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Survey of Bible Doctrine: The Holy Spirit

by
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I. The “personhood” of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a personal being just as the Father and the Son. The Spirit is not an impersonal “it” or simply an influence.

A. The Spirit has personal characteristics.

1. He has intelligence (1 Cor.2:10-11).
2. He has emotions (Eph.4:30 – “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”).
3. He has will (1 Cor.2:11).

B. The Spirit acts in personal ways.

1. He teaches us (John 14:26).
2. He commands (Acts 8:29).
3. He intercedes for us in prayer (Rom.8:26).

C. The Spirit is described in personal terms grammatically. The Greek word for Spirit (*pneuma*) is neuter in gender, yet the Bible uses masculine pronouns (“He,” “Him”) to refer to the Spirit (John 16:13-14; 15:26; 16:7-8. To be grammatically correct, personal neuter pronouns (“it”) would be expected.

II. The deity of the Holy Spirit

A. He has the names and titles of deity.

1. Yahweh – What the Lord (Yahweh) said in Is.6:8-13 is ascribed to the Holy Spirit in Acts 28:25.
2. Spirit of God (Rom.8:9,14; 1 Cor.2:11; 12:3; Eph.4:30)

B. He possesses incommunicable attributes.

1. Self-existence (Rom.8:2)
2. Omnipresence (Ps.139:7 ff)

C. He performs incommunicable works (no one but God can do them).

1. Creation (Gen.1:2)
2. Resurrection (Rom.8:11)

D. He is equated with deity.

1. Acts 5:3,4 – a lie to Spirit equals lie to God
2. 2 Cor.3:17,18 – “The Lord is the Spirit”

III. The Holy Spirit’s role prior to the Church Age

A. He took part in creation (Gen.1:2; Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30).

B. He guided and protected Israel (Isaiah 63:10-14).

C. He spoke through prophets to produce Scripture (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:20,21).

D. He selectively and conditionally indwelt certain people in the Old Testament (Joseph – Gen.41:38; Joshua – Num.27:18; Saul – 1 Sam.10:9,10; David – 1 Sam.16:13 etc.). The Spirit’s indwelling was specifically related to enabling someone to do a particular task. The Holy Spirit could cease to indwell a person because of their disobedience. The Spirit left Saul (1 Sam.16:14). When David sinned he pled that the Spirit not be taken from him (Psalm 51:11).

E. He was the empowering Agent in Christ’s earthly life.

1. He was the Agent of Christ’s virgin birth (Luke 1:35).
2. He empowered Christ’s ministry (Matt.12:28; Luke 4:1,18).
3. He was the Agent of Christ’s resurrection (Rom.1:4; 8:11).

IV. The Holy Spirit’s role in the Church Age

A. He is central in salvation (How people are saved).

1. He directs and enables evangelistic efforts (Philip/Ethiopian – Acts 8:26,29; Great Commission – Acts 1:8).
2. He convicts the unbeliever of sin (John 16:8-11).
3. He regenerates (saves) the person.
 - a. He cleanses the person from sin and gives them the new nature (Titus 3:5).
 - b. As He performs this spiritual “new birth,” the person enters “the kingdom of God” (=eternal life – John 3:3-7,16).
4. He seals (eternally secures) the person. The presence of the Holy Spirit is the “seal” or guarantee that a person is saved and will remain saved (Eph.1:13).

5. He baptizes (places) the person into the body of Christ.

a. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

- It is the Spirit's work of uniting us with Christ – spiritually identifying us with Christ's death, burial and resurrection (Rom.6:3-5).

- It is the Spirit's work of incorporating us into the universal church (=the "body of Christ" – all church age believers – 1 Cor.12:13).

b. When is the baptism of the Spirit?

- In each believer it occurs once and for all at their conversion (1 Cor.12:13; Gal.3:26-28).

- In history it is limited to church age believers (predicted – Acts 1:5; accomplished – 1 Cor.12:13).

- Note: Exceptions – On the Day of Pentecost when the church age began, both new and existing believers were baptized by the Spirit (Acts 1:5; 11:15,16). Also in 2 other cases in the early church it seems the Spirit was not given to believers until an apostle was present (Acts 8:14-17; 19:1-6).

B. He is central in sanctification (How saved people grow).

1. He indwells believers.

a. The Spirit indwells all believers in this age (Rom.5:5; 8:9; 1 Cor.3:16; 6:19). (unlike the Old Testament where the Spirit indwelt some)

b. The Spirit indwells believers permanently in this age (John 14:16). (unlike the Old Testament where the Spirit could depart)

c. The Spirit's indwelling is the basis for His other ministries in believer's lives. (He teaches/illuminates us about scripture – John 16:13; He aids in prayer – Rom.8:26; He assures us of our salvation – Rom.8:16; He enables us to grow – see "filling" below – Eph.5:18).

2. He "fills" believers.

- The "filling of the Spirit" describes the crucial work of God enabling the believer to live a transformed life. The only way we grow spiritually is by the empowering work of God (1 Peter 1:3). It is specifically the ministry of the Holy Spirit that gives a Christian the capability of change and growth in righteousness (by the Spirit... – putting to death the deeds of the body" – Rom.8:13; the fruit of the Spirit... – Gal.5:22,23).

