

A DIFFERENT HOLY SPIRIT

We will start with quotes from the Watchtower and then later contrast with a biblical perspective.

Knowledge 1995 pg. 31 (JW) (PDF pg. 32)

“God's holy spirit is not a person. It is Jehovah's active force, used by the Almighty to accomplish his purposes.”

The Watch Tower 6-1-1988 pgs. 14-15 (JW) (PDF pg. 334)

“Holy Spirit-A Person or an Active Force?”

“What about the supposed third person of the Trinity, the holy spirit, said to be equal in power, substance, and eternity to Father and Son? Nowhere in the Bible is the holy spirit mentioned with God and Christ as being equal to them. For instance, on the occasion of Jesus' baptism, Mark 1:10 shows that the holy spirit came down upon Jesus ‘like a dove,’ not in a human form. The holy spirit was not some person coming upon Jesus but was God's active force. That power from God enabled Jesus to heal the sick and resurrect the dead. As Luke 5:17 says in the Diaglott: ‘The Mighty Power of the Lord [God] was on him [Jesus] to cure.’ Later, at Pentecost, the apostles also were given the power from God to heal the sick and raise the dead. Did that make them part of some ‘godhead’? No, they were simply given power from God, through Christ, to do what humans ordinarily could not do.

That same active force is mentioned in Ephesians 5:18, where Paul counsels: ‘Keep getting filled with spirit.’ Similarly, Acts 7:55 says that Stephen was ‘full of holy spirit.’ And at Pentecost, the followers of Jesus ‘all became filled with holy spirit’ (Acts 2:4).Can a human get filled with another person? No, but he can get filled with the power that comes from God. That holy spirit is the same force that God used to create the universe. As Genesis 1:2 says: ‘God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters.’

After Jesus was resurrected, Stephen had a vision of heaven and ‘caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand’ (Acts 7:55). Thus, two separate persons were in evidence in heaven: (1) God and (2) the resurrected Jesus Christ. No holy spirit is mentioned in this vision because it was not any third person of a Trinity. The holy spirit, being God's active force, would proceed from God but not as a separate being. That is why Stephen saw only two persons, not three. (End Quote)

Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985, 1989 pgs. 136-137(JW) (PDF pg. 135-136)

“Jehovah is the only true God. Jesus Christ is not part of a Trinitarian godhead but is the only- begotten Son of God. Redemption from sin is possible only through faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice. The holy spirit is not a person but is Jehovah's active force, and its fruitage must be evident in the lives of true worshipers. The human soul is not immortal, as the ancient pagans claimed; it dies, and the hope for future life is in the resurrection. God's permission of wickedness has been because of the issue of universal sovereignty. God's Kingdom is the only hope for mankind. Since 1914 we have been living in the last days of the global wicked system of things. Only 144,000 faithful Christians will be kings and priests with Christ in heaven, whereas the rest of obedient mankind will receive eternal life on a paradise earth.”

These Watch Tower statements show us that Jehovah’s Witnesses believe the following:

1. The Holy Spirit is not a person.
2. The Bible does not say that Jesus or the Holy Spirit is equal to Jehovah.
3. The Holy Spirit came in the form of a dove, not a person.
4. The Holy Spirit is the power that was given to Jesus to perform miracles.
5. A person cannot be filled with another person; therefore, the Holy Spirit is not a person.
6. Stephen only saw two people, not three.

Let us now examine these six beliefs from a Christian perspective.

The Personhood of the Holy Spirit (numbers 1 and 3)

Let's look first at the definition of a person.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition

“per.son n [ME, fr. OF persone, fr. L persona actor's mask, character in a play, person, prob. fr. Etruscan phersu mask, fr. Gk prosopa, pl. of prosopon face, mask--more at prosopopoeia] (13c) human, individual--sometimes used in combination esp. by those who prefer to avoid man in compounds applicable to both sexes <chairperson><spokesperson> 2: a character or part in or as if in a play: guise 3 a: **one of the three modes of being in the Trinitarian Godhead as understood by Christians** b: the unitary personality of Christ that unites the divine and human natures 4 a archaic: bodily appearance b: the body of a human being; also: the body and clothing <unlawful search of the ~> 5: **the personality of a human being: self.**”

1. The Holy Spirit is a person in the sense that he has the personality of a person. A force such as the one the Watch Tower describes as the Holy Spirit does not have a personality. Electricity is an active force, but it does not have a personality. Because the Holy Spirit is called a spirit, does that mean he is not a person? Jesus said that the Father is spirit (John 4:24) and in Luke 24:39 Jesus said that a spirit does not have a body of flesh and bones. If God the Father does not have a body of flesh and bones then He is not literally in human form. Does that mean that Jehovah is not a person, because He is not in a human form?

