

EQTH105 Basic Bible Doctrine

Unit 5a Who Is the Holy Spirit?

Presented by the



LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE
CAPITAL SEMINARY & GRADUATE SCHOOL

For Use by the

Blue Letter Bible Institute

[Web: Study.Bible](http://Study.Bible)

A Ministry of the

Blue Letter Bible

[Web: BlueLetterBible.org](http://BlueLetterBible.org)

Welcome back. We are now in Unit 5 where we are dealing with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We've already spent some time exploring the doctrine of God, the attributes of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, and the person of Jesus Christ. So the logical next step would be to look at the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. To begin any discussion about the Holy Spirit, it would probably be a great start to establish a basic understanding of who he is and what he does. The name Holy Spirit comes from two Greek words: *hagion* meaning holy, and *pneuma* meaning spirit. In Scripture, the Holy Spirit is known by various names, including the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of truth. Jesus refers to him as another Comforter and the helper [John 14:16]. But all that aside, the most important fact is that the Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit *is* God. All throughout Scripture, both Old Testament and New, we see this fundamental truth. Woven throughout the verses, we see, number one, he is called God. Number two, he is treated on an equal basis with God the Father and God the Son. Number three, he has the characteristics of God. And number four, he does the work of God.

So let's start with this number one, the fact that he is called God. The primary reason we believe the Holy Spirit to be God is because the Scripture clearly affirms this. In the second verse of the Bible, he is called the Spirit of God. Genesis 1:2 says, "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." The Bible designates the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of the Lord God. Isaiah 61:1 says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." And just to clarify, he is called God in both the Old and New Testament. For example, Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord. He says, "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'" And that's in Isaiah 6:8. Now, you might be saying, "Well, that verse doesn't mention the Holy Spirit." But the New Testament identifies the voice that spoke to Isaiah as the voice of the Holy Spirit. It says, "So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: 'The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers.'" And that's in Acts 28:25.

In the New Testament, we find the following account. "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? You have not lied to men but to God.'" And that's in Acts 5. It's in the first four verses. [Acts 5:1-4] You can see in that verse that Peter is linking God and the Holy Spirit. He made it clear that Ananias did not lie to men but to God. The person he lied to was the Holy Spirit. And the conclusion is obvious. The Holy Spirit is God.

The second point: The Holy Spirit is treated on an equal basis with God the Father and God the Son. The Holy Spirit is not only called God, he is also associated on an equal basis with the other two members of the Godhead: the Father and the Son. Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Of course, you probably recognize the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19. The apostle Paul wrote, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." [2Co 13:14]

We can see the Holy Spirit is linked by association to the other members of the Godhead, and this provides further testimony that they are of the same nature, for neither men nor angels are ever associated on the same level with God.

The third point is that the Holy Spirit has the characteristics of God. We've talked previously about the attributes of God, and these are attributes of God alone. Neither men nor the angels, for example, can be present everywhere at once. Nor are they all-knowing. But we see that the Holy Spirit shares these attributes. In Psalm 139:7, it says, "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" So here we see the Holy Spirit and omnipresence linked together. We also see that he is all-knowing. We read, "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God." [1Co 2:10-11] So we see that the Holy Spirit is also omniscient. Isaiah writes, "Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor taught Him?" [Isa 40:13]

Third, we see that he is called the eternal Spirit. Hebrews reads, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God?" This is in Hebrews 9:14. These attributes which the Bible ascribes to the Holy Spirit (all-knowing, everywhere present, and eternal) belong to God, and to God alone. So we see the Holy Spirit is called God. He is treated on an equal basis with God the Father and God the Son. And we see that he has the characteristics of God.

Number four, we see that the Holy Spirit performs the work of God. In fact, the Holy Spirit performed certain works that only God himself can perform. For instance, the Bible teaches that he, the Holy Spirit, that is, was involved in the creation of the universe. It says, "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." [Gen 1:2] The Holy Spirit was also involved in the creation of life. It says, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gave me life." And that's in Job 33:4.

Another work of God that the Holy Spirit performs is that the Holy Spirit is the ultimate source behind the books of the Bible. In 2 Peter, we read, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." And that's in 2 Peter 1:20-21. In 2 Timothy, we read, "Since all Scripture is God-breathed, the Holy Spirit, the source of biblical truth, is God." [2Ti 3:16] So the Holy Spirit is instrumental in the divine revelation of Scripture. He is also the divine agent that brought Jesus, God the Son, into the world. We read, "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" And that's in Luke 1. [Luke 1:35] The Bible says that it was the Holy Spirit who guided Jesus during his earthly life and was instrumental in his resurrection. We read, "Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region." [Luke 4:14] All of these works are works of God, for no being less than God can perform them.