- Spiritual growth as an issue of control. We are either controlled by our self-centered flesh or by the Holy Spirit who indwells us (Rom.8:4-11; Gal.5:16,17). Ephesians 5:18 describes this controlling/empowering ministry of Spirit as the "filling" of the Spirit. "Filling" is a metaphor

(picture) of control. We can be filled/controlled by fleshly desires (like alcohol) or be filled/controlled by the Spirit (Eph.5:18).

- Although it's the Spirit's power that is at work, the believer must choose to be controlled/empowered by the Spirit. It is a command to "Be filled" and likewise to "Walk in the Spirit" (Gal.5:16). The Spirit's presence is permanent (indwelling) but we must repeatedly choose to yield to God to experience the Spirit's transforming power to change and grow us (filling). In actual experience, "walking in the Spirit" or "being filled with the Spirit" means living the Christian life (facing temptations, making decisions, etc.) with a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit. He is the one who enable us – producing godly "fruits" (Gal.5:22,23).

3. He gives spiritual gifts to believers.

a. Where do I find out about spiritual gifts? Four key passages describe spiritual gifts: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10,11.

b. What are spiritual gifts?

1) Definition: Spiritual gifts are God-given abilities to serve. The Greek word for spiritual gift (charisma) is a form of the word "grace." So these special abilities are privileges. God graciously enables all believers to serve in spiritual ministry.

2) Spiritual gifts are **not** particular positions. Youth ministry leader or nursery worker are not gifts although those ministries definitely can put to use spiritual gifts such as teaching, serving, etc.

3) Spiritual gifts are **not** the same as natural talent (music ability or mechanical aptitude, etc.) although God may often give spiritual gifts that make use of natural abilities. A musician may have the gift of encouragement. An experienced school teacher may have the gift of teaching, etc.

c. How do we get spiritual gifts?

1) The Giver – The Holy Spirit in particular imparts these special abilities (1 Cor.12:7-11). But it is also accurate to say that they are "Christ's gifts" to the church (Eph.4:7,8,10).

2) The Time – We receive spiritual gifts when we trust Christ as Savior. That's when we received the Spirit; that's when we became part of the body of Christ.

3) The Recipients – Each believer has at least one but perhaps several gifts.

d. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

1) Spiritual gifts accomplish spiritual ministry that God desires.

2) Spiritual gifts equip others to minister (Eph.4:12).

3) Spiritual gifts glorify God (1 Pet.4:11).

e. What are the different spiritual gifts?

1) Some of the gifts listed seem to have been temporary, serving to establish the early church and to verify the gospel to people as Christianity began (Eph.2:20; Heb.2:3,4 – See supplement “The Charismatic Question” for more detail.). The temporary sign gifts included apostleship, healing, miracle-working, tongues, interpretation of tongues, etc. Also temporary were the word of wisdom, word of knowledge, and prophecy – by which God gave direct revelation to man. These gifts were needed before the New Testament was complete. They were also seemingly the gifts needed to write the New Testament.

2) Gifts that doubtless exist today include teaching, helps (serving), giving, administration (leadership), showing mercy, evangelism, pastor-teacher (shepherding) and exhortation. These gifts are crucial to the ongoing function of the church throughout this age.

f. How do we discover and use our spiritual gift(s)?

1) We should concentrate on meeting needs, not pin-pointing our gifts. Ministry experience may expose unused gifts.

2) We should allow the advice of other mature Christians to guide us into areas of service for which we are suited and away from areas for which we are not.

3) We should not use spiritual gifts as an excuse to avoid certain ministries. Christians are **universally** told to do some types of ministry (Show mercy – James 2:13; 3:17; Evangelize – Acts 1:8; Exhort one another – Heb.3:13; 10:25; Give – 2 Cor.8:7) which are also the **specific** spiritual gifts of some Christians (Mercy – Rom.12:8; Evangelist – Eph.4:11; Exhortation – Rom.12:8; Giving – Rom.12:8).

4) We must realize that spiritual gifts do not benefit others automatically.

- We must obediently put our gift(s) to use. No one benefits if we don't use them (Rom.12:6-8; 1 Pet.4:10,11).

- We must be diligent to become effective in using our gift (1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim.1:6,7).

- We must use our gifts with proper attitudes (Rom.12:8; 1 Pet.4:11) and at appropriate times and places (1 Cor.14:9-12,22,23,40). Otherwise they can be worthless or even harmful to God's purposes.

V. The Holy Spirit's role in the End Times


A. In the 7-year Tribulation Period

1. In unbelievers – The Holy Spirit will be instrumental in the salvation of Israelites at the close of the tribulation (Zech.12:10).
2. In believers – The Holy Spirit will provide special enablement for spiritual tasks as in Old Testament times (Acts 2:17-21).

B. In the Millennium

1. In believers – The Holy Spirit will enable believing Israelites to live righteously (Ezek.36:27).
2. In Christ – The Holy Spirit will be active in Christ's righteous rule (Isa.11:2).

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