

The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

Lesson #3 for January 21, 2017

Scriptures: Acts 5:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Isaiah 63:10-14; Titus 3:4-7; Romans 8:11; 1 Peter 1:2.

1. This lesson will be a careful Bible study on the nature and work of the Holy Spirit.
2. What defines divinity? Some people call the main church service, *the divine service*. Is that appropriate? How would you determine if an individual is divine or not? God the Father is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament and in the New Testament; His Divinity is simply assumed. Although we know that Jesus was the main Leader of the children of Israel in the Old Testament, (Luke 24:44; John 5:39-40; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4) the Jewish people, even now, believe it was the Father, that is, the One God, *Yahweh*. What does that mean? How can we believe in One God while at the same time talk about Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. Although the divinity of Jesus prior to His coming to this earth has been hotly debated for thousands of years, His divinity is clearly spelled out in the New Testament both in the Gospels and the Epistles.
4. So, that leaves us with a discussion about the Holy Spirit. Where would you look in Scripture for evidence that the Holy Spirit is divine? We do not have any direct biblical statement simply asserting that the Holy Spirit is divine. His divinity is portrayed in more subtle ways. So, let us see if we can determine exactly what the Scripture does teach; but, at the same time, not go beyond what the Bible teaches. How do you read Genesis 1:1-2?
5. It is important in this study to carefully do our research and not to let any preconceived idea that we may have overshadow what the Scriptures say.
6. Some of what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit may be difficult to grasp. Let us see what we can do with it.
7. Read Acts 5:1-4. In his dealing with Ananias as described in Acts 5, Peter clearly equated God and the Holy Spirit. In his brief discussion with Ananias regarding his attempt at stealing from God, he first mentioned that Ananias had lied to the Holy Spirit, and then, he followed up by saying he had lied to God. In a sort of parallelism in these verses, Peter clearly believed and strongly implied that the Holy Spirit is equal to God.
8. As a side note to our main discussion, why was there such a harsh punishment for those two early Christians? The new church was just beginning. If the actions of Ananias and Sapphira had just been ignored or if it appeared that God did not know that they had lied, others would have been tempted to lie as well. And the ability of God to read the thoughts and minds of men and women would have been in question.
9. Is it true that the Members of the Godhead are the only Beings in the universe that can read peoples' minds? Can the Devil read our minds? Can he plant ideas in our minds? How does he do that? Can God plant ideas in our minds? Does He?

The adversary of souls is not permitted to read the thoughts of men; but he is a keen observer, and he marks the words and actions, and skillfully adapts his temptations accordingly. If all would labor to repress sinful thoughts and feelings, giving them no expression in words or acts, Satan would be

defeated; for he would not know how to prepare his specious temptations to meet their cases. But how often do professed Christians, by their lack of self-control, open the door to the adversary of souls!—Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches* 146.2 (1886); *RH*, March 22, 1887, par. 5; *1SM* 122-123; *2MCP* 658.3.

10. In considering this case, we must remember that the early Christians were living a kind of communal life. They lived together; they worked together; they learned together; and they ate together. They studied together in the temple. Acts 4:32 suggests that the unity that was present among them was a direct result of the work of the Holy Spirit.
11. Many people at that point were making significant contributions to the group. How would those people later have regarded Ananias and Sapphira when they discovered that they had lied about the price they received for their property? Would that have promoted the oneness that was felt in that early church community?
12. God needed to take this early attempt at deceit very seriously. Would you say that God was too severe? And even arbitrary? Try to imagine how Ananias and Sapphira themselves would have felt, mingling with the Christian community, knowing that they had lied to Peter and the rest of the group. Ananias and Sapphira not only held back a portion of the money, but also they lied about it. Was that a punishment sent by God? Or, did the stress of realizing that they had been found out lead to heart attacks or strokes? The fact that it happened right there on the spot makes it look like God was directly involved in one way or another. One Jewish physician who does not believe in the Bible discussed this story at a medical meeting and claimed that this was a known medical condition. People die of the sudden shock to their nervous system. One possibility is that this experience in the early church was to remind people that Jesus Christ who was the God of the Old Testament needed to strike people dead in order to prove that He had not changed and was the same God (Malachi 3:6) in the times of the New Testament. A much better explanation is that God needed to act to prevent the devastating effect it would have had on the fellowship and cohesiveness of the early church.
13. There are certain characteristics that we have come to attribute to God alone. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-11 and Isaiah 40:13-14. If the Holy Spirit knows the secret purposes of God, He is clearly omniscient, and that is a characteristic of God alone.
14. Read Psalm 139:7, *KJV*, *NASB95*. If the Holy Spirit is able to be everywhere present, He is described as omnipresent. That is also a divine characteristic.
15. Read Hebrews 9:14 and 1 Timothy 6:16. If only God is eternal/immortal and if the Holy Spirit is eternal, then the Holy Spirit must be God. How does God communicate with human beings? Through the Holy Spirit.
16. Read Luke 1:26,35. Notice that “the Holy Spirit” and “the power of the most High” are parallel constructions. While we have no idea how the Holy Spirit actually impregnated Mary with the divine Son to whom she gave birth, it was certainly one of the greatest miracles of all time. Certainly, no one but God could have done what happened there!
17. In Romans 15:19, Paul said that mighty signs and wonders performed by the power of the Spirit of God have taken place.
18. Read Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:28-29. Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit so unforgivable? Is it because He is divine? Is the “Spirit of truth” the same as the Holy Spirit?

