

DEREK PRINCE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

Who is the Holy Spirit?



Part 1/6

Who Is the Holy Spirit?
By Derek Prince

The Bible is the inspired revelation of God, given to us so that we may come to know God more fully. But how can we possibly know Him? He is eternal, immortal, invisible.

Because of this unique, unparalleled "otherness" of God, it may seem beyond our grasp to understand Him—and in particular, to understand His Holy Spirit. But as we will see in this Teaching Legacy series, *Who Is the Holy Spirit*, He longs for us to know Him. Even in the face of His "otherness," we can know God more fully.

My purpose in this letter—and in those to come—is to help you understand Who the Holy Spirit is, so you can grow in your own personal relationship with this mysterious third person of the Trinity. My hope is that your life may be marked by the ever-increasing presence of the Holy Spirit.

Three Distinct Persons

In order to understand who the Holy Spirit is, let's begin by laying a Biblical foundation regarding the Trinity. This involves two words: "oneness" and "plurality" (meaning more than "one").

In God, both "oneness" and "plurality" are eternally combined. This mystery confronts us in the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). In the original Hebrew, *Elohim* (the word for "God") is plural in form, but the verb *bara* (the word for "created") is singular. In other words, the very first words of the Bible establish that both "oneness" and "plurality" are combined in God Himself.

Further on, in Genesis 1:26, we see a combination of singular and plural in reference to God:

> Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. ..."

The verb "said" is singular in form. But, the pronouns "Us" and "Our" are plural.

This combination of singular and plural in reference to God recurs in other passages of Scripture as well. When Isaiah had a vision of the Lord on His throne, he then heard Him say, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" (Isaiah 6:8). The pronoun "I" implies that one Person is speaking. But the pronoun "Us" indicates that He is speaking on behalf of more than one Person.

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In the ongoing revelation of Scripture, three distinct persons emerge, each of whom is God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. Interestingly, the first of the three divine persons referred to individually in Scripture is the Spirit: "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2).

The Parable of Light

We can never "explain" God. But in His created world, He has provided various "parables" which reveal His nature to us. One of these is the parable of **light**. Because light is such a part of everyday life, we rarely give it much thought. Yet in this singular phenomenon, we also discern plurality—reflecting the plurality of God's own nature—in at least two forms.

Light is regularly refracted into the **three** primary colors: blue, yellow, and red. In the rainbow, light appears in **seven** colors: violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red. Thus within the unity of light, there is the trinity of the primary colors and the **sevenfold** diversity of the rainbow.

Throughout Scripture seven is the number particularly associated with the Holy Spirit. Revelation 4:5 speaks of "the *seven* Spirits of God." In Isaiah 11:1–2 the prophet foreshows how the Holy Spirit will set apart Jesus as the Messiah (the Anointed One). He lists seven distinct aspects of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of **the Lord** (the Spirit that speaks in the first person as God); the Spirit of **wisdom**; the Spirit of **understanding**; the Spirit of **counsel**; the Spirit of **might**; the Spirit of **knowledge**; the Spirit of **the fear of the Lord**.

In Acts 13:2, the Holy Spirit is plainly presented as being Himself God. Speaking to the leaders of the church in Antioch, "the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Clearly the Holy Spirit is speaking here in the first person as God.

An Exciting Discovery

Perhaps the supreme revelation of God's grace is His redemption of the fallen human race through the sacrifice of Jesus. As I studied the details of this redemption, I made an exciting discovery: in every stage each Person of the Godhead played a unique and distinctive role.

1. **The conception of Jesus.** God the Father caused Jesus to be conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1:35).
2. **The beginning of the ministry of Jesus.** When Jesus submitted Himself to the baptism of John, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove and the Father acknowledged Him as His Son (see Luke 3:21–22).
3. **The ongoing ministry of Jesus.** Peter sums this up in Acts 10:38: "God [the Father] anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...."
4. **The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.** "Christ... through the eternal Spirit [i.e. the Holy Spirit] offered Himself without spot to God [the Father]..." (see Hebrews 9:14).
5. **The resurrection of Jesus.** God the Father resurrected Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Romans 1:4; 8:11).
6. **Pentecost.** Exalted to the right hand of God the Father, Jesus received from Him the gift of the Holy Spirit and poured it out on the waiting disciples (see Acts 2:33).

