

The Holy Spirit Is Not a Person

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by United Church of God (<https://www.ucg.org/user/united-church-of-god>)

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The Holy Spirit, from the evidence found in the Bible, is not a person in a supposed Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the very nature, presence and expression of God's power actively working in His servants.



The Scriptures depict the Holy Spirit as the power of God.

In the chapter, *Is God a Trinity?*, we saw that the teaching of the Trinity originated well after the New Testament was written rather than with the Bible writers themselves. How, then, do we define the Holy Spirit if it is not a person?

Rather than describing the Holy Spirit as a distinct person or entity, the Bible most often refers to it as and connects it with God's divine *power* (**Zechariah 4:6; Micah 3:8**). Jewish scholars, examining the references to it in the Old Testament Scriptures, have never defined the Holy Spirit as anything but the power of God.

In the New Testament, Paul referred to it as the spirit of power, love and a sound mind (**2 Timothy 1:7**). Informing Mary that Jesus would be supernaturally conceived in her womb, an angel told her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you ...," and he defined this as "the *power* of the Highest," which "will overshadow you" (**Luke 1:35**).

Jesus began His ministry "in the *power* of the Spirit" (**Luke 4:14**). He told His followers, "You shall receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (**Acts 1:8**).

Peter relates that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with *power*" (**Acts 10:38**). This was the same power that enabled Christ to perform many mighty miracles during His ministry. Likewise, Jesus worked through the apostle Paul "in mighty signs and wonders, *by the power of the Spirit of God*" (**Romans 15:19**).

The Holy Spirit is the very nature, presence and expression of God's power actively working in His servants (**2 Peter 1:4; Galatians 2:20**). Indeed, it is through His Spirit that God is able to be present everywhere

at once throughout the universe and affect it at will (**Psalms 139:7-10**).

Again and again the Scriptures depict the Holy Spirit as the power of God. Furthermore, it is also shown to be the mind of God and the very essence and life force through which the Father begets human beings as His spiritual children. The Holy Spirit is not God, but is rather a vital aspect of God—the divine substance of the Father and Christ as well as the agency through which They work.

Divine inspiration and life through the Spirit

In its article about the Holy Spirit, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* describes it as the "manifestation of divine presence and power perceptible especially in prophetic inspiration" (Vol. 3, 1992, p. 260).

Repeatedly the Scriptures reveal that God imparted divine inspiration to His prophets and servants through the Holy Spirit. Peter noted that "prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (**2 Peter 1:21**).

Paul wrote that God's plan for humanity had been "revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" (**Ephesians 3:5**) and that his own teachings were inspired by the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 2:13**). Paul further explains that it is through His Spirit that God has revealed to

true Christians the things He has prepared for those who love Him (**1 Corinthians 2:9-16**). Working through the Spirit, God the Father is the revealer of truth to those who serve Him.

Jesus told His followers that the Holy Spirit, which the Father would send, "will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (**John 14:26**). It is through God's Spirit within us that we gain spiritual insight and understanding. Indeed, we come to receive the very "mind of Christ" (**1 Corinthians 2:16**)—also referred to as the "mind of the Spirit" (**Romans 8:27**).

Christ had this spiritual comprehension in abundance. As the Messiah, He was prophesied to have "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (**Isaiah 11:2**).

As the Son of Man on earth, Christ portrayed in His personal conduct the divine attributes of Almighty God through completely living by His Father's biblical standards through the power of the Holy Spirit (compare **1 Timothy 3:16**).

Now returned to the spirit realm, Christ wields the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit along with the Father. The Holy Spirit, we should understand, is not only the Spirit of God the Father, for the Bible also

calls it the "Spirit of Christ" (**Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19**). By either designation, it is the *same* Spirit, as there is only one Spirit (**1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4**).

The Father imparts the same Spirit to true Christians through Christ (**John 14:26; John 15:26; Titus 3:5-6**), leading and enabling them to be His children and "partakers of the divine nature" (**Romans 8:14; 2 Peter 1:4**). God, who has eternal life in Himself, gives that life to others through the Spirit (**John 5:26; John 6:63; Romans 8:11**).

Impersonal attributes of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is spoken of in many ways that demonstrate that it is not a divine person. For example, it is referred to as a gift (**Acts 10:45; 1 Timothy 4:14**). We are told that the Holy Spirit can be quenched (**1 Thessalonians 5:19**), that it can be poured out (**Acts 2:17, Acts 2:33**), and that we are baptized with it (**Matthew 3:11**).

