THE HOLY SPIRIT:
THIRD PERSON IN THE GODHEAD

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**PRELUDE**\(^1\)

Thanks to the elders and preacher of this congregation for the selection of such an important and needed subject. It is important because the Holy Spirit is a Biblical subject. He permeates the Bible from beginning to end. He is mentioned in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, and He is mentioned in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible. In between, there are over three hundred fifty references to the Holy Spirit in the Bible.

It is needed because of the ignorance, confusion, misconceptions and errors that exist regarding the subject. The need for this study can be emphasized by the following quotes. These quotes are only a sampling of what could be included. Note how each of them underscores and highlights the need for the study that has been selected by the elders and evangelist of this fine congregation.

No subject of such importance to the salvation of man is more confused in the minds of the common people than the work of the Holy Spirit; hence, the need of a frank and clear discussion on the subject. It is a frequent and just complaint among the common people that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been strangely neglected. Even preachers are not clear on this subject; many of them have preached one or two sermons on the subject, and that is about all that is usually done in the study of this question.\(^2\)

The Bible teachings about the Holy Spirit and his works are among the most neglected phases and aspects of our teaching.
The subject of the Holy Spirit is so sublime and so far beyond the knowledge of the ordinary person that it has been neglected, if it is not the most forgotten phase of Bible teaching. It is difficult to understand why this Bible theme freighted with such importance should be so long neglected. No subject that is so vitally connected with man’s redemption has been neglected as the study of the Holy Spirit. It is a prominent Bible subject; it stands out as emphatically as the subject of faith. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a cardinal and unmistakable teaching of Christ and receives in the Bible a large place.

The subject has been given a subordinate place in Christian thinking. Religious leaders have not studied the subject and, hence, have not been stressing the teaching of the Bible about the Holy Spirit; the religious leaders have been ignorant of this phase of Bible teaching and have emphasized other teachings until the subject has been almost lost or enshrouded in superstition. There is needed today a thorough scriptural examination and exposition of the great truths revealed in the Bible concerning the third member of the Godhead. Even those who have been doing some teaching on this subject need to re-examine the truth of the Holy Spirit as taught in the Bible.

This is a timely subject. There is probably no other Bible subject concerning which there is more confusion than the subject of the Holy Spirit and his work. There is much superstition and error being taught to the disturbance of religious people throughout the world, and much of it centers around the Holy Spirit and his work.

Considering (1) the frequency with which he is mentioned and discussed in the sacred text, (2) the universal interest in knowing more about him, and (3) the multitudinous misconceptions of him and his work, no more needed, relevant and practical theme could have been chosen, and subsequently probed and studied than the theme for the third annual Fort Worth Lectures, “What Do You Know About The Holy Spirit?”

Thus, the subject [the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, jgp] calls for a study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity. The religious world in general is woefully ignorant of the actual person and work of the Holy Spirit ... There is a crying need for a proper study of the Holy Spirit and for a proper recognition of the Holy Spirit as a person—not an effluence.
Misconceptions abound toward every Biblical fundamental in both testaments. The Godhead is no exception to this true assessment. God is misunderstood. Jesus Christ is misunderstood ... Misconceptions, misapprehensions and misunderstandings really abound toward the Third Person of the Godhead. His reality is misunderstood; His person is misunderstood; His inspired product, the Holy Bible, is misunderstood; how He influences people in conversion and sanctification is misunderstood; whether He operates on us directly or through a medium is misunderstood; whether He is still dispensing modern day revelations is misunderstood; whether Holy Spirit baptism is still a current phenomenon is misunderstood. In fact, there is no fundamental facet relative to the Holy Spirit but what is misconceived and misappropriated by reckless men and women in our day.7