Now, to go off on a little trail here, I'd like to explore the names of the Holy Spirit, the titles of his deity, if you will. You could look up these texts specifically, but here are some of his titles: the Spirit [John 3:6-8], the Holy Spirit [Luke 11:13], the Spirit of God [1Co 3:16], the Spirit of the Lord [Isa 63:14], the Spirit of the Lord God [Isa 61:1], the Spirit of the Living God [2Co 3:3], the Spirit of the Father [Matt 10:20], the Spirit of Jesus [Acts 16:6-7], the Holy Spirit of God [Eph 4:30], the Spirit of Christ [Rom 8:9], the Spirit of Jesus Christ [Phl 1:19], the Spirit of his Son [Gal 4:6], the Spirit who is of God [1Co 2:12]. These titles set forth the fact that the Holy Spirit is God. They also show, however, that he is a distinct person from God the Father and God the Son. And this is an important doctrine. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity, simply stated, is as follows. The Bible teaches that there is one eternal God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the only God that exists. Within the nature of this one God are three eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons are the one God. The Trinity doctrine is based on what the Scripture says concerning the nature of God. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit is called God, though he is a distinct person from God the Father and God the Son.

So to wrap up this first section, after a close study of Scripture, we can conclude the following. Number one, the Holy Spirit is called God. Number two, the Holy Spirit is associated on an equal basis with the Father and the Son. Number three, the Holy Spirit has the characteristics of God. And number four, the Holy Spirit does work that only God can do. From this, we conclude that the Holy Spirit is the eternal God.

But while we know the Holy Spirit is God, he is, to many people, an enigma. Some people see him as an impersonal force or influence. Some deny his very existence. And others are not certain who or what the Holy Spirit is. The Bible, as we have established, teaches that the Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Holy Trinity. By person, we mean one who has his own identity or individuality as a rational being, conscious of his own existence. The fact is that the Holy Spirit is a person. And this can be observed in four ways. He has the characteristics of a person. He acts like a person. He is treated as a person. And he is the third person of the Trinity, and he is therefore personal.

So let's think about this. The Scriptures attribute to the Holy Spirit characteristics that only a person can possess. He is portrayed as a thinking being, an emotional being, a volitional being, that is to say, one who chooses. So let's look at that first. A thinking being. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit has the intellectual capacity to think. We read, "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." [1Co 2:10] The Holy Spirit thinks and reasons. These things imply personality.

Next, we see that the Holy Spirit is an emotional being. He not only thinks like a person; he has feelings like a person. He can give and receive love. In Romans, we read, "Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." [Rom 15:30] And while we are talking about emotions, the Holy Spirit can be grieved. Ephesians reads, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." That's Ephesians 4:30. And talking about emotions, the Holy Spirit can also be insulted.

It says, “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” [Heb 10:29] That’s in the Book of Hebrews. He responds emotionally the way a person responds.

And the third thing, he is a choosing being. He can make choices. The Holy Spirit has a will to choose. We read, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:11) These attributes are consistent with person-hood. And we see that the characteristics ascribed to the Holy Spirit (thought, feelings, choice) are attributes of a person.

In addition, there are deeds that the Holy Spirit performs that only a person can do. For example, he teaches. We read, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” [1Co 2:13] He gives guidance. We read, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” [Rom 8:14] He provides comfort. It says, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away.” This is Jesus speaking. “For if I do not go away, the Comforter (that’s the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” [John 16:7] Next, we see him commanding. It says, “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’” [Acts 8:29] Again, these are all things that a human being can do. He can give understanding. It says, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.” [John 16:13] Next, we see that he speaks. Again, something a human being can do. “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’” [Acts 13:2]

These deeds attributed to the Holy Spirit are not the acts of an impersonal force. They are the acts of a person. And whenever the Holy Spirit is encountered in a historical situation in Scripture, we discover that he is always treated as a person. If you look in Acts 5, the story that we told earlier, the Bible records that Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?” [Acts 5:3] You can only lie to a person. Stephen told the Sanhedrin that they were disobeying the Holy Spirit by resisting him. He said, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.” [Acts 7:51] You do not disobey an impersonal force. That would be like deciding one day to disobey gravity. You can only disobey a person. Another example: Simon Peter went to the house of Cornelius as the Holy Spirit directed. It says, “While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are seeking you.’” [Acts 10:19] Again, we see obedience to a person. Whenever we find the Holy Spirit in historical narrative, he is consistently treated as though he is a person, never as anything else.

The final reason that we conclude that the Holy Spirit is a person is that he is addressed as God. He is a member of the Godhead, which consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” [Matt 28:19] The Father and the Son are personal beings, and the Holy Spirit is treated in the same manner and assumed to be a person. So just to sum up this second part, we conclude the following concerning the Holy Spirit. Number one, the Holy Spirit has the attributes of a person. Number two, the Spirit performs the acts of a person. Number three, the Holy Spirit is treated as a person. And number four, the Holy Spirit is God, and therefore, by nature, is personal.