute personality to God the Son for He came in human flesh. But since the Holy Spirit has no physical body, He seems impersonal and less than real to many people.

B. The terms *SPIRIT* and *GHOST* are used to refer to Him, and that makes Him seem impersonal. (There is no word for ghost in the Greek language, so every reference to “Holy Ghost” should be translated “Holy Spirit.”)

C. The personal pronoun *IT* is used to refer to Him in Romans 8:16, “*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” That intimates He is not a true person.

D. He is related to “*POWER*” in Acts 1:8, “*Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.*” That suggests impersonality.

E. Many people use the unscriptural expression, “get the Spirit,” as if He were an object which they manipulate in the service of God. But the Bible makes it quite clear that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the divine trinity. He is a person, a divine person, who must be recognized and responded to as such.

II. PROOF OF THE SPIRIT'S PERSONALITY

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you....Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:7, 13, 14).

A. The Holy Spirit has the qualities of personality. Four qualities are essential to full personality: mind, emotion, will, and powers of moral discernment. All those are found in Bible descriptions of the Holy Spirit of God.

1. The Holy Spirit has intellectual powers. He can think, know, and understand (Acts 15:28; I Corinthians 2:10, 11; Isaiah 11:2). “*And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit*” (Romans 8:27).

2. The Holy Spirit has emotion. He exercises “*the love of the Spirit*” (Romans 15:30), and it is possible for men to “*grieve...the holy Spirit of God*” (Ephesians 4:30). Both love and grief indicate spiritual personality.

3. The Holy Spirit has a will which He exercises. He guides Christian workers according to His will (Acts 16:6, 7) and distributes spiritual gifts to believers according to His own will (I Corinthians 12:11). His will is

manifested also in calling men to special service for God (Acts 13:1-4).

4. The Holy Spirit has powers of moral discernment that separate good from evil, approving the good and condemning the evil. That is His ministry when He will “*reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8).

All those are the qualities of personality. An impersonal force (like gravity) or influence (like love) cannot think, feel, plan and execute the plans, and distinguish with true judgment between good and evil. The Holy Spirit can do that because He is a person.

B. Personal pronouns are used to refer to the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Consider the personal pronouns used to refer to Him in John 16:7, 8, 13, 14, for instance. *“If I depart, I will send HIM unto you. And when HE is come, HE will reprove the world.... Howbeit when HE, the spirit of truth is come, HE will guide you into all truth: for HE shall not speak of HIMSELF: but whatsoever HE shall hear, that shall HE speak: and HE will shew you things to come. HE shall glorify me: for HE shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”*

Here is why that is so significant. The Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*) is a neuter noun. According to the rules of Greek grammar, the neuter pronoun it should be used to refer to that neuter noun. But the writers of Holy Scripture, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, break the rules of grammar and use the masculine pronoun he as if to underscore the personality of the Spirit.

C. Personal acts are ascribed to the Spirit, acts which only a person can perform. The Holy Spirit testifies (John 15:26); reproves of sin (John 16:8; Genesis 6:3); guides into truth (John 16:13); guides in service (Acts 16:6, 7); speaks (John 16:13; I Timothy 4:1); shows the things of Christ (John 16:13-15); intercedes for us in prayer (Romans 8:26, 27); calls and commissions Christians to service (Acts 13:2, 4); teaches the things of God to believers (I Corinthians 2:9-13); sanctifies believers (I Peter 1:2; II Thessalonians 2:13); gives access to God (Ephesians 2:18); leads the believer (Galatians 5:18; Romans 8:14); effects a new birth (John 3:3-5); bestows spiritual gifts on the saved (I Corinthians 12:8-11); searches and reveals the things of God (I Corinthians 2:10); loves (Romans 15:30); and witnesses (Revelation 22:17). Those acts could not be performed by an object, a power, or an influence. They are the acts of a person with mind, emotion, will, and the powers of moral discernment of good and evil.

D. The Holy Spirit can be treated as a person. He can be quenched (I Thessalonians 5:19); grieved (Ephesians 4:30); resisted (Acts 7:51); and blasphemed (Mark 3:29; Matthew 12:31). Those are actions which can be

done to a person only.

Can you imagine one “quenching” a stone, “grieving” the law of gravity, or “blaspheming” the light of the moon? No! One can quench, grieve, resist, and blaspheme a person only. Those actions toward the Spirit indicate that He is a person.

III. THE SPIRIT: A DIVINE PERSON

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Corinthians 2:9-13).

The Holy Spirit is not only a person, He is also a divine person. He is more than man, who is a person. He is God! There is ample Bible proof that the Holy Spirit is a divine person. The Holy Spirit is God, as are the Father and the Son.

A. The name GOD is given to Him. To “*lie to the Holy Ghost*” is the same as having “*lied. . . unto God*” (Acts 5:3, 4). What one does in relation to the Holy Spirit he is doing to GOD because the Spirit is “*the Spirit of God*” (I Corinthians 3:16) and “*the Spirit of Christ*” (Romans 8:9). There is no difference in essence between the Father, Son, and Spirit.

B. The attributes of God are ascribed to Him. He is “*the eternal Spirit*” (Hebrews 9:14), just as God is eternal. He is present in all places at the same time (Psalm 139:7-10), just as God is omnipresent. He is the medium through which the power of God flows. For the Holy Spirit to come upon one is the same as the power of the Highest coming upon him (Luke 1:35). The Spirit has the same attributes as the Father and the Son. He is God!

C. The acts of God are attributed to Him. The Bible reports the creation of man, “*The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*” (Genesis 2:7). Then a man is inspired to say, “*The Spirit of God hath*

made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4). The work of God is the same as the work of the Spirit of God.

Salvation is the work of the Spirit of God who causes us to be “*born again*” (John 3:3, 5), even though Jesus saves us (Romans 5:10). Resurrection from death is accomplished by the Spirit (Romans 8:11), though it is said that God raises the dead (Romans 6:4). God does what the Spirit does because the Spirit is God.

What a blessing to know of the personality of the Holy Spirit. As a divine person, as God himself, He is with us as our Companion (John 15:26), our Helper (John 16:7), our Guide (John 16:13, 14), and our personal Teacher (I Corinthians 2:9-13).

Every contact we have with God is by His Spirit. Be fully and constantly available to His ministry in your life.

Questions

1. What difference does it make whether the Spirit is a person?
2. Why do people think of Him as impersonal?
3. What qualities of personality show that He is a person?
4. How are his mind and emotion manifested?
5. How are His will and moral discernment manifested?
6. How does John 16:13, 14 show He is a person?
7. How do His acts show He is a person?
8. How do you know that He is a divine person?