No, of course not! Yet this is the argument the Watch Tower used when saying, "on the occasion of Jesus' baptism, Mark 1:10 shows that the holy spirit came down upon Jesus 'like a dove,' not in a human form." Taking on the form of a dove does not rule out the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

There is no verse in the Bible that directly states that the Holy Spirit is a person; however, there are passages that give the Holy Spirit attributes that are normally only applied to a person (and not to a "force", or "power"):

The Holy Spirit is referred to as "He" and "Him" (John 14:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is referred to as "He", and he teaches (John 14:26, 1 John 2:27).

The Holy Spirit is referred to as "He", and convicts the world of sin (John 16:7-8).

The Holy Spirit speaks (Acts 4:8, 8:29, 10:19, 13:2; Hebrews 3:7).

The Holy Spirit intercedes (Romans 8:26).

The Holy Spirit leads and directs (Galatians 5:18, Acts 16:6).

The Holy Spirit appoints men to service (Acts 13:2, Acts 20:28).

The Holy Spirit bears witness of Jesus (John 15:26).

The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

The Holy Spirit is called "God", and he can be lied to (Acts 5:3-4).

The Holy Spirit can be insulted and blasphemed (Hebrews 10:29, Matthew 12:31).

These types of references are only applied to a person with a personality. These are not references that one would use for a force or power. One would not say that electricity spoke, or interceded. One cannot lie to or grieve electricity, yet it is a force. The Holy Spirit is not an active force; rather He is a person.

The Holy Spirit is called "God" and possesses the attributes of God (number 2).

If the Holy Spirit is to be considered equal to God, then we would expect to find within the Holy Spirit something of like quality or nature to God. Let's examine some of the attributes that only God possesses, such as being referred to as "God", being eternal, being omnipotent, being omniscient, being omnipresent, and being involved in creation and in our salvation and worship.

The Holy Spirit is referred to "God".

Acts 5:3-4: "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.'"

Judgment: Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to the Holy Spirit. Considering this, one could certainly say that the Holy Spirit is in some way involved with judgment.

The Holy Spirit is Eternal.

Hebrews 9:14: "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through **the eternal Spirit** offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The Holy Spirit is Omnipotent.

Luke 1:35: "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.'"

The Holy Spirit is Omniscient.

1 Corinthians 2:10-11: "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God."

The Holy Spirit is Omnipresent.

Psalms 139:7-10: "Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me."

The Holy Spirit is involved in our salvation.

Titus 3:5: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit in creation.

Psalms 104:30: "Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; and Thou dost renew the face of the ground."

Genesis 1:2: "And the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters."

Job 26:13: "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent." (KJV)

The Watch Tower declares that the Holy Spirit "is the same force that God used to create the universe", yet still maintains that Jehovah created Jesus, and then through Jesus created everything else. By their own words all three members of the Godhead are involved in creation, but Isaiah 44:24 says that God "made all things" by Himself. God can truthfully say this only because these three persons make only one God.

The Holy Spirit involved in our worship.

Philippians 3:3: "for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh"

The Holy Spirit is not just the power that was given to Jesus to perform miracles (number 4).

The Watch Tower said, "The holy spirit was not some person coming upon Jesus but was God's active force. That power from God enabled Jesus to heal the sick and resurrect the dead." This statement really limits the power of Jesus. As we can see in the verse below, Jesus was more than the instrument through which this power was channeled; He is himself the power. Again, this is true because the three persons make only one God.

1 Corinthians 1:24: "but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The Holy Spirit can fill a person and still be a person (number 5).

In our earlier quotes the Watch Tower said, "Can a human get filled with another person? No, but he can get filled with the power that comes from God." Does this argument show that the Holy Spirit is not a person? No, it does not. Our body is a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). Does this mean that God is not a person? No, of course not. Paul said Christ lived in him (Galatians 2:20). Does this mean that Christ is not a person? Again, the answer is "No"; Watch Tower's example does not line up with other Scripture.

Stephen only saw two people, not three (number 6).

The Watch Tower's argument is this: "Stephen had a vision of heaven and 'caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand.' (Acts 7:55) Thus, two separate persons were in evidence in heaven: (1) God and (2) the resurrected Jesus Christ. No holy spirit is mentioned in this vision because it was not any third person of a Trinity."

This is simply a matter of reason and logic. Does failure to mention one member of the Godhead, in one particular passage, prove that there is no third member? Of course not. All three members are mentioned together at the birth of Christ (Matthew 1:18-23), and at His baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). Even if all three were not mentioned together (at the same time), this would not change the fact that all three are called "God", and we are told there is only one God.