

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Since the early days of Christianity until the present day the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has either been a neglected or an abused doctrine. Loraine Boettner, a prolific writer and theologian of the last century wrote in *Studies In Theology*: "During the first three centuries of the Christian era, theological discussion was centered almost entirely on the relationship subsisting between the Father and Son, to the almost complete neglect of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In the nature of the case the development of a formal statement of the doctrine was a slow process." He continues: "Historically, the doctrine of the Holy spirit, which supposedly is of lesser consequence than that of the generation of the Son, has been perverted and exaggerated out of all proportion to its real importance." The controversy concerning the "trinity", beginning with the Council of Nicaea in 325, that produced the Nicene Creed, continued throughout the next four centuries and produced seven Ecumenical Councils. For the most part the concern of these councils was the nature of God and Jesus, very little attention was given to the Holy Spirit. In fact in his book *When Jesus Became God*, Richard Rubenstein devotes only 7 of 231 pages to the subject of the Holy Spirit. It seems that the Council of Constantinople I, held in 381, was the first to give a lot of attention to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In a chapter on this council in Leo Donald Davis' book *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, he states: "As the Trinitarian controversy continued on its weary way the Church was being buffeted by two new dangers, the errors in the theology of Christ and of the Holy Spirit. A new chapter in Christology was being written by Apollinaris of Laodicea in Syria." Apollinaris was bishop of Laodicea from 361 to 390. Davis further states: "With Apollinaris a new chapter of Christology was opened at the same time Trinitarian theology was extended to include the Holy Spirit in its speculations." Evidently the Holy Spirit had not been much of a question in the former councils. Some of them thought at this time that "the Holy Spirit was thought of as an hypostasis of third rank, one of the entities which came into being through the Son. Some believed that the Holy Spirit was the noblest of creatures produced by the Son at the Father's bidding" (Davis). It was this council that attributed the divine title, "Lord" to the Holy Spirit, and stated the Holy Spirit should be given supreme worship equal to that rendered to the Father and the Son. Thus the doctrine of the so called Trinity, originating in the council of Nicaea in 325, was complete.

The answer to the question "Who is the Holy Spirit" that was given by Apollinaris and added to the Nicene Creed is the answer the religious world has held for centuries and, although not admitted by Trinitarians, is the belief of most churches and clergy today. This answer to the question is simply not found in scripture. There is no scripture that says the Holy Spirit is the "third person of the Trinity." It is pointed out that the Holy Spirit has all the qualities of personhood because the Bible refers to the Spirit as "he" and assigns such personal traits as "being grieved" (Eph. 4:30), and "quenched" (I Thess. 5:19) to the Spirit. Many

verses show that the Holy Spirit speaks, sends, prays, leads, etc. Does this not say the Spirit is a person, the "third person of the Godhead"? J. I. Packer, recognized as one of today's leading theologians, states in his book *Keep In Step With The Spirit*: "My heart sinks and I wince, when I hear Christians, as I sometimes do, calling the third divine person 'it' rather than 'he.'" We wonder if the learned professor has never read his Greek New Testament. The pronoun translated "he" in John 14:15-18, 26, referring to the Holy Spirit as the comforter is the Greek word *autos*. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* states: "*autos* has the force of a simple personal pronoun of the third person, answering to our unemphatic *he, she, it* and *that*." The word "spirit" is masculine and could not be referred to as "she," but there would be no injustice done to translate *autos* as "it" in this passage. The same could be said of John 1:1-4 where *autos* is translated "He." In reference to the "Word."

When Jesus said in John 15:26: "When the Helper comes...that is...the Spirit of truth..." There is an obvious interchange in Jesus' words between Spirit and Helper. Psalm 139:7 reads: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?" There is an interchange with the word "Spirit" and "presence." God's Spirit is His presence. A clear answer to the question "Who is the Holy Spirit?" is found in John 14:23: "Jesus answered and said, 'If any man loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him, and **we** will come to him and make our dwelling place with him.'" This promise of Jesus was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Jesus had said "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you...You heard that I said to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you'...Now I have told you before it happens, **so that when it happens** you may believe" (John 14:18, 28, 29). The KJV translated the word "spirit" as "ghost," thus, the Holy Ghost. To the translators the word "ghost" meant the "presence" of someone who had died. The Holy Ghost, then, was the "presence" of someone. It is therefore the "presence" of Christ and God.

In Romans 8:9 the Spirit of God is said to dwell in us and verse 10 states that Christ is in us. Verse 11 simply states the Spirit dwells in us. This is what Jesus was talking about in John 14:23 when he said "we will make our abode" in the believer. Having the Holy Spirit in our life is having God and Christ in our life. This is further seen in the gospels: when Jesus said to the disciples "When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit" (Mark 13:11). Luke's version states: "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of our opponents will be able to resist or refute" (Luke 21:14, 15). The parallel passage in Mathew 10:20 says: "For it is not you who speak but your Father who speaks in you." These verses show that the "Holy Spirit" equals "I" (Jesus) equals "the Spirit of your Father." All three gospels speak of the same event; it will not be their words because of the presence of God and Christ.