INTRODUCTION

Hebrew And Greek Words

Behind the English word *spirit* in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *ruwach* or *ruach*. The word literally means “breath,” “wind.” According to *PC Bible Study* software (version 3.2), there are 378 matches for this word in the King James Version. Two things are important to note about the 378 matches. First, not all occurrences of the word are translated as “spirit.” *Ruwach* is also translated as wind (approximately 82 times), breath (approximately 5 times), blast (approximately 4 times), courage (1 time), anger (approximately 44 times), quarter (1 time), vain (1 time), air (1 time), tempest (1 time), and side (approximately 5 times). Second, when it is translated as “spirit,” not all occurrences are references to the Holy Spirit. For example, “spirit” sometimes stands for a person’s attitude or disposition, whether good or bad. Thus, Bible passages mention “anguish of spirit” (Ex. 6:9), a “spirit of jealousy” (Num. 5:14), a “sorrowful spirit” (1 Sam. 1:15), a “contrite spirit” (Ps. 34:18), and a “broken spirit” (Ps. 51:17). Since *ruach* is not always translated “spirit,” and even when it is translated “spirit,” it is not always a reference to the Holy Spirit, it becomes apparent that the word must be examined in its context to determine its meaning.

Examining the New Testament, one learns that *pneuma* is the Greek word behind the English word “spirit” or “ghost.” It occurs 379 times in the New Testament. Just like *ruach* in the Old Testament, *pnuema* is not always translated “spirit,” and all references to spirit are
not references to the third Person in the Godhead. The New Testament uses of the word are, for the most part, as follows. It is translated as (1) “wind” (Jn. 3:8); (2) “breath” (2 Thess. 2:8); (3) “spirit,” referring to the human spirit (Jas. 2:26); (4) “spirit,” referring to an attitude of mind or disposition (Phil. 1:27); (5) “spirit,” referring to unclean or evil spirits (Acts 8:7); and (6) with reference to the Spirit of God.

Specific References To The Spirit

It becomes obvious that whether it is the New Testament or the Old, neither of the words used for spirit are words exclusively used in reference to the third Person of the Godhead. In both testaments, the word must be studied in its context to determine the meaning.

When that is done, Z.T. Sweeney states that the Old Testament distinctly references the Holy Spirit eighty-eight times and that He is referred to “in more than half of the books of the Old Testament, while in sixteen of them there is no specific mention of the Spirit.” Brethren Sweeney and Boles state that there are two hundred sixty-four references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. He is referred to in twenty-four of the twenty-seven New Testament books. Philemon, 2 John and 3 John are the only New Testament books that fail to reference Him directly. Boles mentions that there are a dozen or more references in Matthew, six in Mark, eighteen in Luke, about two dozen in John, about fifty-seven in Acts, and about one hundred thirty-two in the epistles and Revelation.

NAMES AND TITLES

Brother Sweeney observed:

The Old Testament has eighty-eight distinct references to the Holy Spirit. In these references there are eighteen names applied. The New Testament refers to the Spirit two hundred and sixty-four times and uses thirty-nine names. Five names are common to both Testaments, which leaves fifty-two different appellatives for the Spirit. Seventeen appellatives express his relation to God, five his relation to the Son, five indicate his divine nature, seven describe his own character, while seventeen are used to indicate his relation to man.

An examination of some of the names and titles found in God’s Word regarding the Holy Spirit is in order. While the following is not an all-inclusive list, it does include many of the names and titles by which the Holy Spirit is identified.
His Names In Relationship To His Character

He is called “Holy Ghost” and “Holy Spirit.” “The word ‘Holy’ signals his absolute moral perfection. He infinitely possesses all that is good; and, he is infinitely removed from all that is evil.”

It should be noted that the KJV, in most places translates *pneuma* as “Ghost” instead of “Spirit” when used with “Holy.” It is translated “Holy Ghost” ninety times and “Holy Spirit” four times (Lk. 11:13; Eph. 1:13, 4:30; 1 Thess. 4:8). The ASV and NKJV do not translate *pneuma* as “ghost.”

Brother Guy N. Woods, who for years conducted the Open Forum session at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures, had this comment to the question, “Why is the third Person of the godhead sometimes called ‘the Holy Ghost,’ and at other times, the ‘Holy Spirit’?”