People can drink of it (**John 7:37-39**), partake of it (**Hebrews 6:4**) and be filled with it (**Acts 2:4; Ephesians 5:18**). The Holy Spirit also renews us (**Titus 3:5**) and must be stirred up within us (**2 Timothy 1:6**). These impersonal characteristics are certainly *not* attributes of a person.

It is also called "the Holy Spirit of promise," "the guarantee of our inheritance" and "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" (**Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 1:17**).

In contrast to God the Father and Jesus Christ, who are consistently compared to human beings in Their form and shape, the Holy Spirit is consistently represented, by various symbols and manifestations, in a completely different manner—such as wind (**Acts 2:2**), fire (**Acts 2:3**), water (**John 4:14**; John 7:37-39), oil (**Psalms 45:7**; compare **Acts 10:38**; **Matthew 25:1-10**), a dove (**Matthew 3:16**) and an "earnest," or down payment, on eternal life (**2 Corinthians 1:22**; **2 Corinthians 5:5**; **Ephesians 1:13-14**, KJV). These depictions are difficult to understand, to say the least, if the Holy Spirit is a person.

In **Matthew 1:20** we find further evidence that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct entity, but God's divine power. Here we read that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus continually prayed to and addressed God the Father as His Father and *not* the Holy Spirit (**Matthew 10:32-33**; **Matthew 11:25-27**; **Matthew 12:50**). He *never* represented the Holy Spirit as His Father. Clearly, the Holy Spirit was the agency or power through which the Father begot Jesus as His Son.

Paul's example and teaching

If God were a Trinity, surely Paul, who recorded much of the theological underpinnings of the early Church, would have comprehended and taught this concept. Yet we find no such teaching in His writings.

Moreover, Paul's standard greeting in his letter to the churches, as well as individuals to whom he wrote, is "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Yet in each of his greetings he *never* mentions the Holy Spirit. (The same can also be said of Peter in the salutations of both his epistles.)

The same greeting, with only minor variations, appears in every epistle that bears Paul's name (see **Romans 1:7**; **1 Corinthians 1:3**; **2 Corinthians 1:2**; etc.) The Holy Spirit is *always* left out of these greetings—an unbelievable and inexplicable oversight if the Spirit were indeed a person or entity coequal with God the Father and Christ.

This is even more surprising when we consider that the congregations to which Paul wrote had many gentile members from polytheistic backgrounds who had formerly worshipped numerous gods. Paul's epistles record no attempt on his part to explain the Trinity or Holy Spirit as a divine person equal with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

In all of Paul's writings, only in **2 Corinthians 13:14** is the Holy Spirit mentioned along with the Father and Christ, and there only in connection with the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit" (NIV) in which believers share—not in any sort of theological statement on the nature of God. God's Spirit, says Paul, is the unifying agent that brings us together in godly, righteous fellowship, not only with one another but with the Father and Son.

Yet here, too, God's Spirit is not spoken of as a person. Notice that our fellowship is *of* the Holy Spirit, not *with* the Holy Spirit. As **1 John 1:3** tells us, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The Holy Spirit is not mentioned.

Paul states that "there is one God, the Father, ... *and* one Lord Jesus Christ" (**1 Corinthians 8:6**). He makes no mention of the Holy Spirit as a divine person.

Other biblical perspectives

Jesus likewise never spoke of the Holy Spirit as a divine third person. Instead, in numerous passages He spoke only of the relationship between God the Father and Himself (**Matthew 26:39; Mark 13:32; 15:34; John 5:18; John 5:22**; etc.). The Holy Spirit as a person is conspicuously absent from Christ's teaching in general. Of particular interest in this regard are His many statements about Himself and the Father, especially when He never makes similar statements about Himself and the Holy Spirit.

We should also consider that, in visions of God's throne recorded in the Bible, although the Father and Christ *are* seen, the Holy Spirit is *never* seen (**Acts 7:55-56; Daniel 7:9-14; Revelation 4-5; Revelation 7:10**). Jesus is repeatedly mentioned as being at the right hand of God, but no one is mentioned as being at the Father's left hand. Nowhere are three divine persons pictured together in the Scriptures.

Even in the final book of the Bible (and the last to be written), the Holy Spirit as a divine person is absent from its pages. The book describes "a new heaven and new earth" (**Revelation 21:1**) wherein "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them" (**Revelation 21:3**). Christ, the Lamb of God, is also present (verse **Revelation 21:22**). The Holy Spirit, however, is again absent—another inexplicable oversight if this Spirit is the third person of a triune God.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit, from the evidence found in the Bible, is *not* a person in a supposed Trinity. Regrettably, the unbiblical doctrine of the Trinity obscures the scriptural teaching that God is a family—a family which, as we will see, is our ultimate destiny!



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