



## # 18. The Holy Spirit of the Trinity (Mat 28:18-20)

### Section 4: Christian Doctrine Handout

Although we have looked at the Holy Spirit from various aspects thus far, it is worthy to aim at a holistic biblical perspective of the Spirit's being and his glorious work in order to better contemplate and worship the Living God. The Trinity is one of the most mysterious topics. Comprehending the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, invisible and wholly unlike ourselves, has perplexed the best thinkers of the human race down to our present generation.

#### A. The Triune God Works As One

- a. In the **7<sup>th</sup>** question of the larger catechism of the Westminster Standards it asks, **“What is God?”** The answer is concise: “God is a Spirit <sup>1 Jn.4:24</sup>, in and of himself infinite in being <sup>2 Ex.3:14; Job 11:7-9</sup>, glory <sup>Acts 7:22</sup>, blessedness <sup>1 Tim.6:15</sup>, and perfection <sup>Mat.5:48</sup>; all-sufficient <sup>Gen.17:1</sup>, eternal <sup>Ps.90:2</sup>, unchangeable <sup>Mal.3:6; Ja.1:17</sup>, incomprehensible <sup>1 Kings 8:27</sup>, everywhere present <sup>Ps.139:1-13</sup>, almighty <sup>Rev.4:8</sup>, knowing all things <sup>Heb.4:13; Ps.147:5</sup>, most wise <sup>Rom.16:27</sup>, most holy <sup>Isa.6:3; Rev.15:4</sup>, most just <sup>Deut.32:4</sup>, most merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth <sup>Ex.34:6</sup>.”
  - b. After stating in the **8<sup>th</sup>** question that, “There is but one only, the living and true God <sup>Deut.6:4; 1 Cor.8:4; Jer.10:10</sup>”, it moves on to explain in the **9<sup>th</sup>** question that, “There be three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, although distinguished by their personal properties <sup>1 Jn.5:7; Mat.3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor.13:14; Jn.10:30</sup>.”
  - c. That leads the writers to ask the natural question, “What are the personal properties of the three persons in the Godhead?” (Question **10**). The answer again is succinct: “It is proper to the Father to beget the Son <sup>Heb.1:5-6,8</sup>, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father <sup>Jn.1:14,18</sup>, and to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son from all eternity <sup>Jn.15:26; Gal.4:6</sup>.”
  - d. Finally, the catechism approaches the question of, “How does it appear that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father? The catechism continues to rely on the witness of the Bible stating, “The scriptures manifest that the Son and the Holy Ghost are God equal with the Father, ascribing unto them such names <sup>Isa.6:3,5,8; comp. Jn.12:41; Acts 28:25; 1 Jn.5:20; Acts 5:3-4</sup>, attributes <sup>Jn.1:1; Isa.9:6; Jn.2:24-25; 1 Cor.2:10-11</sup>, works <sup>Col.1:16; Gen.2:1</sup> and worship <sup>Mat. 28:19; 2 Cor.13-14</sup>, as are proper to God only.” (Question **11**).
1. There has been a gradual formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Initially, the church gave strong emphasis to the unity of God, but did not have a clear and distinct notion of the Trinity.
    - a. Early church history provided various views of the Trinity.
      - ❖ Some claimed there to be a sub-ordination within God, making the 3 persons of the Godhead different in rank, while others viewed the Father, Son & H.S. as 3 modes of manifestation successively assumed by the Godhead.
      - ❖ Some held to the unity of God but not that of a Triune God, while others held to the idea of a trinity that actually denied the unity of the Godhead --- Tritheism.
    - b. Official formulations of the Trinity were reached by 4<sup>th</sup> century church Councils

**Council of Nicea** (325AD) affirmed that the Father and the Son were co-essential.

**Council of Constantinople** (381AD) fully affirmed the deity of the H.S. The Son being generated by the Father and the H.S proceeding from the Father and the Son refers to their relationship within the Godhead (3 in 1).
  2. **Personality** – Personality exists in relation to other persons it relates to (Eph.3:19; Col.1:9; 2:9 - fullness of deity). The plurality of fullness in God (or infinite fullness of divine life) where God is self-conscious, self-communing, self-contemplating requires the personal nature of God. It does not result from God's choice but rather is a necessary characteristic of his being God. God is tri-personal, whereas man is created uni-personal.