19. Read John 3:5-8. Perhaps the second most important work the Holy Spirit does or has done—second after giving us the Bible—is to change human hearts and minds. That is called a new spiritual birth. So, what does the Spirit actually do in the new birth? Can we clearly see God’s hand at work? An individual must actually give the Holy Spirit permission to work with his/her mind in order for such a transformation to take place. The Holy Spirit is the only One who can actually make such a change in us; but, He will never force us to do it. We must give Him permission.
20. What other kinds of evidence does the Bible give us concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit? Read Isaiah 63:10-14; compare that with Numbers 14:11 and Deuteronomy 32:12. We know that Christ was the Leader of the children of Israel through the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) God Himself (Father? Or, Son?) stated that He guided the children of Israel through those experiences. (Numbers 14:11 and Deuteronomy 32:12) But, Isaiah 63:10 tells us that by their sinning, the people made His Holy Spirit sad. That suggests that the Holy Spirit was at work along with the Father and the Son in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land. Clearly, all the Members of the Godhead work in unison. They never oppose each other.
21. Read 2 Samuel 23:2; compare it with 23:3. Verse 2 says: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me.” (NASB) The following verse says: “The God of Israel said ... to me.” (NASB) This is a clear example of Hebrew parallelism in which the Spirit of the Lord is equated with the God of Israel. Doesn’t that mean that the Holy Spirit is God? And is divine?
22. Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. In these verses we are told that we are to be God’s temple, and the Holy Spirit is to live in us. Once again, the Holy Spirit is equated with God. Which Member of the Godhead can actually dwell in us?
23. Read 1 Corinthians 12:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28. In these two verses, we see that God’s Spirit is the One who gives gifts to the church. Later, we are told that those gifts come from God. Once again, we see the parallelism between Holy Spirit and God.
24. Isaiah 63:10 suggests that the children of Israel made God’s Holy Spirit sad. Could we make the same mistake? Read Ephesians 4:30. The same is applied to the Christian church.
25. Think of all the miracles that the Holy Spirit has performed in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Now imagine yourself visiting God’s throne room in heaven, the control center and heart of the universe. All the angels are gathered around the throne of God. (Daniel 7:9-10) What questions might they ask you as a representative of the human race and of God’s remnant church just over 172 years after the Great Disappointment?
26. Read Titus 3:4-7 (GNB). Notice that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us new birth and new life by “washing us.” This is a clear reference to baptism. Paul went on to say: “God poured out the Holy Spirit abundantly on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that by His grace we might be put right with God and come into possession of the eternal life we hope for.” Clearly, these actions are possible only if the Holy Spirit is divine.
27. Read Isaiah 6:8-10 and Acts 28:25-27. Isaiah quoted the words of God; but, in quoting Isaiah, Paul attributed the words to the Holy Spirit. Paul clearly saw the Holy Spirit as God. Do you think that Paul’s comments were just a coincidence?
28. Read 2 Peter 1:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16. Once again, we notice that 2 Peter says it was the Holy Spirit who gave us the Scriptures while 2 Timothy says it was God. Is it possible that either of these men were confused? Peter and Paul may have both been confined in the

Mamertine Prison in Rome when these words were written.

29. Read John 2:19 and 10:18. How do these verses compare with Romans 8:11? In what sense did the Spirit of God raise Jesus from the dead?

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again.... I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 10:17, 18; 2:19.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 785.2.