The variation, “Holy Spirit,” and “Holy Ghost,” appears in the King James Version, but not in the American Standard Translation, where the Greek phrase *to angion pneuma* is uniformly rendered the “Holy Spirit.” The word “ghost,” when the King James Version appeared, in 1611 A.D., conveyed much the same significance as the word “spirit” does today. The word “ghost,” is derived from the anglo-saxon *gast*, which meant spirit, soul, or seat of intelligence. Inasmuch as one of its meanings was *spirit*, it adequately translated the Greek word *pneuma*, spirit. The King James’ translators again and again so rendered the word in those passages where the reference is to the immortal nature of man (Mt. 27:50; Acts 5:10; see also Gen. 49:33; Job 10:18; Jer. 15:9.) By 1901, however, when the American Standard Translation was made, the word “ghost,” had lost its earlier meaning and had acquired the significance of a spook or specter, thus no longer indicating the significance of the Greek word for spirit (*pneuma*). Meantime, the word “spirit,” which earlier had signified *breath*, and then life (from the Latin *spiritus*, breath), had come to mean that part of man not subject to death—the immortal nature, and it thus found its way into the American Standard Version.

The dual usage of *pneuma* (“ghost” and “spirit”) by the KJV translators has led to some incorrect and erroneous teachings being advocated by some. Some have said that the word “ghost” in 1611 meant “a guest that came to abide with another.” However, Marion R. Fox has “attempted to verify the accuracy of this assertion without success.” Ron Cosby has a four page handout, titled *Does the Word*
“Ghost” Mean “Guest”? which he uses as part of his Holy Spirit I class that he teaches for Online Academy Biblical Studies. After doing research to determine if “Holy Ghost” meant “Holy Guest,” in 1611 when the KJV was translated, Cosby concluded that the evidence was lacking to support such a claim.14 Others (Mormons) have advocated that the Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit are not the same.15 The Bible is clear that the Holy Ghost and Holy Spirit are one and the same. Both “Ghost” and “Spirit” are translated from the same word, *pneuma*. For example, some passages use the words Ghost and Spirit interchangeably. Luke 4:1 is one of those passages, “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”

He is called the “Spirit of Truth” (Jn. 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).

He is called “the Spirit of truth” because of the integrity of his testimony; and because he guided the New Testament apostles and prophets “into all the truth” (Jn. 16:13; Eph. 3:1-5) as he revealed and inspired the complete and final revelation of God’s omniscient mind; the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; Jn. 17:17).16

*His Names In Relationship To His Nature*

He is called the “Spirit.”

“The Spirit” indicates his nature or essence. He is not a man-made materialistic being. Rather, he possesses the same essence as God the Father (Jn. 4:24). On the other hand, he is not an ethereal being without substance or being. He is not a mere wind, sound or influence. He is a person ... who inhabits the spirit

He is called the “Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2).

He is called the “Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29).

He is called “the Spirit of grace” because every thing he did/does in the scheme of redemption is rooted in the grace of God and is a demonstration of divine grace. For example, the word that he revealed (Eph. 3:1-5) is called “the word of his grace” (Acts 20:32).18

He is called the “eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14).

He is called the “spirit of glory and of God” (1 Pet. 4:14). “He is called ‘the Spirit of glory’ because he inhabits the glory world and because of his glorious nature.”19
His Names In Relationship To The Father

He is called the “Spirit of God” (Gen. 1:2; Mt. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:11).

He is called the “Spirit of the living God” (2 Cor. 3:3).

He is called the “Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 8:39; Lk. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, et cetera).

He is called the “Spirit of your Father” (Mt. 10:20).

He is called the “Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). “The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit ‘of God’ to show his relationship to God the Father as well as to express his deity [‘God,’ signifying deity].”20

His Names In Relationship To The Son

He is called the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11).

He is called the “Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6).

He is called the “Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:19).

His Names In Relationship To Man

He is called the “Spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8:15).

He is called the “Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13).

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON

One cause for so much confusion concerning the Holy Spirit and his work stems from a failure on the part of many people to understand that the Holy Spirit is a person—a personality—just as God and Christ are persons. They regard the Spirit as a kind of illusive, emotional and mysterious influence—or a substance that emanates from the heavenly Father—a kind of electrifying effluence from on high. The Holy Spirit is not, however, an effluence.21

One of the most fundamental errors regarding the Holy Spirit is the tendency of some cults to deny his very personality. A Watchtower publication asserts that “the holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will” (Reasoning, p. 81).