In each stage of redemption, the Holy Spirit played His own vital and distinctive role. He is rightly called both "the Spirit of grace" and "the Spirit of glory"—grace, that is, which leads to glory (see Hebrews 10:29; 1 Peter 4:14).

Another Mysterious Attribute

This next unique fact about the Holy Spirit stretches our powers of comprehension. The Spirit is both personal and non-personal—both a He and an it!

To understand this remarkable truth, we need a brief explanation of Greek, the language in which the New Testament has come to us. Greek has three genders: masculine (he), feminine (she), neuter (it). Grammatically, the Greek word for "spirit," *pneuma*, is neuter. The appropriate pronoun would therefore be neuter—in other words, "it." However, both "He" and "it" are applied to the Holy Spirit (but never "she"). For example, in John 16:13 the rules of Greek grammar are deliberately set aside to emphasize that the Holy Spirit is a "He" as well as an "it": "However, when *He*, the Spirit of truth, has come..."

Like English, Greek uses the definite article which corresponds to our word, "the." (On the other hand, some other languages, such as Latin or Russian, do not have any corresponding word.) In the Greek New Testament, the phrase "Holy Spirit" is sometimes preceded by the definite article (corresponding to "the"). However—and this is very important—sometimes it occurs without it. In English this would be equivalent to the difference between "the Holy Spirit" and "Holy Spirit."

To English ears, however, the phrase “Holy Spirit” on its own sounds incomplete. Therefore English translations invariably insert “the” before “Holy Spirit,” even when it is not there in the original Greek. Only by consulting the Greek text is it possible to determine whether “the” is actually there.

A Vital Distinction

At first, this might not seem all that significant. But through my study of the Greek New Testament, I have come to the conclusion that the presence or absence of “the” in conjunction with the Holy Spirit marks a vital distinction. When “Holy Spirit” is not preceded by “the,” it denotes something non-personal: life, a power, a force, a presence, an influence. On the other hand, when “Holy Spirit” is preceded by “the,” He is being depicted as a Person.

Consider the following example. A very distinctive mark of personality is the ability to speak. At Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended from heaven, **He spoke** in other tongues through the disciples. By this He signified that He had come, as a Person, to take up His dwelling on earth. He is now the permanent, personal representative of the Godhead residing on earth.

From then on, each time the Holy Spirit comes to take up His residence as a Person in the body of a believer, it is appropriate that He should manifest His presence by speaking out of that believer in a new language supernaturally imparted. In effect, He is saying, “Now you know that I am here as a Person to indwell your body.”

For this reason, in 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul prefixes, or adds, the definite article:

> Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

He is emphasizing that speaking in tongues is not merely a brief supernatural experience. Beyond that, it is a divinely given sign that the Holy Spirit, as a Person, has taken up His dwelling in the believer’s body, thereby making it a sacred temple. On the other hand, when people are being baptized in, or filled with, the Holy Spirit, the definite article is usually omitted. This would indicate that the Holy Spirit is here seen as something non-personal—as life, or power, or an influence.

The following two lists are to help you see this important distinction—the presence or absence of the definite article “the”—in conjunction with “Holy Spirit.” In the first list of passages, “the” is prefixed (or added) to “Holy Spirit”; in the second list, “Holy Spirit” occurs without “the.”

With “The” Prefixed

The following are some of the passages where “the” is prefixed to “Holy Spirit.”

- Matthew 12:31: “... but the blasphemy against the [Holy] Spirit will not be forgiven men” (compare Mark 3:29).
- Mark 13:11: “... it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.”
- Luke 3:22: “And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him [Jesus]. ...”
- John 14:26: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit ... He will teach you all things....”
- Acts 2:38: “... and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
- Acts 13:2: “... the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’”
- Acts 15:28: “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us.”
- 1 Corinthians 6:19: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?”

Without “The” Prefixed

Here are some passages where “the” is omitted (in the Greek).