These facts are also seen in John 14:10, 11, 17, 18, 20: "...the Father abiding in me does His works...I am in the Father and the Father is in me...the Spirit of truth abides with you and will be in you...I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." In Romans 8:9-11 Paul uses the terms "the Spirit of God dwells in you...the spirit of Christ is in you ...Christ in you...the Spirit of the one who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you..." Again we see that the Spirit dwelling in us is the Presence of Christ and God making their "abode" with us (John 14:23). The Bible never calls God's Holy Spirit "God the Spirit." Neither is worship, prayer or praise offered to the Spirit. There is no record in the Bible of anyone offering worship to the Holy Spirit. Neither is there any record of anyone praying to or praising the Holy Spirit. The popular song heard in some churches that appeal "Come, Holy Spirit" is alien to Scripture. Romans 8:26, 27 shows the Holy Spirit to be the instrument, enabler, helper, and interceder not the recipient of our prayers.

Many Christians are unaware of who they really are in Christ and many are looking forward to some future day "over yonder" to realize what they can now have because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 2:11, 12 states: For who among men knows the thoughts of man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God." The last verse (16) makes a remarkable statement: "...we have the mind of Christ." To have the mind of Christ is to have the spirit of Christ. This verse reads: "For who has known the *mind* of the Lord that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ." This is a quotation from Isaiah 40:13 which reads: "Who has directed the *spirit* of the Lord, or His counselor has informed Him?" The "mind" of the Lord is the "Spirit" of the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the operational presence of God, His mind and character. It is remarkable that there is no text in the Bible where greetings are sent from the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is not to make us feel good or enable us to receive some kind of mysterious "pray language," but to enable us to know the things given us by God: "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:12, 13). Jesus told the Apostles: "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" (Jn. 14:26). Further, "When He, the Spirit of truth, comes He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak" (Jn. 16:13). The word translated "Helper (NASV) is translated "Comforter," "Advocate" and "Intercessor." The Greek word is *paracletos* and means "one called alongside to help." Jesus identifies the *Paracletos* as the Holy Spirit. However, in I John 2:1 Jesus is said to be our *Paracletos*, translated "Advocate" in most versions. Jesus had said "I will come to you" (Jn. 14:18), showing the presence of the Spirit is Jesus' own presence in Spirit. Jesus said "the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26). I Thessalonians 4:9 says "...you yourselves are taught by God..." All this shows that the Holy Spirit is the Presence of God and Jesus making their "abode" with those who love Jesus (Jn. 14:23).

Alexander Campbell in commenting on I Corinthians 2:12, 13 in *The Christian System* stated: "The active power of man is in his spirit. The Spirit of God is therefore often used for His power, hence in all the works of God the Spirit of God is the active operating agent." The following Scriptures show that the Holy Spirit is parallel with the *power* of God: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you (Mary) and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). "The power of the Holy Spirit...mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:13, 19). "Our gospel came...in power, and in the Holy Spirit" (I Thess. 1:5). The promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples was spoken of as their being "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), and "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (Acts 1:8). Jesus had been "anointed with the Holy Spirit and power" (Acts 10:38). The Apostle Paul prays that that we may know "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. This (power) is in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:19, 20). We are to be "empowered (Greek) in the Lord" (Eph. 6:10), and "strengthened with all power..." (Col. 1:11). In Romans 15:18, 19 note the parallel between Christ's accomplishments and the power of the Spirit: "I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me...in the power of the Spirit." It is "according to the power that works within us that God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). It was the "greatness of His power" that brought Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:19-20) and Romans 8:11 declares Christ was raised from the dead by the Spirit. Who is the Holy Spirit? The Spirit is the power of God. Jesus said "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (Jn. 6:63). The Apostle Paul stated: "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. (Eph.5:8-9). The parallel passage in Colossians 3:19 states: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."

## THE POWERFUL DEATH LOBBY

For many years we have pointed out the fact that many Christians and churches actually glorify death. Refusing to recognize death for what it is...an enemy, it has become to many a "door" into a better life; so we have glorified it in song and sermon, especially funeral sermons, and have given so much attention and exhortation about death and dying that we have ignored life and living in the present. Many times we have felt alone in our crusade against the Christian's love affair with death. It was therefore refreshing to read an article in *The Atlantic* magazine, a purely secular publication, which discusses what it calls our "support system for death." The article goes beyond the funeral parlors, cemeteries and crematoria and shows how doctors, lawyers, insurance companies, the Social Security trust fund, family structures and organized religion all play a part in our embracing what it calls our "death program." After speaking of the ability of powerful interests in Washington to keep pet policies intact, the article states: "the death lobby must be the most powerful of all." All this says that the secular press sees what many Christians and churches have refused to see...we are sometimes more interested in death than in life.