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of “Christian Science,” characterized the third person of the Trinity as “Divine Science” (p. 55). Parley Pratt, one of Mormonism’s original “apostles,” once described the Holy Spirit as a force like “magnetism” or “electricity.” He
further spoke of the Spirit as “a divine fluid” and “impersonal energy” (see Jackson, 1993, p. 26). The Bible’s use of “holy spirit” indicates that it is a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish a variety of his purposes. To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations.

When it is advanced that the Holy Spirit is a Person, there are those who understand this to mean that the Holy Spirit has hands, feet, eyes, ears, mouth, and so on. Such are not the characteristics of personality but of bodily existence. Spirit “hath not flesh and bones” (Lk. 24:39), but flesh and bones is not what is meant when it is said that the Holy Spirit is a Person. Person means personality, having will or volition, which may act or be acted upon.

*His “Actions” Demonstrate His Personality*

The Spirit *speaks*. Jesus told the disciples, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mt. 10:19-20). He spoke to the brethren at Antioch. “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). He spoke expressly (which means clearly, vividly, distinctly, plainly) that some would depart from the faith. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1).

The Spirit *commands*. He commanded Philip. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29). He spoke to Peter. “While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19-20).

The Spirit *forbids*. “Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not” (Acts 16:6-7). The text does not say exactly how the Holy Ghost prohibited their going
into these areas, but it clearly says that He did prohibit them. “Observe that the action of the Spirit argues for His personal identity.”

The Spirit teaches and brings things to remembrance. Jesus told the apostles, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jn. 14:26). This was a promise made to the apostles, and “it is utterly to disregard the context and all proper rules of exegesis to extend this promise beyond that of the apostles.” However, the things that are here said that the Spirit would do are things that establish Him as a Person. It is said that He would:

1) teach them “all things,” and, particularly, those matters they were not capable of receiving thus far; and (2) enable them to recall the things Jesus had taught them during his public ministry.

The Spirit guides, speaks and hears. Jesus promised the apostles, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (Jn. 16:13-14).

The Spirit divides or distributes. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11).

The Spirit searches. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10). It takes the mind to be able to search; it is something that can not be attributed to an influence.

His “Attributes” Demonstrate His Personality—They Are Attributes Which Are Exclusively Characteristic Of A Person

The Spirit has a mind. “And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8:27). This is an attribute that cannot be done by a force or thing.

The Spirit has intelligence. “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man
which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10-11).

The Spirit has affections. “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30). Love is an affection or emotion that can only be associated with a person.

The Spirit has a will. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11). The Spirit determined what gift He gave to each person. Again, this is a characteristic of a person.

His Personality Is Demonstrated By What Is “Ascribed” To Him—These Things Can Not Be Said Of Electricity, Magnetism Or Some Controlled Force

The Spirit can be resisted. “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). To reject the teaching of inspired men is to reject the Spirit Himself. They were rejecting the teaching of the apostles; therefore, the teaching of the apostles is inspired of the Spirit.

The Spirit can be grieved. “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

The Spirit can be lied to. “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).

The Spirit can be spoken against (blasphemed). “And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Mt. 12:32).

The Spirit can be despised (insulted). “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:29).

The Spirit can be quenched. “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19).

His “Associations” Demonstrate His Personality

Another way in which the Bible reveals that the Spirit is a Person is by placing Him in juxtaposition or combination with other persons. For example, the Father and Son are Persons, so when Jesus speaks of
baptizing disciples “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mt. 28:19), He indicates thereby that the Holy Ghost is a Person, too, just as the Father and the Son are. To suggest that one is to be baptized in the name of (or by the authority of) the Father, the Son and electricity, assaults his common sense. Three Persons are clearly implied in this verse.

Leaders in the early church wrote: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things” (Acts 15:28). They very clearly considered the Holy Spirit a Person capable of the same thoughts and ideas as theirs. Notice how the “Holy Ghost” and “us” are connected by the conjunction. The “Holy Ghost” is as personal as the “us.”

So it is also with the “Apostolic Benediction” at the end of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13:14). To deny the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost would seem almost to involve denying the distinct personality of the other two, the Lord Jesus Christ and God. It seems obvious that Paul regards the Holy Ghost as a Person, just as he regards each of the other two. With 2 Corinthians 13:14, just as in Matthew 28:19, the writer presents a three part combination verse that demands “grace,” “love” and “communion” (fellowship) be equally ascribed to three corresponding Persons.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DEITY**

*His Deity Demonstrated By Passages That Refer To Him As God*

“God” simply means “divine” or “deity.” So, if the Holy Spirit is referred to as “God,” and if “God” means “deity,” then the Holy Spirit is Deity.