- Matthew 1:18: “... she [Mary] was found with child of [or pregnant by] Holy Spirit.”
- Matthew 3:11: “He will baptize you with Holy Spirit and fire” (compare Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5).
- Luke 1:35: “Holy Spirit will come upon you [Mary]... therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”
- John 20:22: “... He [Jesus] breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive Holy Spirit [or holy breath].’”
- Acts 10:38: “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and with power....”
- Romans 15:13: “... that you may abound in hope by the power of Holy Spirit.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:3: “... no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by Holy Spirit.”

- Titus 3:5: "... washing of regeneration and renewing of Holy Spirit..."
- Hebrews 6:4: "... and have become partakers of Holy Spirit..."
- 2 Peter 1:21: "... holy men... spoke as they were moved [borne along] by Holy Spirit."

Titles of the Holy Spirit

Finally, here are just a few of the many titles given in Scripture to the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of **grace**; the Spirit of **glory**; the Spirit of **wisdom**; the Spirit of **truth**; the Spirit of **self-discipline**.

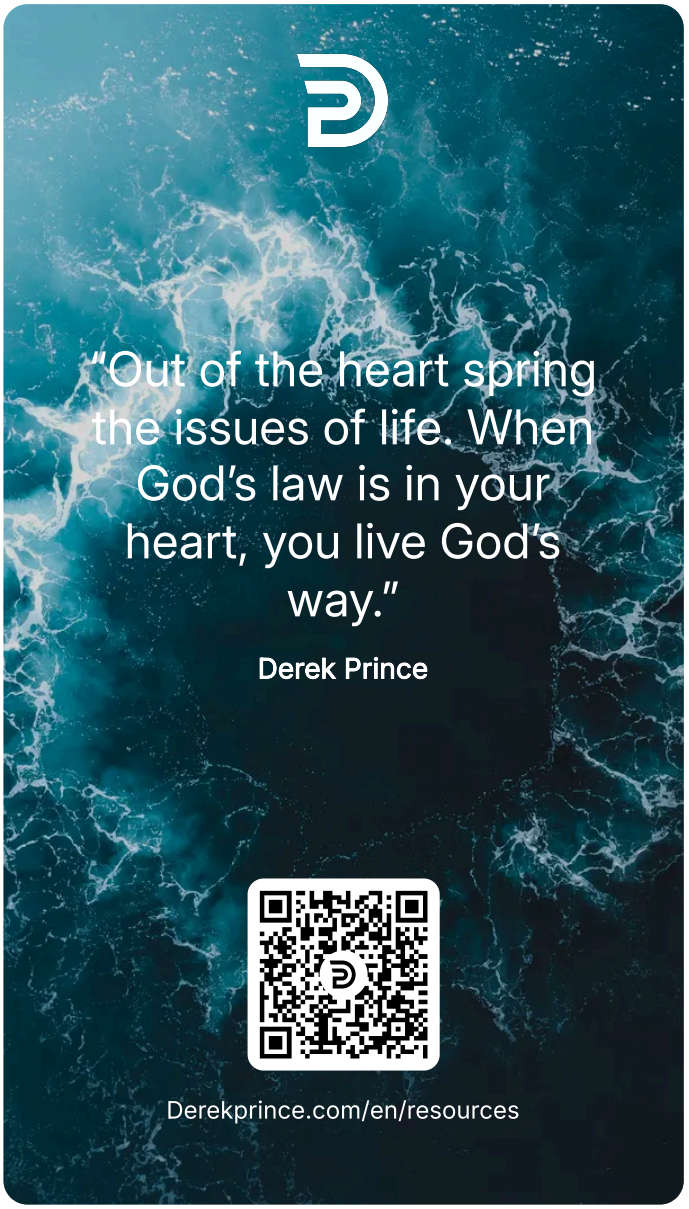
Let's take a moment to meditate on the significance of each of these titles. Now let's give thanks to Jesus, the One Who has fulfilled His promise to send us the Holy Spirit.

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for sending the Spirit to me. I am in awe of what I have just learned about the Person of the Holy Spirit. Through His power in me, I can become who You created me to be. I want to know Him better and have more of His presence in my life. I ask now that You will grant me a deeper and more profound experience of this third Person of the Trinity. Come, Holy Spirit... come. Amen.

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