- a. Scripture: O.T. indications or traces of the plurality of God are found
  - in the work of CREATION (Gen.1:26 ; 11:7 ; Ps.33:4-6),
  - in the work of PROVIDENCE (Gen. 16:7-13 ; 18:1-21 ; 19:1-28 ; Prov.8:12-31),
  - and especially in the work of REDEMPTION (Mal.3:1 ; Ps.45:6-7).
- b. Scripture: N.T. gives even clearer evidence for the Triune nature of God.
  - ❖ In the O.T. God is spoken of as the Redeemer and Savior (Job 19:25 ; Ps.19:14 ; Isa.43:3,11,14 ; 60:16 etc.) but in the N.T. the Son of God takes on this capacity (Mat.1:21 ; Jn.4:42 ; Gal.3:13 ; 4:5 ; Titus 2:13-14 etc.).
  - ❖ In the O.T. God as Jehovah dwells among his people (Ps.74:2 ; 135:21 ; Isa.8:18 ; Ezek.43:7-9 ; Zech.2:10 etc.) but in the N.T. it is the Holy Spirit that dwells in the church (Acts 2:4 ; Rom.8:9,11 ; 1 Cor.3:16 ; Gal.4:6 ; etc.).
  - ❖ In the N.T. the incarnation of the Son makes clear that God had sent his Son into the world (Jn.3:16 ; Gal.4:4 ; Heb.1:6 etc.) and in the outpouring of the H.S. that the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (Jn.14:26 ; 15:26 16:7 ; Gal.4:6). In other ways, the distinct persons of the Trinity become obvious: the Father and Son commune with one another, and the Holy Spirit prays in intercession for and through his people.

3. Statements of the Doctrine of the Trinity:

- a. “There is in the Divine Being but one indivisible essence.”
  - b. “In this one Divine Being there are three Persons or individual subsistences, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”
  - c. “The whole undivided essence of God belongs equally to each of the three persons.”
  - d. “The subsistence and operation of the three persons in the Divine Being is marked by a certain definite order.”
  - e. “There are certain personal attributes by which the three persons are distinguished.”
  - f. “The Church confesses the Trinity to be a mystery beyond the comprehension of man.”
- \*\*\* {Select material gleaned from Berkhof’s Systematic Theology}

## B. Reviewing Our Journey

1. We began **Section #1 Life & Belief** by searching out our **Christian Beginnings** in relation to the H.S.
 

With a focal kick-off verse **“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit”** (Gal.5:25),

  - ❖ We attempted to define boundaries, map out guidance and confirm Scripture’s message in order to better understand the true meaning of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. And we tried to mark out the right path to discern the difference between the H.S. and false spirits that seek to mislead true believers.
  - ❖ We endeavored to show how the Spirit searches out and reveals all things, indeed the deep things about God (1 Cor.2:10-16). We considered how the H.S. enables us to take on the **“mind of Christ”**, giving us discernment of things natural and supernatural, things worldly and spiritual.
  - ❖ We looked carefully at the various kinds of conviction that the H.S. works in us (John 16:8-11): conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of God’s severe and just judgment.
  - ❖ We investigated the new birth (John 3:3-8) as rebirth or being born from above, essential in receiving the presence and power of the H.S. that enables us to understand things freely given us by Him.
  - ❖ And we examined the assurance of salvation (Rom.8:14-17), as the H.S. takes us through life’s joys and trials, provides all things necessary to know that we belong to God and trains us to walk by the Spirit.
2. Next in **Section #2 “Strength & Dedication”** we contemplated **Christian Growth** in relation to the H.S.
  - ❖ We focused upon how the H.S. of God leads, sanctifies, fills and teaches us to walk and be pleasing in his sight, bearing fruit in all we do, so that we might not resist the H.S. (1 Thess.5:19 ; Eph.4:30).
  - ❖ We learned that ‘In Christ’ we have become the holy temple of God (1 Cor.3:16), set apart by the H.S. to believe and bring glory to the living God (1 Pet.1:1-2 ; 2 Thess.2:13).