In Acts 5, Ananias and Sapphira sold land and brought part of the money obtained from the selling of the land and gave it to the apostles. In so doing, they left the false impression that the money they gave the apostles was all, instead of part, of what they had received from the sale of the land.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this
thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3-4).

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira was not in keeping part of the proceeds of the sale, but in lying about how much they had received. Twice, Peter says Ananias lied. The first time he says that Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost (v. 3); the second time he says Ananias lied not to men but God (v. 4). The Holy Ghost, therefore, is not man but God; thus, Deity.

Jesus promised His apostles, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (Jn. 14:16). When Jesus said they would be given another Comforter, it indicated two important truths. First, they already had a Comforter. In order to be promised another meant they already had one. Second, the Comforter they were promised would be of the same kind as the one they already had. That is the meaning of the word “another.” The word used here means another of the same kind, contrasted to another of a different kind. So, if anything can be determined about the Comforter they already had, it will reveal a great deal about the nature of the Comforter they were promised.

The word translated “Comforter” appears five times in Scripture (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 Jn. 2:1). Four times, it is translated “Comforter” and applies to the one promised to the apostles (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The other time it is translated “advocate” and applies to Jesus (1 Jn. 2:1). Therefore, since the Comforter promised is of the same kind as the one they already had, and since the one they already had was Jesus, and since Jesus is God (Jn. 1:1), then the Comforter that they were promised is God. If not, He was not of the same kind. The Comforter promised is the Holy Ghost (Jn. 14:26). Thus, the Holy Ghost is God, and if God, He is Deity, because that is what the word “God” means.

His Deity Demonstrated By His “Actions”

The work of the Holy Spirit in material creation proves His Deity. In the creation of the heaven and the earth, “Jehovah was the Divine Architect; the Word was the Divine Agent ... the Holy Spirit was the Divine Organizer, Arranger, and Beautifier.”27 The Spirit had a part in material creation. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). “By his spirit he hath garnished
The heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent” (Job 26:13). “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth” (Ps. 104:30).

The work of the Holy Spirit in redemption proves His Deity. In the scheme of redemption, God was the designer (Gal. 1:4; 1 Jn. 4:14; Eph. 3:10-11); Christ was the executor of God’s design (Heb. 2:9; 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:18; Rev. 5:9); and the Holy Spirit revealed it (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; Jn. 14-16).

His Deity Demonstrated By His “Attributes”

The Deity of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated in that He has all the attributes of God. He is eternal (Heb. 9:14); He is omnipotent (Lk. 1:35). He is omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10-11). He is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-16). These are attributes also possessed by both the Father and the Son.28

THIRD PERSON IN THE GODHEAD

“Godhead” Appears Three Times In Scripture

The term “Godhead” is found three times in the King James Version of the Bible (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9). There are three different Greek words translated “Godhead” in these occurrences. They are theios, theiotes and theotes. Theios means “divine, deity.”29 Thayer says Godhead (theiotes) means, “divinity, divine nature.”30 Vine distinguishes between theiotes and theotes as follows: “Theiotes, the attributes of God, His Divine nature and properties; theotes indicates the Divine essence of Godhood, the personality of God.”31 Summarizing, the Godhead, then, is divinity, divine nature, and the essence of God.

There Is One God

The Bible clearly and unmistakably teaches that there is one God. It teaches such in the Old Testament. Moses declared: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord” (Deut. 6:4). It teaches the same in the New Testament. James wrote: “Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jas. 2:19). There are more than forty-five passages in the Old and New Testaments which express the concept that there is “one God,” or “only one God,” or “none other God.”32 “God” denotes “deity” or “divine nature,” so when these passages teach that there is “one God,” or “only one God,”
or “none other God,” they are teaching that there is one divine nature, or one divine essence.

How Many Possess The Divine Nature?

