

Who is the Holy Spirit?
Selected Scriptures
Dr. Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
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INTRODUCTION

1. We are beginning a new study tonight on *the ministry of the Holy Spirit*.
2. R. A. Torrey gives us some thoughts to ponder as we begin this study. He says, “It is of the highest importance from the standpoint of worship that we decide whether the Holy Spirit is a divine person, worthy to receive our adoration, our faith, our love, and our entire surrender to Himself, or whether it is simply an influence emanating from God or a power or an illumination that God imparts to us” (The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, 9).
3. In the preface of “The Mystery of the Holy Spirit,” R.C. Sproul writes:

“‘The Holy Spirit leaves no footprints in the sand.’ These words are from Abraham Kuyper's classic work on the Holy Spirit. Jesus did leave footprints in the sand. He was God incarnate, God with a human nature. When His disciples walked with Him, they could hear His voice, touch His hands, and watch the sand spilling over His feet as He trod the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

But the Holy Spirit is like the wind. Jesus said, ‘The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes’ (John 3:8). We cannot capture the wind in a bottle. It is elusive and mysterious but nonetheless real. We see the effects of the wind—trees bending and swaying in the breeze, flags rustling. We see the devastation of the fierce hurricane. We see the

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ocean become violent in a gale. We are refreshed by gentle zephyrs on a summer day. We know the wind is there.

So it is with the Holy Spirit. He is intangible and invisible. But His work is more powerful than the most ferocious wind. The Spirit brings order out of chaos and beauty out of ugliness. He can transform a sin-blistered man into a paragon of virtue. The Spirit Changes people. The Author of life is also the Transformer of life.

Because the Spirit is mysterious, we are vulnerable to superstitions and distortions of His Person and work. Here we must listen carefully to scripture as it reveals to us the character of God the Holy Spirit” (Preface).

4. There are many teachings concerning the Holy Spirit.
5. Not all of them, of course, are from the Bible.
6. So it is important that we begin our study by asking the question, “Who is the Holy Spirit?”
7. I want to break that question into two parts.
8. The first is “Who is the Holy Spirit according to false teachers?” and the second, “Who is the Holy Spirit according to biblical revelation?”
9. Let’s look at the first, “Who is the Holy Spirit according to false teachers?”

I. Who is the Holy Spirit?

A. According to False Teachers

1. In the early church

Charles Ryrie says, “Doctrinal formulation of the Christian faith did not occur all at once at some point in the history of the church. Nor did a definition of all Christian doctrines take place at any equal rate. Sometimes one doctrine came in for attention; at other times the spotlight would focus on a different doctrine.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit did not receive much attention in the early centuries as far as formal definition was concerned. What we have come to know as the orthodox expression of the doctrine of the Spirit was witnessed to by the early church in the baptismal formula, in the Apostles’ Creed, and in the castigating of error when it did appear” (The Holy Spirit, 111).

a) Montanism (150 A.D.)

“Montanism, (also called the Phrygian heresy) appeared in Phrigia about 150 through the ministry of Montanus and two women, Prisca and Maximilla.

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They announced themselves as prophets and announced the period as the age of the Paraclete in which new revelations from God were to be given” (Charles Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit*, 111-12).

Montanism “flourished mostly in and around the region of Phrygia, where early on its followers were called Cataphrygians; although it spread rapidly to other regions in the Roman Empire, and at a time before Christianity was generally tolerated or legal” (Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montanism>).

They “antagonized the church” by claiming “a superior authority arising from divine inspiration” (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition - <http://www.bartleby.com/65/mo/Montanis.html>).

“Some people have drawn parallels between Montanism and Pentecostalism (which some call Neo-Montanism). The most widely known Montanist was undoubtedly Tertullian, who was the foremost Latin church writer before he converted to Montanism” (Wikipedia).

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“Montanism was officially rejected because of its insistence on additional revelation, and in so doing the church affirmed the belief that the Spirit does not give new revelations apart from the Scriptures” (Ryrie, 111-12).

b) Sabellianism (215 A.D.)

This is “also known as modalism, modalistic monarchianism, or modal monarchism” (Wikipedia - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabellianism>).

“Sabellianism was a Christian heresy named after Sabellius, a priest excommunicated by Pope Callistus I in 220” (Kelly, John N. D., *Early Christian Doctrine*, 1958 - <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txn/sabellia.htm>).

“Historic Sabellianism taught that God the Father was the only person of the Godhead, a belief known as Monarchianism” (Wikipedia).

“Sabellius taught that god is a unity but that He revealed Himself in three different modes or forms. These three forms were three roles or parts played by the one God” (Ryrie, 112).

“Sebellianism was the first major error

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concerning the Trinity which gained a large following in the church” (Ryrie, 112)” “has been rejected by the majority of Christianity” (Wikipedia).

