A STUDY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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INTRODUCTION:

Much has been written and spoken about the Holy Spirit. The number of books, articles and tapes produced about the Holy Spirit is very large. Yet, in spite of the abundance of material, there is still widespread misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit.

More controversy surrounds the Holy Spirit than any other person of the Godhead. Here are but a few of the areas related to the Spirit where there is misunderstanding: His nature, being, work, relation to revelation, giving of miraculous powers, indwelling, etc. It is difficult to find anything related to the Holy Spirit that is not the subject of controversy.

What is the reason for so much controversy over the Spirit? The problem lies in a failure to understand what the Spirit says about Himself. The sourcebook for learning about the Holy Spirit is the Bible—a book that claims to be authored by the Spirit Himself, 2 Peter 1:20-21. Many people have their minds made up about the Spirit before they ever go to the Bible, and thus their study of the Bible is clouded by preconceptions.

Two major preconceptions that confuse people's thinking on the Holy Spirit are Calvinism and Pentecostalism.

Calvinism holds that without special guidance from the Spirit of God, a person cannot read and understand the Bible. It is interesting that persons who hold this view are among the most divided and confused of all on the Spirit—something that would not be the case if they were really guided by the Spirit. Calvinism also claims a direct and personal indwelling where the Holy Spirit is actually inside of a person's body. This view is so widespread that few people even question the validity of this position. This preconception prevents men from understanding the Spirit's relation to the believer. The second major preconception relates to the Pentecostal movement.

Pentecostalism is much like Calvinism in that it teaches a direct and personal indwelling of the Spirit, and that this indwelling is necessary to understand the Bible. But, Pentecostalism goes a step further and alleges that all believers have access to the power to work miracles by the Spirit. Pentecostalism argues that miraculous spiritual gifts were possessed by all believers in the first century and are available to all believers today. Pentecostalism errs on both of these assertions. You can readily see that if one goes to the Bible with these preconceptions, his interpretation of Holy Spirit passages will be affected.

Even among those who profess more conservative views on the Spirit, there are still many vague, hazy and ill-defined ideas. When that is the case, it is difficult to teach others the truth; in fact, ill-defined concepts on the Holy Spirit can leave one vulnerable to false teaching.

While the study before us may not answer every question that may be raised on the Holy Spirit, it will set forth a number of concrete truths that every believer can stand on. We will appeal to the Holy Spirit's own testimony concerning Himself in the word of God as the foundation for our understanding. The workbook we have produced will serve to help us study in an orderly manner, but we will appeal to the scriptures as our authority.

Accepting the authority of the Bible is the crux of the issue on the Spirit. If the Bible does not teach the truth on the Holy Spirit, then we have nothing at all to which we may appeal. The experiences and claims of men are not our authority. "What does the Bible say?" is the question we must ask and answer. What somebody saw on a TV program, or what somebody heard about a "faith healer," a fortune teller or psychic is not what this study is about. This study is about what the Bible says. Do you know what the Bible says about the Spirit? If the Bible is not our authority, then we have no defense against the false teacher; we have no way of protecting our families from those who would lead them into error; we have no means of strengthening the church and
preventing apostasy. Should we just listen to anyone who comes along and tells us what he thinks about the Holy Spirit, or should we hear the Spirit's own testimony?

Accepting the authority of the Bible also means that my feelings, opinions, and "I think..." are not the standard for knowing what is right. It is as Paul wrote in Romans 3:4, "...let God be true but every man a liar." Every person has feelings and experiences. The Bible must not be interpreted in the light of our experiences; rather, our experiences must be interpreted in the light of the Bible. The Bible is our standard!

The chapters in our workbook are laid out in a progressive order, beginning with basic and fundamental truths about the Holy Spirit, and progressing to more complex issues. Please take note of the lesson divisions listed below. You will note that each of the lesson titles (with the exception of Appendices A and B) is expressed in the form of a question. We have laid out the study in this way, because these are the very questions that people have problems with in regard to the Holy Spirit.

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Part One: WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Introduction:
1. Our first assignment in studying the Holy Spirit is to learn who He is.
   a. Some suggest He is a power or force used by God, but is not a person.
   b. Others see Him as some mystical, indefinable substance that permeates the universe.
   c. There are those who hold that He is merely the mind or disposition of God.
2. In a time when so many misunderstand the Spirit, we cannot afford to hold any views on the Spirit except those which are found in the Bible.

The Lesson:
I. The Holy Spirit is called by many names in the scriptures.
   A. Here is a listing of scriptures where some of the various terms used to describe the Holy Spirit are found. All of the references are from the New Testament. A similar list could be made from Old Testament scriptures.
      4. John 14:16 “Helper” or “Comforter” 10. 2 Corinthians 3:3 “Spirit of the living God”
   B. Look carefully at the list. What special significance do you see in the various terms used to describe the Holy Spirit? Each term does what?

