



We Believe in the Holy Spirit

“The Lord, the Giver of Life”

Lesson 1

Introduction

Who is the Holy Spirit?

What do the following passages tell us about the Holy Spirit?

Matthew 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the *Holy Spirit*.

Acts 5:1–11 (Ananias lied to the members of the early church *and* to the Holy Spirit. See especially verses 3, 4.) Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to *God*.”

Psalms 139:7, 8 Where can I go from *your Spirit*? Where can I flee from your presence? *If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

1 Corinthians 2:10 These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the *Holy Spirit*.

How do we know that the Holy Spirit is God?

Historical Background

The Third Article of the Nicene Creed will serve as an outline for this study. All that we know concerning the Holy Spirit is certainly from Scripture alone. Considering the Nicene Creed and its historical background will give us insight into how those who have gone before us clung to the Scriptures to combat heresies concerning the Trinity and the person of the Holy Spirit.

What we have come to know as the Nicene Creed is the result of decades of the early church’s endeavor to combat anti-trinitarian controversy and to give the clearest possible confession concerning the Triune God. False teachings concerning the Trinity led to false teachings concerning both the person of Christ and the person of the Holy Spirit. The two main heresies addressed by the Nicene Creed were **Modalism** and **Arianism**.

Modalism – In an attempt to stress the unity of God, a theologian by the name of Sabellius reduced the persons of the trinity to merely different *modes* of activity. Sabellius used the term *homoousios* (of the same substance), only he denied the distinct persons of the Trinity.

Arianism – Arius stressed that God is one, however he claimed that the Son (and the Spirit) were subordinate to the Father and created by the Father. Arius used the term *homoiousios* (of a similar substance).

The first Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) combated these heresies primarily as they pertained to the person of Christ. The word *homoousios* was used to describe the Son in relation to the Father—“...of **one being** with the Father...” The creed that resulted from this first council included an anathema that made it clear that both Arianism and Modalism were rejected by the creed. The creed also only included the statement, “And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.” The creed that we now know as the Nicene Creed was not complete until the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.).

Council of Nicea (325 A.D.)	Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)
<p>We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;</p> <p>And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate and became man, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and dead,</p> <p>And in the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change—these the Catholic and apostolic Church anathematizes.</p>	<p>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.</p> <p>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.</p> <p><i>[Greek text includes the word “and/also”]</i> We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [<i>“and the Son” did not appear until later</i>], who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.</p> <p>We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.</p>

Why was the section concerning the Holy Spirit only one simple phrase in the original creed?

What happened between 325 and 381 to necessitate a more thorough statement concerning the Holy Spirit?

Pneumatomachian heresy – The term *pneumatomachian* literally means “enemy of the Spirit.” By the middle of the 4th Century, the teaching concerning the Spirit was under attack. As Arius claimed that the Jesus was subordinate to the Father, the same was said of the Spirit. The key spokesperson for this heresy, Macedonius, claimed that the Spirit was created and was similar to angels.

Discuss

- In what ways is the teaching of the Trinity challenged today?
- Do you understand the Trinity?
- Why is an accurate teaching concerning the person of Jesus Christ essential for our Salvation? Why is an accurate teaching concerning the Holy Spirit equally essential?
- *Evaluate:* “Why do we have to make such a big deal about little words and phrases? Can’t we just say we believe in God?”

“The Lord, the Giver of life”

The simple phrase that we confess each week, “The Lord, the giver of Life,” succinctly combated the pneumatomachian heresy. What are we confessing when we call the Holy Spirit “Lord?”

When is the Holy Spirit first mentioned in Scripture?

Jesus, the Son of God, is seen throughout the Old Testament in prophecies and pictures (or types). However, in the New Testament, we see even more clearly who the Son of God is and what he has done. How clearly is the Holy Spirit revealed in the Old Testament?

Genesis 6:3 – Then the Lord said, “*My Spirit* will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.”

Numbers 11:25 – “Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the *Spirit* that was on him and put the *Spirit* on the seventy elders. When the *Spirit* rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again.”

Judges – the phrase, “the *Spirit* of the Lord came upon him,” is repeated throughout the book of Judges.

1 Samuel 10:6-7 – [Samuel Speaking to Saul] “The *Spirit* of the Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.”

1 Samuel 16:14 – “Now the *Spirit* of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.”

Psalms 51:11 – “Do not cast me from your presence or take your *Holy Spirit* from me.”

Joel 2:28,29 – “And afterward, I will pour out *my Spirit* on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my *Spirit* in those days.”

What are we confessing when we call the Holy Spirit the “Giver of life?” (See **John 6:63**)

Psalms 104:30 – “When you send your *Spirit*, *they are created*, and you renew the face of the earth.”

Romans 8:11 – “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also *give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit*, who lives in you.

1 Corinthians 12:3 – “Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and *no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.*”

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. *He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 8:2 - because through Christ Jesus the law of *the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*

Galatians 5:16-18 – “So I say, *live by the Spirit*, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷ For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the *Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature*. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*”

2 Corinthians 3:6 – “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

Discuss

- The Holy Spirit is also called the “Comforter.” What comfort do you have in knowing that the Holy Spirit is the Lord, the Giver of life?
- By nature, people tend to view God as vague or impersonal. How do the passages we’ve studied today show that God the Holy Spirit is personal and distinct?