- ❖ We considered how we have been called into action, spiritually born for battle. As flesh wars against the Spirit (Gal.5:16-21) and seeks to keep us from bearing fruit (Gal.5:22-23), the H.S. teaches us how to **“crucify the flesh with its passion and desires”** (Gal.5:24-25).
  - ❖ We contemplated what it means to be empowered (Eph.5:17-21) or equipped to do God’s will (Ex.31:3), as we are **“filled with the Holy Spirit”** (Eph.5:18); keeping the delicate balance of right relationship to the law of God (Gal.5:18) by rightly fearing the Lord and walking in his wisdom (Isa.11:2-3).
  - ❖ And we were reminded that it is the H.S. who reveals, reminds and takes us into a deeper walk with Christ, **“into all the truth”** (Jn.14:26 ; 16:13 ; Lk.12:12). (John 16:13-15)
3. Next we studied **Section #3 Faith & Filling** having to do with **Christian Service**.
- ❖ We discovered the power and mystery of the H.S. as it inspired and guided over 40 authors of the O.T. and N.T. to preserve for us the word of God down through the ages (2 Pet.1:19-21). It was the Holy Spirit who ordered the whole process through weak, fallible human beings; to provide the church with a fully trustworthy spiritual guide for all matters of faith and practice (1 Pet.1:10-12).
  - ❖ We considered how the Holy Spirit continually sends out the church into missions (Acts 13:1-4), and reveals God’s plan along the way in building his kingdom, working especially through the local witness of Christians.
  - ❖ We learned that the Holy Spirit equips the church with many gifts, manifestations of the Holy Spirit to be used for the **“common good”** of the body of Christ (1 Cor.12:8-11 ; Eph.4:7-13 ; Rom.12:3-8).
  - ❖ We reflected on the gifts given to the church so that she may graciously grow up to maturity in **“the fullness of Christ”**, and that though the gifts are operative in our day they must be used with great care (1 Cor.12:4-7), so as not to lose sight of the goal; **“that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ”** (1 Pet.4:10-11).
4. Finally we looked at **Section # 4 Questions & Theology** having to do with **Christian Doctrine**.
- ❖ We began with a consideration of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that is like **“rivers of living water”** flowing out from the human heart (John 7:37-39). This same Spirit anointed Jesus, as prophesied hundreds of years before his advent (Luke 4:17-21; Is 61:1-2). We studied how this anointing provides Christians knowledge of the truth, and teaches us everything concerned with the practice of righteousness: how to abide in Christ, (1 John 2:20,27) how we are sealed (2 Cor.1:21-22 ; Eph.1:13) and then how it empowers us to live out God’s will.
  - ❖ We looked at the distinct ways that the Holy Spirit’s worked in the N.T (1 Thess.1:5), and saw according to God’s time, believers reap the blessing of an eternal harvest, bearing everlasting fruit (Jn.15:7-8).
  - ❖ We pondered our Lord Jesus Christ’s promise to send a personal **“Helper”** (the **“Advocate”** or **“Counselor”**) to be with us forever, reminding us of our Lord’s teaching and enabling us to walk in a manner pleasing to God (John 14:16-17, 25-26). And we saw how the Holy Spirit is likened it to a wind that blows where it wishes and that **“so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit”** (Jn.3:8).
  - ❖ We finally considered the attributes and nature of the Holy Spirit, who as an integral member of the Trinity applies the benefits of what Jesus Christ accomplished to the church. The core teaching of the Trinity will always remain a mystery for us, yet we embrace the Trinity by faith and try to feebly express it with our human concepts, but we cannot even begin to fathom its true magnificence and glory.

Our assigned task has been to better understanding the person and work of God’s Spirit as we continue to strive to carry out His great commission in this world: beginning from creation (Gen.1:1-2ff ; Ps.104:30), and carrying through to God’s divine commission to the church to make disciples of all the nations (Mat 28:18-20 ; Rev 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). It is our privileged task to fulfill this God-given responsibility, now empowered by the Holy Spirit of God to do so.

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is the most significant thing that you have learned through this 18 week study on the Holy Spirit?
2. Share together some of the fresh ways you have experienced God’s Holy Spirit at work in your life.