Are there any examples of this is the church today? Yes, T.D. Jakes. “When being interviewed on the radio Jakes in responding to the questioner on the orthodox view of the trinity said “The Trinity, the term Trinity, is not a biblical term, to begin with. It’s a theological description for something that is so beyond human comprehension that I’m not sure that we can totally hold God to a numerical system. The Lord said, “Behold, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one, and beside Him there is no other.” When God got ready to make a man that looked like Him, He didn’t make three. He made one man. However, that one man had three parts. He was body, soul and spirit. ***We have one God, but He is Father in creation, Son in redemption, and Holy Spirit in regeneration***” (“Living by the Word” on KKLA, hosted by John Coleman, Aug. 23, 1998 - <http://www.letusreason.org/popteac9.htm>).

If you were to visit the beliefs section of his website, you would read “God--There is one

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God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in *three*

Manifestations: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

(<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/j11.html>).

“Dr. Norman Geisler President of Southern Evangelical Seminary and a well known scholar and speaker on cults said in an interview with “The Charlotte World,” “I know T.D. Jakes is very popular, and I know people don't like his ministry being called a cult, but it is. It would have been condemned by any orthodox church down through the centuries.”...He “ said that Jakes promotes modalism, which denies the doctrine of the Trinity”

(<http://www.letusreason.org/popteac9.htm>).

c) Arianism (325 A.D.)

“Arianism first originated with Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria. It consisted of anti-Trinitarian views.

He distinguished the One Eternal God from the Son by saying that the Son was generated from the Father and therefore had a beginning. He also believed that the Holy Spirit was the first thing the Son created”

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(Ryrie, 112-13).

“For his doctrinal teaching he was exiled to Illyria in 325 after the first ecumenical council at Nicaea condemned his teaching as heresy. It was the greatest of heresies within the early church that developed a significant following. Some say, it almost took over the church”

<http://www.carm.org/heresy/arianism.htm>.

2. In the modern-day church

a) Jehovah’s Witnesses (“a force”)

They teach that “the holy spirit is the invisible force of Almighty God, which moves his servants to do his will.”

“There is no Trinity, (Let God be True, p. 100-101; Make Sure of All Things, p. 386); The Holy Spirit is God's impersonal active force, The Watchtower, June 1, 1952, p. 24); Their church is the self-proclaimed prophet of God, (The Watchtower, April 1, 1972, p. 197); They claim to be the only channel of God's truth, (The Watchtower, Feb. 15, 1981, p. 19)”

<http://www.carm.org/heresy/arianism.htm>.

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b) Christian Science

They teach, “In the words of St. John: ‘He shall give you another comforter’...this comforter I understand to be Divine Science” (Science and Health, Mary Baker Eddy, 331:31).

They also refer to the Holy Spirit as “the developer of eternal life, truth, and love” (S&H 331:26).

Mary Baker Eddy said, “His students then received the Holy Ghost. By this is meant, that by all they had witnessed and suffered, they were roused to an enlarged understanding of divine Science” (S&H, p. 46:30-32).

c) Spiritualism

The Holy Spirit “is not part of this belief. However, some use the term to refer to the spirit of a holy person who once lived” (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

d) Mormonism

“The Holy Ghost is a male personage” (A Marvelous Work and a Wonder, p 118;

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Journal of Discourses, Vol. 5, page 179). He is “a god separate from the Father and the Son” (Christianity, Cults & Religions). “The influence of deity...like electricity...the executive power of both the father and son, carrying out the plan.”

e) Unification Church

They believe the Holy Spirit “is a female spirit who works with Jesus in the spirit world to lead people to Sun Myung Moon” (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

They say that the Holy Spirit “also cleanses the sins of the people in order to restore them, thus indemnifying (repaying) the sin committed by Eve.”

“There must be a True Mother with the True Father, in order to give rebirth to fallen children as children of goodness. She is the holy spirit.”

f) New Age

This is teachings “based on Eastern mystics, Hinduism, and paganism. Popularized in part by actress Shirley Maclane, 1980s-90s.

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New age teaches that the Holy Spirit is “sometimes a psychic force. Man is divine and can experience psychic phenomena such as contacting unearthly beings” (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

g) Hinduism

They do not believe in the Holy Spirit nor does Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation or Buddhism (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

h) Baha’i World Faith

They teach that the Holy Spirit is “divine energy from God that empowers every manifestation” (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

i) Islam

“The Qur’an refers to Jesus as spirit of God. Muslim scholars see the angel Gabriel as the Holy Spirit” (Christianity, Cults & Religions).

j) Evangelical Church

Some see the Holy Spirit as being “a power

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or an influence.” Others view Him as being
“passive, not active or involved.”

B. According to Biblical Revelation

1. He is a Spirit

- a) He is referred to as being a Spirit in both the Hebrew and Greek

The Hebrew word for Spirit is *rauch*. It occurs 100 times in the OT. The Greek word is *pneuma* which occurs 261 times in the NT.