There is only one God. “‘God’ denotes the nature of the Godhead, i.e., there is only one Divine nature.”33 The word “God” does not mean “one,” it means “deity.” The word “God” does not indicate how many possess the divine nature. To determine the number of individuals possessing the divine nature, one must go to the Scriptures to determine how many are said to be God (thus, possessors of the divine nature).

When that is done, one learns that the very first mention of God, the Bible indicates a plurality of Persons. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The word for “God” in this verse is the Hebrew word elohim, which is plural in number. This plural noun, denoting Deity, occurs over 2,500 times in the Old Testament. However, it commonly occurs with a singular verb.

In the very first chapter of Genesis, as well as in many other places, we find the names of God are in the plural, Elohim, also Adonai; and with these plural forms of the divine name singular verbs and adjectives are usually joined,—a remarkable phenomenon in view of the fact that the Hebrew language also contained the singular term El, meaning God. Along with the plural name, God sometimes uses plural pronouns in referring to Himself: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26-27).34

The very first time the word “God” is mentioned, the Bible used a word that conveyed the unity of the one God, yet allowed for a plurality of Persons, each possessing the divine nature. That was the word God wanted used because the words of the Bible are the very words of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21).

While the plural nouns used for God, along with the plural pronouns, convey the unity of one God with the plurality of Persons, those words do not indicate the specific number. To determine that, one must “search the Scriptures” to see how many specific ones are said to be God, and then determine if these references are all references to the same or different individuals. The searching of the Scriptures reveals:

1. The Father is God. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16).
2. The Son is God: “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Heb. 1:8).

3. The Holy Ghost is God: “But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3-4).

Are These Three The Same Or Different Persons?

Are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each distinct? If so, that means there are three Persons who are Deity? Are two of the three the same? If so, that would suggest there are two Persons who possess the divine nature. Are all three the same? If so, then there is only one who possesses the divine nature. That is the position of the “Oneness” groups (Oneness Pentecostals, United Pentecostals). They do not believe that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost represent different Persons in the Godhead, but these are simply different designations for the one Person in the Godhead.

The Father, Son, And Holy Ghost Is Each A Distinct Person

There are many passages which teach that each is a distinct Person. Only a few will be examined here.

John 8:13-18 emphasizes that Jesus and the Father are distinct individuals.

The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.

Jesus argues that His testimony satisfies the requirements of the Law of Moses in that it provides the two witnesses the law required (Deut. 19:15). Who does He say the witnesses are? He is one and the Father is the other. Twice (vv. 16, 18), He says that He is one and the
Father is the other. In addition to that, He also says He is not alone. So, the Father and Son are different Persons or Jesus lied when He said, “I am not alone.” Did Jesus tell the truth when He said, “I am not alone”? If He did not then He lied. If He lied then He is not God because God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). He did not lie; He told the truth, and the truth of this passage emphasizes: 1) The Oneness Pentecostal claim that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost do not represent different Persons in the Godhead, but are simply different designations of the one Person in the Godhead can never be true, and 2) There are at least two Persons in the Godhead and all those passages that mention one God are not teaching that there is only one Person in the Godhead.

John 14:16 emphasizes that Jesus, the Father, and Holy Spirit are distinct individuals. Jesus, in His upper room discourse, tells the apostles: “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.” It has already been shown that the Father and Jesus are different Persons, now Jesus tells the apostles that the Father will give them another Comforter. The word “another” in the New Testament is translated from at least two Greeks words, allos and heteros. The word in John 14:16 is allos. Thayer says that allos, as compared with heteros, denotes numerical in distinction, and allos generally denotes simply distinction of individuals. Therefore, Jesus is saying that the Comforter (identified as the Holy Ghost in John 14:26) is a Person distinct from both the Father and Him. The combination of these passages from John proves that the Father is distinct from the Son, the Son is distinct from the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is distinct from the Father; therefore, any theology which denies the separate and distinct personalities is false.

Matthew 28:18-20 is another example.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Mt. 28:18-20).

Matthew’s account of the commission also contains a solid argument for the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus stated that those discipled must be immersed “into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
Of special interest is the fact that each of the nouns—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is preceded by the definite article (rendered “the” in the English Bible). In Greek grammar when a series of nouns is joined by the conjunction *kai* (“and”), if an article commences the series, but is missing from the subsequent nouns, then the nouns stand as a further descriptive of the initial subject. This is known as Sharp’s Rule (Dana & Mantey, p. 147).

