

20240512 SRCF Who is the Holy Spirit?

In attempting to answer the question ‘Who is the Holy Spirit?’ it is tempting to visualise him as a dove, fire, oil, wine and the like. All of those metaphors are in the Bible but he is a person, not a thing. So we are going to explore who he is and what sort of character he has.

We begin at the beginning, creation.

Creation

READ Genesis 1:1-2

READ John 1:1-4

These two verses tell us that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were intimately together at creation, working as one.

Jesus’ coming

The second momentous event in earth history is the coming of Jesus. And all three were intimately involved in that.

READ Luke 1: 34-35

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of God. And at his baptism, all three are again working as one.

READ Luke 3:21- 22

Jesus is baptised, the Holy Spirit picks him out of the crowd and the Father proclaims him his Son.

So to answer the question ‘Who is the Holy Spirit?’ the answer is God. The term **‘trinity’** does not appear in scripture but it is written all over it. And yet The early disciples were all good Jews and as such believed in the Shema which begins by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4–

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
But they did not think Jesus and the Holy Spirit being God as a problem to explain. It is often described as a mystery, which we come to understand by faith in Jesus.

Time does not allow us to explore what we can understand about this strange idea that God is three persons in one. And I'm not sure there is great mileage in it. God is beyond our human understanding so it seems clear to me that there can be no explanation of him that satisfies the human intellect. We can be satisfied in his love for his creation and humans in particular. It is in Jesus, God begins to make sense.

Character

What we do need to understand is that everything we know about the character and behaviour of God and Jesus is true about the Holy Spirit. So he is the all-powerful creator, all knowing, he is present everywhere, all the time. He is love, faithful, just, holy, full of grace and truth and merciful to repentant sinners but ultimately punishes unrepentant sinners.

So the question moves on to what is distinct about the Holy Spirit?

Our source of information comes from Jesus, our Saviour, himself.

READ John 15: 26-27.

Context is important and this passage comes to us from Jesus teaching on the way to Gethsemane, to arrest,

crucifixion, death and resurrection. Jesus is about to leave his disciples and he is telling them the bad news – they will be hated – and in that context, He reassures them that God The Father and he himself will not desert them but come to us as the Holy Spirit. Notice yet again how they work together Jesus sends the Holy Spirit from the Father. And the Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus. The Holy Spirit is described as the **Advocate** or ‘Paraclyte’ to use the Greek. It means that the Holy Spirit comes alongside us to assist us in proclaiming Jesus, bringing to mind the things we should say.

The means of doing that is in the next verse. ‘And you also must testify,’. If you want to walk in the Spirit, you must do what the Holy Spirit does, tell others what Jesus is doing. Even though you will be hated for doing it, you will have the presence of the Holy Spirit to remind you of the truth, that you are loved by God and have eternal life. Now that is an encouragement to get out there and tell the good news to whoever you meet.

So, not surprisingly, the Holy Spirit is in the same business that God is, seeking out the sinner and bringing him back to himself. Which brings me to the next verse that tells us about who the Holy Spirit is.

READ John 16: 7-11

The Holy Spirit has been sent to reveal the good News of salvation.

That was prophesied by Isaiah in 61:1ff

This passage Jesus applied to himself in Luke 4:18. That was his mission statement and as the Body of Christ, it is our mission as well.

In John 16 there are three aspects of the Holy Spirit that summarise the good News we have to share. Sin is not believing in Jesus, righteousness is found only through the death and resurrection of Jesus – here Jesus expresses that as “I am going to the Father” the route to the Father was through suffering and death and resurrection.

Judgement is that the prince of this world stands condemned. Judgement has been passed and we choose to accept Jesus as our Saviour or join the Devil in being condemned.

Jesus has more to say.

READ 16:12-15

Who is the truth? Why, Jesus is the truth. So in saying the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth he is saying that, like Jesus himself, the Holy Spirit is the truth. And he will lead us into truth. But lets be clear, the truth he teaches us is the truth about Jesus. So Acts, the Letters and the rest of the New Testament, inspired by the Holy Spirit, tell us about and glorify Jesus.

I have touched here on the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and in the believer, but my brief is to answer the question “Who is the Holy Spirit?”

So let's explore a bit further. First, the Holy Spirit has **emotions**

READ Ephesians 4:29-30

A similar statement is made in Isaiah 63:10. However else, you interpret this, clearly we can grieve the Holy Spirit by what we say, what we think and how we react to one another. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we fail to practice what we pray in the Lord's Prayer "*Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.*"

He also expresses deep emotion on your behalf. Romans 8:26-27

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

Have you got that? The Holy Spirit is deeply emotionally involved in your prayer life! Prayer is not saying a few words and hoping God listens, it is engaging in the conversation of heaven. Here the Holy Spirit is involved, in 1 John 2:1 it is Jesus who speaks in heaven on our behalf. When we pray, the Holy Spirit prays for us in accord with the Father's will. This is really encouraging! You may think you have little influence in the world around you but when you pray, God is involved in your prayers, Jesus is involved in your prayers and the Holy Spirit is involved in your prayers in a deeply emotional

way. When we pray “Your will be done”, we have sided with God, and we have joined in the eternal activity of the universe, the agreement between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit reveals his character

Moving on in READ Galatians 5:22-25

They are the fruit of the Holy Spirit because they are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. He is *love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*.

Who is the Holy Spirit? He is God and he exhibits the same characteristics as God. His intention is loving, he is joyful, he is at peace, he brings peace as in Isaiah 26:3
Philippians 4:4-7 brings joy and peace together:

He is forbearing, not willing that any should perish but reaching out to all with the message of salvation.

And he longs to invade your soul and bring his own characteristics into your minds and heart.

So what we have discovered is that the Holy Spirit is God, he is intimately involved in creation and salvation. It is the Holy Spirit implanted in us that brings new birth into eternal life. He is God with us. Promised by God and sent by Jesus, he is our guide and ever present friend. His ambition is to bring about salvation by us sharing this Good News to the world around us. We can and do grieve the Holy Spirit when we don't display the same character as God himself. He is passionately involved in our prayer life, interpreting our words and thoughts and

speaking to the Father on our behalf. He is the truth and teaches us about Jesus. The fruit he brings out in our lives reflect his personality, love joy , peace forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit living in you. Our desire is to be filled with him, to live lives that please him, share the Good News we have received with others.

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.