30. Does the Holy Spirit still have the power to raise people from the dead? Aren't we depending upon that power if we succumb to death before the second coming?
31. One way to decide whether or not the Holy Spirit is divine is to try to determine what would happen if He had not been there or is not there. We have seen that He gives new birth to believers, He dwells in us and fills us, and He renews our thinking and changes our characters. He even has the power to raise people from the dead. And He can transform us to become holy followers of God. If He were not divine, could He do any of those things?
32. Read 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Matthew 28:18-19. These are three verses in the New Testament which clearly equate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Another reference which some people use is 1 John 5:7-8. Why do some versions not have most of verse 7—except in a footnote?
33. The Latin words equivalent to: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," crept into the *Latin Vulgate* somewhere around 300 to 400 A.D. Those words were not written by John; they are not in the original Greek. Thus, modern translations leave them out.
34. The Bible clearly suggests that the Holy Spirit plays an important part in preparing the Christian for baptism. He is a proper object of worship and the One who is described as dwelling in our minds and hearts. What does it mean to have God dwelling in you?
35. We have put together some fairly compelling evidence from Scripture to suggest that the Holy Spirit is fully divine. Nevertheless, we should not make the mistake of thinking that we fully understand everything that we need to know about the Holy Spirit. He is still a divine mystery.

It is not essential for us to be able to define just what the Holy Spirit is. Christ tells us that the Spirit is the Comforter, "the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father." It is plainly declared regarding the Holy Spirit that, in His work of guiding men into all truth, "He shall not speak of Himself." John 15:26; 16:13.

The nature of the Holy Spirit is a mystery. Men cannot explain it, because the Lord has not revealed it to them. Men having fanciful views may bring together passages of Scripture and put a human construction on them, but the acceptance of these views will not strengthen the church. **Regarding such mysteries, which are too deep for human understanding, silence is golden.**—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* 51.3-52.1. [Bold type

is added.]

36. Let us not make the mistake of speculating beyond what we have seen in this lesson. Are you convinced that Christ is fully divine and has existed for all eternity, even before His coming to this earth? Are you convinced that the Holy Spirit is fully divine?

The Holy Spirit, who is to fill us, is not some vague influence or mystic force. He is a divine Person, to be received with deep humility, veneration, and obedience. Therefore it is not a question of our having more of Him, but of His having more of us—yes, all there is of us.—LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Coming of the Comforter* 159. [Bold type is added.]

We have been brought together as a school, and we need to realize that the Holy Spirit, who is as much a person as God is a person, is walking through these grounds, that the Lord God is our keeper, and helper. He hears every word we utter and knows every thought of the mind.—Ellen G. White, *Ms 66*, 1899, p. 4. (Talk to Avondale School, April 15, 1899.)

37. Have you personally felt the workings of the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you appreciate all that He does? As far as possible, are you willing to cooperate with Him in making the changes necessary to prepare yourself for the kingdom to come?
38. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 again. The earthly tabernacle constructed at the foot of Mount Sinai and the most holy place of the temple built by Solomon contained the Shekinah—the visible presence of God. Is it true that God’s Holy Spirit wants to transform your mind into a *most holy* dwelling place for Himself? The Holy Spirit is not some force to be used; He is not some miraculous power into which we can tap. He is a divine Member of the Godhead whom we should worship and thank daily. We are not to use the Holy Spirit. When we fully understand all He wants to do for us, we should love to be used by Him.
39. Are you convinced that the Holy Spirit is all-knowing, all-powerful, omnipresent, and eternal? (1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Psalm 104:30; 139:7; Hebrews 9:14)
40. Read Matthew 28:18-19; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Genesis 1:1-2. Maybe, by default, we assume that God the Father is the primary God of the Old Testament. That is actually incorrect. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-4. That same Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who led Israel through the wilderness is featured in the four Gospels. But, which Member of the Godhead is foremost in the book of Acts? Is it not the Holy Spirit?
41. When the Holy Spirit is mentioned, what comes to your mind?
42. Have you personally experienced what it is like to try to live a good life even a holy life without the Holy Spirit? How much different are things when we fully cooperate with the Holy Spirit?
43. Read Romans 15:19. Didn’t Paul think that everything that he had accomplished was done with the help of the Holy Spirit?
44. What are the characteristics of God? What makes God, God? Clearly, They are eternal. As hard as it is for us to wrap our minds around the idea, we believe that all three Members of the Godhead have existed from eternity past and will be there for eternity future.
45. There are some prominent theologians even among Adventists who believe that the future is “open,” that is, they think there are some things that not even God can know before they happen. That idea is alien to the Bible.

46. If we were to take a very human example: God the Father might be referred to as the Chief Executive Officer of the Godhead. Jesus might be referred to as the Chief Operating Officer; He is the one who has related to angels, becoming an Angel to the angels, and becoming a Human to humans.
47. But, the Holy Spirit working with the angels is the One who carries out many of the functions of the Godhead, functioning like the Project Manager for the Godhead.
48. Think of your life and what you have been through in the past. Now consider the powers and abilities that we have discussed that belong to the Holy Spirit. What would you like the Holy Spirit to do for you right now?

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