On the other hand, when the article is repeated before each noun, “the distinctness of each” thing or person (as in the present case) is emphasized (Warfield, p. 42). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are thus not merely three qualities of the One-Person God, as alleged by the United Pentecostal Church. Rather, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three separate divine Persons.37

*The “One” God Of Deuteronomy 6:4 Does Not Prevent “Three” In The Godhead*

The word translated “one” is from the Hebrew word *echad*. Brother Wayne Jackson states:

The concept of the Godhead is not easy to fathom. There is a sense in which God is but “one” (Deut. 6:4; Jas. 2:19). The Hebrew term *echad* reflects a compound unity (Gen. 2:24). “It stresses unity while recognizing diversity within that oneness” (Harris, et al., 30). This is an allusion to the unified divine nature. This oneness has to do with the sum total of those characteristics that collectively constitute the “essence” of deity. It includes such qualities as eternal, non-derived existence, omnipotence, omniscience, perfect holiness, etc. The divine nature is shared by three individual personalities, fully revealed in the New Testament as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In this context, the numeral “one” is applied to each holy person in the sacred “family,” and the mathematical sum yields a “three.” Obviously “God” cannot be both “one” and “three,” if the numerals are employed in the same sense. However, if they refer to different aspects of the Godhead, there is no conflict.

Sometimes the term “God” can be used in a more restricted way, i.e., it may designate but one person of the Sacred Three, in distinction to the others. In Ephesians 4:6, “God” is clearly used of “the Father,” being differentiated both from the “one Spirit” (v. 4) and the “one Lord” (v. 5). In fact, the apostle identifies the “one God” as “Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (v. 6). The ultimate thrust of these progressive clauses is the implied cooperation of the Trinity on behalf of the church of
Jesus Christ. The Father (in conjunction with the Son and the Spirit as appropriate agents) reigns over all his people (cf. Eph. 1:20-23), works through them (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6-9), and also indwells them as his temple (Eph. 2:19-22).

There are numerous vantage points from which one might discuss “Godhead” (e.g., God’s existence, Christ’s historical reality and identity, the Spirit’s personality and work, etc.). In this context, though, which emphasizes oneness, perhaps a consideration of several aspects of the united activity of the Holy Three would be appropriate.

For example, the entire Godhead was involved in the creation of the Universe. The name for “God” (Elohim) in Genesis 1:1 is a plural term, which, together with plural pronouns (Gen. 1:26), certainly lends itself to the revelation of the Trinity, as set forth progressively in Scripture. Both the eternal Word (Christ—Jn. 1:1, 14) and the Holy Spirit were involved in the creation activity (cf. Gen. 1:2; Psa. 104:30; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

Second, it is apparent, from a consideration of the testimony of biblical history, that each of the divine Persons was operating on behalf of humanity as the great plan of redemption was being prepared across the centuries. That the Father so functioned is beyond dispute. Collateral evidence establishes the fact that both Christ and the Spirit were vital in the preparatory phase of the scheme of redemption as well (see Jn. 8:58; 1 Cor. 10:4; Acts 1:16; 7:51). Note, for instance, how that divine “grace” (unearned “favor” extended redemptively in a plan) is attributed to God (2 Cor. 1:12; Tit. 2:11), to Christ (Rom. 5:15; Gal. 1:6), and to the Spirit (Heb. 10:29).

Consider the heavenly concord reflected in this passage: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). With this exalted example before us, surely Christians ought to be motivated toward the type of unity for which the apostle pleads in Ephesians 4:1ff.38

Jesus Said: “I And My Father Are One” (Jn. 10:30)—Does This Mean That He And The Father Are One In Person?

Notice carefully what the passage says. It says: “I and my Father are one.” It does not say, “I and my Father are one person.” If Jesus meant by this passage that He and the Father are one in Person, then He contradicted the argument He made, in John 8:15-18, that they not the same. Furthermore, to say that they are one in Person, makes the
passage absurd. How could it be that the Father is the Son and the Son is the Father? As Woods has said: “One is not his own Father; one cannot beget himself; one cannot exist before he exists.”

