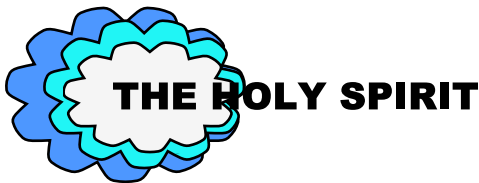


## Introducing the Holy Spirit, the other “Comforter”

Jesus introduced his disciples to the Comforter in a special manner during the Last Supper\*. They were called disciples because they were expected to learn important truth and the truth about the Spirit was very important. At that Last Supper Jesus knew he would soon be leaving them, and he wanted to introduce them to some one who like himself would henceforth journey with them . He himself had been a “One called alongside” (the literal meaning of “Comforter”; Gk = paracletos) and now they were to have another “One called alongside” - the Holy Spirit. Though concerned to teach them what to expect as the Spirit came, he was even more concerned about them actually receiving the Spirit himself. No amount of understanding about the Spirit would be a substitute for an experience and a personal knowledge of the Spirit.

True disciples are those who look for, seek for and walk in reality of the Spirit.



## WHO IS HE?

**TWO MAIN BIBLICAL FEATURES need to be noted:**

### 1. HE IS A PERSON

a. When we talk of a person we mean a being who has the capabilities of rational thought, depth of feeling, personal awareness and ability to act out of a will.

The Holy Spirit clearly has these capabilities: with regard to rational thought, Paul refers to “*the mind of the Spirit*” (Rom 8:27); and Jesus said, “*the Spirit will teach you all things and remind you of everything*” (John 14:26) and “*the Spirit will guide you into all truth*” (John 16:13). With regard to feelings or emotions the Spirit can be “*grieved*” (Eph 4:30), and he acts with “*love*” (Rom 15:30). With regard to power and will the Spirit “*gives his gifts to each person as he determines*” (1 Cor. 12:11), and “*the Spirit blows where he will*” John 3:8. He has impeccably righteous standards of action (he is “*Holy Spirit*”), and he is one with whom we, as persons, are called into relationship and “*fellowship*” (2 Cor 13:14) Thus all the marks of personhood are present in the Holy Spirit.

His personhood is clearly emphasised in the teaching of Jesus in John’s Gospel, where, though the noun “spirit” is neuter in gender, the Greek word “it” is never used as a pronoun for “spirit”, but only the personal word “he”.

### 2. HE IS A DIVINE PERSON - GOD

The bible does not give us a formal “doctrine” of the nature of the Spirit as such. Rather it makes numerous references to him in such a manner that enables us very rapidly and conclusively to see that he is considered to be not simply a person but also a divine person, God. It is quite impossible to follow the biblical descriptions and not come to that conclusion.

a. The Holy Spirit is described as having **all the “attributes” of the Godhead**, that is to say those qualities that belong to God as distinct from created beings:

He is **all knowing** ( & esp. that he knows the “depths of God” 1 Cor 2:10-11)

He is **everywhere present** Psalm 139: 7-10

He is **all powerful** Luke 1:35

He is **eternal** Heb 9:14 He **acts in Creation** Gen 1:2; **He gives life** Gen 2:7

He is **not to be blasphemed** Matt 12:31

b. The Holy Spirit is described as being **separate in his personhood from the Father and the Son**. The distinction in personhood between the Father as God and the Son as God is very plain from scripture and affirms the principle that such distinction of personality exists in the Godhead.

The **distinction between the Son and the Spirit** is clear from Jesus’ own teaching about the Spirit on the night of the Last Supper. He tells his disciples that he “*will ask the Father and he will give you another Comforter - the Spirit of truth*” (Jn 14:16). Thus Jesus is one Comforter and the Spirit “*another Comforter*”. He also tells them that “*unless I go*

away, the Comforter (the Spirit) will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you” (Jn 16:7). Moreover we learn that in his earthly life as the Son of God the Holy Spirit came upon him. (Jn 1:32). There are numerous other examples of the distinction of personhood between Jesus and the Spirit.

The **distinction between the Father and the Spirit** is also clear in Jesus’ teaching. He tells his disciples that the Father **will give you** “another Comforter” Jn 14:15. In Jn 14:25 he says “the Father **will send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit**”. Paul says “we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who **is from God**”, the Spirit who “*knows the thoughts of God*” 1 Cor 2:10-12.

It is language like this that prevents us from blurring the distinction between the Father and the Spirit though at the same time demanding that we acknowledge the divine nature of both.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE PERSON OF THE SPIRIT**

### **1. It keeps us from the danger of thinking of the Spirit as an influence or force.**

Thoroughly digested, the understanding of the Spirit as a person breeds in us an attitude which goes beyond seeing him as an “influence” or an aspect of God” or a “force”. The problem with thinking of the Spirit as a “force” is that we start to think how we can utilise or exploit the “force”. It tends to create a mind set in which we think of getting hold of the Spirit for what we want to do. There could be no more damaging attitude than that. A very big step into spiritual maturity is taken when we think of the Spirit as a person who really wants to get hold of us as his instrument. For example if we were wholly submitted to the person of the Spirit we should not get jealous over the fact that another Christian had “more gifts” than we did. We would accept his will gladly, and rejoice in what he had given to the other person. Yielding to the Spirit, not using the Spirit, is the hall mark of a genuine walk in the Spirit. The Spirit is not an “it” to acquire for our use or to manipulate, but a person, a “he”, who wants to acquire us for his use.

**2. It leads us to honour and worship him.** Once seen clearly as a divine Person we are led to honour the Spirit’s presence, to call upon him, and to thank him for all he does. This is very important even though we know the Spirit’s ministry is to seek to bring glory to the Father and the Son.

**3. It leads us to a relationship with him.** A Person can be “known”. So, therefore, can the Spirit of God be known. That is why Jesus said, “*You know him for he lives with you and will be in you*” Jn.14:17 . Thus we are expected to have an awareness of his presence in us and of his work within us. God’s Spirit will be in the closest proximity to our own spirit, and his presence in us is the mark of belonging to God.

Holy Spirit awareness is very important. It is here that we most show our weakness spiritually. The lack of awareness is the consequence in large measure of a lack of understanding of the nature of the work that the Spirit does in us, and the way he communicates with us. When we recognise his work and his voice our sense of relationship matures rapidly. Understanding his work in us and the nature of his communication with us will be the next subject to be dealt with.

**Bob Dunnett**

**[www.understandingthetimes.org.uk](http://www.understandingthetimes.org.uk)**