C. "Spirit" is a translation of the Greek word pneuma.
   1. In the KJV, the translators translate pneuma by both "spirit" and "ghost." As examples, see John 7:39 and 1 Corinthians 2:13-14. Generally, when the word "holy" (Greek: hagios) precedes pneuma, the KJV translators render pneuma as "ghost." When pneuma is used alone, it is generally translated "spirit." This is unfortunate, for it has led to many misunderstandings.
   2. Furthermore, the use of "ghost" has itself created problems. This is an archaic and now obsolete use of the word. It conjures up the idea of something mystical, which it is not. In 1611, when the KJV was made, it meant the soul as the seat of life or intelligence.
   3. Pneuma is used of many things in the New Testament. It can refer to such things as wind, breath, demons, angels, the human spirit, man's character and disposition.
   4. The use of capital "S" in spirit passages is a choice made by the translators to distinguish the Holy Spirit from other uses of spirit. The translators are not always consistent in this as it involves principles of interpretation and judgment. Look at the passages below from the book of Romans. This will illustrate that "spirit" can be used in different ways.
      a. Romans 1:9 Paul's spirit.
      b. Romans 2:29 Attitude or disposition.
      c. Romans 8:15 Disposition (both times).
d. Romans 8:16  The Holy Spirit.

II. The Holy Spirit is a member of the Godhead.

A. The term "Godhead" or "Godhood" refers to the divine nature. It is a term describing Deity or Divinity.

1. When one possesses Godhood, it means he possesses the qualities of being God. Just like when one possesses manhood, it means he possesses the qualities of being man.
2. "Godhead" is found three times in our New Testaments, Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. In some translations, Acts 17:29 is found as "Divine Nature."

B. There is a plurality of persons in the Godhead.

1. The three persons of Deity are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
   a. All three were present in the beginning, Genesis 1:1-2, 26; John 1:1-3.
   b. Baptism is administered into the name of all three, Matthew 28:19.
2. All three are "one" in the sense of agreement, purpose and action.
   a. They are one just as all believers should be one, John 17:20-21.
   b. They are one, yet not "one person," just as husband and wife are one, yet not one person, Ephesians 5:31.

C. The three persons of the Godhead are Deity and constitute the only Deity.

1. The Bible speaks of one God, Isaiah 43:10; 45:5; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.
2. Though the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, it does describe a Bible concept; it is the idea of "three in one." There are three persons in the one Godhead. There are not three gods.

III. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Person.

A. The individuality of the Holy Spirit shows He is distinct from the Father and Son both by His actions and locality.

1. The Holy Spirit is called God, Acts 5:3-4.
2. Some of the qualities of Deity are found in the following passages regarding the Holy Spirit.
   a. Genesis 1:2. He has creative power and presence.
   b. Hebrews 9:14. He is eternal in nature.
   c. Psalm 139:7-11. As with the Father, He is omnipresent.
   d. 1 Corinthians 2:10. He has knowledge; He searches.
3. Although the Holy Spirit possesses the qualities of Deity, He is to be distinguished from the Father and from the Son as a separate and individual personality.
   a. At the baptism of Jesus, Matthew 3:16-17, the Spirit came in the form of a dove, while the Father spoke from heaven. Jesus came up from the water; the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus; the Father was in heaven. Each was in a different location. This implies individuality and distinction.
   b. The Spirit is sent by the Father, John 14:26; He testifies of the Son, John 15:26; He does not speak of Himself, John 16:13. These truths indicate He is separate from the Father and Son.
   c. Take note of the chart. Though each of the three persons is called God, each maintain a separate identity from the other two. Again,
we hasten to point out that this is a case of three persons in the Godhead; it is not a case of three gods.

B. Attributes which can only belong to a person are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.
1. The Holy Spirit has knowledge, 1 Corinthians 2:9-11.
2. He has a will, 1 Corinthians 12:11.
4. Webster's defines person as: "A being characterized by conscious apprehension, rationality, and a moral sense." This definition fits the Holy Spirit.

C. Actions are attributed to the Holy Spirit which can only be fulfilled by a person. Identify the actions of the Holy Spirit found in these verses.
1. John 16:13-15
2. 1 Timothy 4:1
3. John 15:26
4. Ephesians 4:30
5. Hebrews 10:29
6. 2 Peter 1:20-21
7. Acts 13:2
8. Acts 16:6

D. In light of these truths, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is a person with all that term implies. He is not some mystical substance; He is not the mind of either God or Christ; He is a not mere influence or impersonal force.

IV. The Holy Spirit cooperates in the work of Deity. A. He was active in the physical creation.
1. The Father planned it, Jeremiah 51:15-16.
2. The Son was involved in executing it, John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:1-2.
3. The Holy Spirit assisted in it, Genesis 1:1-2; Job 26:13. B. He was active in the spiritual creation.
1. The Father planned it, Ephesians 1:3-11; 3:9-11.
2. The Son executed it, John 4:34; Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 1:18-21.
3. The Holy Spirit assisted by revealing it, John 16:13; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10; Ephesians 3:1-5.

Conclusion:
1. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person working with the Father and Son in the administration of God's plan.
   a. Understanding that He is a person has bearing on such issues as the baptism of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and the indwelling of the Spirit. Some hold to views on these things that would demand that the Spirit be divided into parts and parcelled out in bits among thousands of persons.
   b. If we attempt to divide Him into parts and distribute Him personally to thousands of believers, then we have destroyed the very concept of personal identity. Could a human be divided up into parts and be scattered over the earth and still be the human person? _________________________
2. Whatever explanations we give for the Spirit's work in gifts, conversion and sanctification, we can accept no explanations which call for a destruction of His being as a person. Unless we see the difference between the person of the Spirit and the gifts and powers he bestows, we will end up in total confusion. The present religious world bears witness to that!