Is it possible that two persons can be said to be one in any sense in the Scriptures without being one person? If so, then that could be the sense in which Jesus could say that He and the Father are one. There are examples in Scripture of two persons being said to be one. See Matthew 19:6 where husband and wife are said to be one flesh. They are not one person, but one in purpose. Another example is 1 Corinthians 3:6-8 where Paul said he and Apollos were one: certainly not one person, but one in purpose.

Be that as it may, the words of Jesus Himself are the best answer as to what He meant when He said, “I and my Father are one.” Look at these passages from John 17.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are (Jn. 17:11, emphasis added).

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one (Jn. 17:20-22, emphasis added).

Jesus prayed that His disciples might be one as He and the Father are one. Notice the word “as,” meaning in the same way or to the same extent. How are He and the Father one? “Even as,” that is, in the same manner or to the same extent that He desires the disciples to be one; therefore, they are not one in person but rather in purpose or essence. So, there is one God, or one Deity, or one Divine Nature comprised of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost who are distinct Persons in the Godhead.

In light of what the Lord says, all thought of regarding the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being merely three modes in which one Person works, or merely three aspects in which one Person may be regarded, is seen to be contrary to the very heart of what the Bible teaches. The Bible certainly teaches that there are three Persons in the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In teaching that, the Bible never allows one to forget the primary truth that there is but one God. That truth is pressed home in the Old
Testament; it is pressed home just as insistently in the New. When the New Testament teaches the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are three Persons, it teaches with equal insistence that these three Persons are one God. The New Testament writers never seem to be conscious that one of these two great truths could by any chance be regarded as in contradiction with the other. They are never for one moment conscious of any danger lest, when they present the Deity and the personality of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, they may lead men away from the unity of God. Yes, in the Gospel of John Jesus says, “I and my Father are one” (Jn. 10:30, emphasis added); yet in that same Gospel He says, about the Father and Himself, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (Jn. 14:23, emphasis added); and in that same Gospel He says, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter” (Jn. 14:16, emphasis added).

One God, three Persons, each Person God, but all three united in purpose. That is what is sometimes referred to as the Trinity, the Sacred Three or the triune nature of God.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty! God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

CONCLUSION

The Scriptures clearly and unequivocally teach that the Holy Spirit is a Person, He is Deity, and He is a member of the Godhead along with the Father and the Son. The Bible clearly indicates that each is distinct from the other. The Father is distinct from the Son (Jn. 8:13-18; 16:28); the Son is distinct from the Spirit (Mt. 12:31-32; Jn. 16:7); and the Father is distinct from the Spirit (Jn. 15:26). The Bible plainly teaches that the Father is God (Jn. 17:20-21); the Son is God (Heb. 1:8); and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). Thus, the Godhead is composed of three Persons: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

ENDNOTES

1 All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.
3 Ibid., 11-12.
9 Much gratitude is expressed to brother Wendell Winkler for his work, *A Study of The Holy Spirit* from which much of the content of this section was taken. *A Study of The Holy Spirit* is a part of the *Life Changing Studies With an Open Bible* series published by Winkler Publications, Inc. eighteen of the planned twenty-four book series are now in print.
10 Sweeney, 16-17.
11 Winkler, 11.
15 Mormon doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit and Holy Ghost is very confusing but some of their “apostles” have taught a difference between the two. For example, John Widtsoe in his book, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, stated, “The Holy Ghost, sometimes called the Comforter, is the third member of the Godhead, and is a personage, distinct from the Holy Spirit.” See: http://www.concernedchristians.org/nocomparison_spirit1.php
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 10.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 9.
21 Turner, 330.


26 Ibid.

27 Taylor, 31.


30 Ibid.


32 See 2 Sam. 7:22; 2 Kgs. 19:15; 1 Chr. 17:20; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 83:18, 86:10; Isa. 40:28, 45:5-7, 57:15; Jer. 23:23-24; Mk. 12:28-30, 1 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 3:20.

33 Fox, 28.


36 For other passages that teach or mention these three, see Mt. 3:16-17 (the baptism of Jesus); and Eph. 4:4-6 (the seven ones); See also 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 13:14; and Eph. 2:18.


39 Woods, John, 221.