

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the invisible power of God by which He does His work and by which He empowers His servants to carry out His will. It is holy because it comes from God Whose power is always directed at righteous purposes.

David the Psalmist said: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." (Psalm 143:10) The spirit of God stands in total contrast to that of the devil which is called "evil spirit" because it is used for evil purposes.

In the King James Version of the Holy Bible, the Holy Spirit is wrongly referred to as the "holy ghost". The word "ghost" means "the supposed spirit of somebody who has died, believed to appear as a shadowy form or to cause sounds, the movement of objects, or a frightening atmosphere in a place". Since the Bible and practical experience show clearly that the dead are lifeless and cannot think or reason or act, and that they can only become conscious again on the day of resurrection, (Psalm 6:5; Job 14:13-15; etc.), it follows that the expression "holy ghost" is a misnomer. That is why modern translations now use the term "Holy Spirit", which is the correct translation.

The Holy Spirit is not "the third person of the Trinity"; it is not a "a distinct person, equal with the Father and the Son", "exercising the acts, thoughts, emotions, and volition of a distinct intelligent person", as stated in the American Tract Society Dictionary among other references. When Jesus Christ says his disciples should baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Holy Spirit), the understanding is that the baptism should be done in the name of God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is only from God Almighty through His son Jesus Christ that we can get salvation, by His grace. Jesus Christ said: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." – John 17:3

Active force

The heavens and the earth were created by God Almighty through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-18; Ephesians 3:9) The Bible says: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:6, 9) In the book of Job it is stated that God "divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens..." (Job 26:12, 13) Thus, when the Bible says that in the beginning, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters", (Genesis 1:2), it only means that the power of God was in operation in the process of creation.

Leadership

It is by the Holy Spirit that leaders of God's people are enabled or empowered to direct His people, according to His will. Moses, the servant of God was endowed with the Holy Spirit by reason of which he was able to carry out the assignment of leading the children of Israel from Egypt to the borders of the land of Canaan. (Exodus 3:1-14; Isaiah 63:11-14) When the work of ruling the natural Jews became too much for Moses, God took part of the spirit that was in him and gave 70 of the elders of the Jews and they prophesied or spoke the word of God, as a sign that they had been empowered by Him. – Numbers 11:14-17.

Interestingly, two of the elders who were in the camp when other elders were put into office, Eldad and Medad, also prophesied from where they were in the camp, when the spirit came upon them. When a young man ran and told Moses, that the elders were prophesying, Joshua implored Moses to stop them but Moses in his reply said: "Enviest thou for my sake? would God

that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:25-29) The point Moses was making was that persons endowed with the Holy Spirit would be given to the doing of righteousness, making the task of administering them to be an easy one.

Having been told that he would not reach the promised land, Moses prayed God to "set a man over the congregation, ... which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd". God granted his request and commanded Moses saying: "... Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient". (Numbers 27:16-20) By virtue of the spirit given him, Joshua was able to lead the natural Jews and complete the journey to the Promised Land.

Other leaders God chose later and gave His spirit by which they were able to lead His people out of captivity include such men as Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. – Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6.

Gifts

By the spirit of God, several men and women in time of old were sufficiently equipped or endowed with skills which they put to use to the glory of God. One of such persons was a man called Bezaleel. The Bible says: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." – Exodus 31:1-3.

Also, God gave His Spirit of wisdom to those who made Aaron's garments and they were able to make them "for glory and for beauty". (Exodus 28:2, 3) Emphasizing the power of the spirit in equipping the people of God with various skills to glorify His work, St. Paul stated: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." -1 Corinthians 12:4-12. See also Romans 12:4-8.

Anointing Spirit

Through the Holy Spirit, God Almighty communicated directly with the prophets of old enabling them to see and understand spiritual things and to testify to the truth of His word. David the prophet stated: "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2) And in the book of Micah it is stated: "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." Micah 3:8.

An interesting incident that illustrates the transformation that occurs in the lives of ordinary people when they are empowered by the Holy Spirit was when Elijah was translated and his servant Elisha was commissioned by God to continue the work. The Bible shows that when Elijah was taken up by the whirlwind, the Holy Spirit fell on Elisha. From then on, Elisha started demonstrating the power of God. The Bible says that "when the sons of the prophets which were

to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him". (2 Kings 2: 9-15) What the sons of the prophets meant was that God Almighty had empowered Elisha to do His work as He had used Elijah.

Right from ancient times, God Almighty had purposed to send Jesus Christ to this earth and to endow him with His Holy Spirit to enable him proclaim the truth and righteousness of God as had never been done by any man. Thus, in Isaiah 11:2 it is stated that: "...the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD". The works Jesus Christ would do by the power of God are spelt out in greater detail in Isaiah 61:1-3, which says: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God ..." When Jesus Christ went into the Synagogue in Nazareth, he was given the book of the prophet Isaiah from where he read this particular prophecy and affirmed that it referred to him. He stated: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears". (Luke 4:16-21) The anointing of Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit took place at the time of His baptism in River Jordan when it descended on him in the form of a dove. (Matthew 3:16,17) In the words of Apostle John, the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus Christ "without measure". – John 3:34

When his earthly ministry was coming to an end, Jesus Christ encouraged his immediate disciples, the apostles with the promise to send them the Holy Spirit, which he called the Comforter, or the Spirit of truth. In John 14:26 it is written: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:16-18; 16:13) That the Holy Spirit is personified, does not mean that it is a person. Personification is just a literary device that ascribes human characteristics to a non-living object. The point is made clearer in chapter 15 verse 26 where Jesus Christ, just before his death told the apostles: "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."

Restating his promise to the apostles, Jesus Christ told them: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) This promise of Jesus Christ to the 12 apostles fulfilled on the day of Pentecost following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which descended on the apostles as cloven tongues of fire. – Acts 2:1-41.

The gift of anointing of the Holy Spirit enables those of the apostles' class to be taught and directed by God in spirit. They need not go to seminaries to learn the Bible. (Isaiah 54:13; Ezekiel 3:1-3; Galatians 1:11-14; Revelation 10:8-11) Apostle John stated: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." – 1 John 2:27

"Other Sheep"

However, it is not only the apostles who have the spirit of God. While the apostles, known as the "Little Flock" have the spirit of anointing, the vast majority of the worshippers of God who constitute the "Other Sheep", (John 10:16), also have the spirit of God, though not that of anointing. One who has the spirit of God will show what St. Paul called the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22,23 and Ephesians 5:9. These are marks of true discipleship which practically demonstrates that such a person is a true Christian. It could therefore be understood why David the prophet prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." – Psalm 51:10, 11.

At any rate, no one can serve God without having His spirit, hence St. Paul said: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Romans 8:9) As our Lord Jesus Christ said, God will not fail to give the Holy Spirit to those who call on him, day and night. Luke 11:13.

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that people are able to accept the truth as to be converted to the true faith. (Job 32:8) The case of Lydia, a seller of purple, "whose heart the Lord opened" to accept the truth preached by St. Paul at Philippi, is very striking. (Acts 16:12-15) Hence St. Paul stated: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." – 1 Corinthians 2:14.

Sin against the Holy Spirit

During his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ spoke of sin against the Holy Spirit when he stated: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matthew 12:31, 32) Another rendition of the same episode in the account of Mark reads thus: "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." – Mark 3:28-30. Sin against the Holy Spirit is deliberate opposition to the work of God by one who has already received the knowledge of the truth. It is wilful or deliberate sin which Apostle John said was "sin unto death". (1 John 5:15, 16) Such will not receive forgiveness. On this score St. Paul stated: "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" – Hebrews 10:26-29. See also Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-22.