

the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they spoke the word of God with boldness. 32 Now the

multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

5:1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 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. 3 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? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. 7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

## "Who Is the Holy Spirit?"

Today is Pentecost Sunday and I will continue my mini-series of topical sermons to address the three Sundays that we come to at this time of year in the Church calendar:

- Ascension Sunday, where we remember the bodily ascension of Jesus to the Father's right hand...
- Pentecost Sunday, where we remember that, as promised, God the Holy Spirit was poured out as our comforter and guide.
- And then, the beginning of ordinary time in the Church calendar where we use Trinity Sunday to remember the nature of our Triune God and all it means to us in our lives and witness.

Each year we move from Advent to Pentecost remembering all that God has done for us and then moving from Trinity Sunday back to Advent we count the Sundays of ordinary time, remembering that Jesus said to His disciples, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

I am striving to aim these messages primarily at the children this year, as we consider the reality of the Ascension, the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the importance of the Trinity.

Last week we considered the question, 'Where is Jesus Today?' learning about one of the great mysteries revealed in the Scriptures: The two natures of Jesus where we know Him to be both the Son of God and the Son of man: Perfect God and perfect man!

Let me begin with a quick lesson about the power of language for the older children: I want you to notice that I have set many of the parameters of this discussion by the very question that I ask.

- Notice that I did not ask, ‘What is the Holy Spirit?’

By asking “Who is the Holy Spirit” I have made the assumption that we are talking about a person. This is very appropriate because that is exactly how the Scriptures present the Spirit of God, but had I said “What is the Holy Spirit” we would begin the discussion from a different point. Today’s skeptics certainly understand the importance of this when they come asking their challenging questions: “Is it reasonable to have faith?” or “Is it reasonable to believe in God?”

Now if someone asks such a question, we should want to quickly jump in and begin witnessing to them, but as we do we must make sure that we don’t start with their assumptions... By asking those questions they are setting up man’s “reason” as the standard by which we judge faith or the existence of God. The reality is just the opposite!

- And we must point out to them, at the beginning, that there is no way to establish any meaning for faith or reason without God’s existence!

If you want to learn from the Master in this regard, notice how many times in the Gospels, Jesus would answer a question with another question. In the case of our modern skeptics, I would answer either of their questions with one for them to consider as we begin the discussion:

- How would you define, or what do you mean by reason?

They will likely say something like, ‘*well EVERYONE’ knows what reason is,*’

- But we must not allow them to assume what require God & faith!*[mention the discussion about ‘minds’ w/ Steve’s article]*
- So back to our question: “Who is the Holy Spirit”

While asking the question this way does not prove that He is a person, it is still the proper place to begin the discussion. Now of course someone who is a skeptic or even sincerely searching could also ask another question of us: How do you know the Spirit is a ‘Who?’

- We would take them to the Bible: God’s revelation to man!

As we work through what has been revealed about the third person of the Trinity in God’s Word we will see that His personhood is beyond dispute, as we would find with faith & existence of God in any honest discussion. Let me begin with what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in His final discussions with His disciples before He was betrayed and went to the cross as the great sacrifice for our sins: Jesus promised that the Spirit would come in the near future and described at least three aspects of His work in the Church and the world...

John 14:15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”

- Notice that Jesus naturally refers to the Spirit as Him.

you while being present with you. 26 But the Helper, the  
y name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your  
7 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the  
art be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

- Jesus then discusses at least three areas where the Spirit will serve as our powerful Helper...
- He will testify of Jesus:

John 15:26: ““But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

- The Spirit will bring the world under conviction:

John 16:7 “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

- And finally, as we have been learning in our journey through the Book of Acts, the Holy Spirit will glorify the Son:

John 16:13 “[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; and He will tell you things to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

So now we have established that the Spirit is a person and have a pretty good idea of what the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been and why it was so important that He came as promised on Pentecost *[which is why we remember Pentecost Sunday each and every year!]* But we still have not yet addressed the basic question that we want our children and all of us to be able to rightly answer:

- Who is the Holy Spirit?

As is often the case, we should briefly consider what He is NOT...

- The Spirit is NOT an ‘it.’

As we have already seen, the Bible clearly presents the Spirit as a person to whom we can relate: The Spirit of God teaches us, strives with us, comforts us, and helps us in our time of need. The Bible teaches that He can be vexed, grieved and even lied to as we saw in our text this morning.

- The Spirit is NOT an experience!

Another way to think about this point is that it is NOT ALL about us! In Evangelical churches there is much talk about the “gifts of the Spirit” and in Charismatic churches they talk of begin baptized in the Holy Spirit and even the Mormons invoke the Spirit by saying that it will give you a warm feeling in your bosom is you pray about whether what they have shared is true. *[To be fair and include a criticism of the Reformers, we don’t talk enough about the Spirit!]*

- To avoid such errors, within and without the Church we need to remember that the Spirit’s work is NOT primarily about us!

It is not about what gift WE can have, how often WE talk in tongues nor does He confirm truth with OUR feelings, warm or otherwise.

- The Spirit of God has been given by the Father to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus so they can both bring glory to the Son!

orders & gifts,

Word to lead us into all Truth,

is certainly not restricted from performing whatever miracles He might deem necessary.

Related to this is another point that must be made in our modern world:

- The Spirit is NOT a force!

Those who know me well will chuckle here because they know I am going to say a word about Star Wars! The writers of these “fun” or “entertaining” movies went to great lengths to explain the force and it was nothing short of a good sales pitch for pantheism! *[which I would argue children should understand IF they want to watch those movies!]* Even many adults have not thought this through and missed many good chances to witness about the truth... How can there be “good” or “evil” in the Star Wars world IF the force is derived from ALL living things?

So no, the Spirit of God is not some force emanating from the Creation and this is why we must confront all the mysticism that surrounds us today from the Star Wars movies to the traditional Hinduism and even the Yogi centers on every corner.

- The Spirit of God is not “in” everything...
- He is the creator of everything!

Now as we turn to answer our question please remember that I cannot possibly cover all that we can know about the Holy Spirit in one sermon, but I want to give you three things to remember about Him when we think about the question: Who is the Holy Spirit?

- The Holy Spirit is our God!

We saw this clearly in our text this morning where they lied to God! *[talk about the fear of the Lord being the beginning of wisdom and how God chastens those He loves.]*

Here is the second thing to remember:

- The Holy Spirit is our Guide!

Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit... 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

And finally, we should remember...

- The Holy Spirit is our Comforter!

Jesus promised that He would send the Comforter and we see this role nowhere more clearly than as Paul continues in on Romans chapter eight:

the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not  
but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out,  
as witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and  
that heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we  
the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know  
what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings  
which cannot be uttered. 27 Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is,  
because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things  
work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity as we shall see in detail next week...

- He is our God and deserves our worship and our obedience.

The Spirit is the one who comes to bring glory to Jesus and He prepares us to be the glorious bride of Christ...

- He is our guide in all of life!

The Holy Spirit is the one who confirms God’s love for His people causing them to cry out ‘Abba Father’

- He is truly the Comforter who Jesus promised to send!

Who is the Holy Spirit?

- He is our God ...

Our guide ...

And our comforter!

**Communion Meditation: Exodus 18:7**

“So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. 8 And Moses told his father-in-law all that Jehovah had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how Jehovah had delivered them. 9 Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which Jehovah had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians.

10 And Jethro said, "Blessed be Jehovah, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God.”