- b) He is called “Spirit” in the Bible

(1) He is called “the Spirit” (Rom.8:1)

(2) He is called “Spirit of life” (Rom.8:2)

(3) He is called “Spirit of God” (Rom.8:9)

(4) He is called “Spirit of Christ”
(Rom.8:9)

(5) He is called the “Holy Spirit” (1
Cor.12:3)

(6) He is called the “eternal Spirit”
(Heb.9:14)

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- (7) He is called “the Spirit of glory” (1 Pet.4:14)
- (8) He is called “the Spirit of holiness” (Rom.1:4; Mat.1:20; 1 Jn.2:20)
- c) Because He is a Spirit He is invisible
 - (1) Jesus said in **Luke 24:39 (NASB)** that “a spirit does not have flesh and bones.”
 - (2) **Romans 8:9 (NASB)** says, “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God *dwells in you*. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

Charles Swindoll says, “He exists in an invisible realm. He is a power and force you will never see, though you are convinced of the force Himself. You will only see His working, the results of His enabling, His feeling, His guiding” (Growing Deep in the Christian Life, 181).

2. He is a Person

Paul Enns says, “The problem in the minds of many people is that personality can exist only in

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human beings, as though personality can related only to finite beings but not to the infinite.” Since man is made in the image of God it is reasonable to expect similar characteristics between God and man. Hence, ‘It is possible to form some conception of divine personality by a study of the human, because man is made in the likeness of God.’

Personality may simply be defined as possessing intellect, emotions, and will” (The Moody Handbook of Theology, 245).

James Montgomery Boice said, “If we think of the Holy Spirit as a mysterious power, our thoughts will be, ‘How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?’ If we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, we will ask, ‘How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?’” (Foundations of the Christian Faith, 374-5).

A.W. Tozer said, “The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is not enthusiasm. He is not courage. He is not energy. He is not the personification of all good qualities like Jack Frost is the personification of cold weather. Actually the Holy Spirit is not the personification of anything. He is a person, just the same as you are a person, and has all the qualities of a person” (Keys to the Deeper Life, 77-8).

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a) He possess intellect

- (1) **Acts 10:19 (NASB)** indicates that He “speaks”

“While Peter was reflecting on the vision, *the Spirit said to him*, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you.’”

- (2) **John 16:13 (NASB)** tells us that He “hears” and “speaks”

Jesus said, “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not *speak* on His own initiative, but whatever He *hears*, He will *speak*; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

- (3) **1 Cor.2:9-11 (NASB)** says that He also “understands”

“But just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” 10 For to us God revealed them *through the Spirit*; for *the Spirit*

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searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so *the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*”

When it says in verse 10 that He “searches all things,” the “word ‘search’ means to examine or investigate a matter. The Holy Spirit examines the depths of God and reveals them to believers” (Enns, 246).

- (4) Jesus said in **John 14:26 (NASB)** that He “teaches”

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will *teach* you all things, and *bring to your remembrance* all that I said to you.”

- b) He possesses will

- (1) In **Acts 16:6-10 (NASB)** Luke says, “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, *having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit* to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia,

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they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. 9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

- (2) Regarding spiritual gifts, **1 Cor.12:11 (NASB)** says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just *as He wills.*"

- c) He possesses emotion
 - (1) **Eph.4:30 (NASB)** says that He can be "grieved"

 - (2) **1 Thess.5:19 (NASB)** says He can be "quenched."

- d) Personal pronouns are used when referring to Him (masculine gender)

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- (1) **John 14:16-17, 26**
- (2) **John 15:26**
- (3) **John 16:13-15**

3. He is God

a) He is called God

- (1) **2 Cor.3:17 (NASB)** says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit.”
- (2) **Acts 5:1-4**

b) He possesses the same attributes as God the Father

(1) He is omniscient

1 Cor.2:11 (NASB) says, “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? *Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*”

(2) He is omnipresent

Ps.139:7 (NASB) says, “Where can I go from Your Spirit?”

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(3) He is omnipotent

John 6:63 (NASB) says, “It is the Spirit who gives life.”

(4) He is sovereign (**Acts 16:6-7**)

(5) He is eternal

Heb.9:13-14 (NASB) says, “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through *the eternal Spirit* offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

(6) He is truth

He is called “the Spirit of truth” in **John 14:17 and 16:13**.

c) He is equal with the Father and the Son

(1) **Mat.3:16-17 (NASB)** says, “After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and

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behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

- (2) **2 Cor.13:14 (NASB)** says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."
- (3) **1 Pet.1:2 (NASB)** says, "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

R.A. Torrey said, "If the Holy Spirit is a person, and a divine person, and we do not know Him as such, then we are robbing a divine being of the worship and the faith and the love and the surrender to Himself which are His due" (The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, 9).

CONCLUSION

1. It is a blasphemy against God's Word to believe anything other than what the Bible teaches concerning the Holy Spirit.

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2. And as we learn about Who He is and what He does in your life you will see how important it is to have your life controlled by Him.
3. As we close, I want to remind you of what Paul said in Ephesians 5:18. He said, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”
4. He also said in **Galatians 5:16 (NASB)**, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”
5. Does this describe your life?
6. If you’re here tonight and you do not know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, **Romans 8:9 (NASB)** says you don’t have the Holy Spirit in your life either.
7. I want to urge you to repent and surrender your life to Him now.
8. Let’s pray.