

Lesson 1: Introduction

"In no other subject is the danger of erring so great, or the progress so difficult, or the fruit of a careful study so appreciable". - Augustine of Hippo

What Others Believe

Catholic Church

- Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
- Though really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son, He is consubstantial with Them; being God like Them, He possesses with Them one and the same Divine Essence or Nature.
- He proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of spiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.

Baptist

- He Is God
- He Is A Person
- He Is In You

Mormon

- Third person of the Godhead
- One in purpose with the Father and the Son but is a separate being
- Pure spirit and has no body (unlike God and Jesus, who have physical bodies)
- Dwells in us

Jehovah's Witnesses

- An honest Bible reader cannot help but conclude that the holy spirit differs from official church descriptions of it as a person.
- In the Bible, God's holy spirit is identified as God's power in action. Hence, an accurate translation of the Bible's Hebrew text refers to God's spirit as "God's active force."

"No, the holy spirit is not a person and it is not part of the Trinity. The holy spirit is God's active force that he uses to accomplish his will. It is not equal to God but is always at his disposition and subordinate to him." p.23 "To a certain extent, it can be likened to electricity, a force that can be adapted to perform a great variety of operations" p.20. - Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Should You Believe in the Trinity?

Difficulties Surrounding the Holy Spirit

Many see the Holy Spirit as a being shrouded in mystery. Some might admit that their conception of the Spirit is less clear than the Father or the Son.

What tends to obscure our understanding of the Holy Spirit?

- We should not assume that any divine being is easy to comprehend. God can only be known by what He has revealed of Himself, and this must be put on elementary terms for humans to grasp.
- Men who wish to justify their beliefs or practices have distorted the person and/or work of the Spirit to suit themselves. This has created much confusion about the true role of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit

- Some difficulties arise from the text itself. The Greek word ***pneuma*** (spirit) is used in a variety of combinations and contexts which give rise to diverse meanings. It may refer to the Father, Christ, man, miraculous gifts, the influence or effects of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit, the character or essence of a thing, wind, even demonic beings. It takes a careful treatment of each passage in context to decide what “spirit” means wherever it is used.
- Sometimes ***pneuma*** is preceded by a definite article “the,” sometimes it is not. Further, Koine Greek did not designate proper names by capital letters, so it is left to translators – and their biases – to decide whether the word should read Spirit or spirit.

The fact that the Spirit is more challenging to comprehend than the Son affirms the wisdom of God in manifesting Himself through Jesus. We more readily understand God when He appears in our form. This speaks to the infinite complexity and divine superiority of God. We should approach Him in reverence and awe!