

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be looking at the subject of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures.

I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter. The primary criteria for inclusion are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include the references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

In addition, if you have a testimony to share, please send that to me as well and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

Also, if you have particular subjects that you would like me to cover in the Newsletter, please let me know.

You can also view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) by going to:

<https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

I've also added a new part to the site where you can find additional resources, aptly named:

<https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

The current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch can be accessed at the following link:

<https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/PreachingSchedule-July-August-2024.html>

If at any time you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please let me know. Your responses to me are confidential unless you request otherwise.

Genesis 4:9 (Inspired Version) And in that day, the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.

1 Nephi 3:15 And after they had slain the Messiah who should come, and after he had been slain, he should rise from the dead and should make himself manifest by the Holy Ghost unto the Gentiles.

Ephesians 1

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ,

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Isaiah 63

8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; so he was their Savior.

9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them and carried them all the days of old.

10 But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore, he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.

11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him,

12 That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name,

13 That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble?

14 As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The scriptures give us a lot to think about regarding spiritual things but we sometimes take for granted that we understand some of these fundamental ideas about righteousness, holiness and spiritual life. The reality is that some of these concepts are seemingly very easy and very hard to understand, and sometimes both at the same time for the same subject. Perhaps the first object we should gain an understanding of is the reality of who God is, what he is, and how he exists.

If we look at the term “Holy Spirit” for example, we find this to be at once both simple and difficult to grasp. In English we look at these two separate words for some definition and see the term “Holy” as referencing something that is pure, righteous, and possessing some character trait of being superior in quality. The term “Spirit” we take to be synonymous with “Ghost,” which we find to be the case when the scriptures refer to the Holy Spirit or to the Holy Ghost with equal significance. Whether there is a real distinction between the use of these terms is something to be debated, but the concept of both is that of a being having intelligence, existence, and yet not possessing the same kind of physical, material form that we do.

The “nature” (if it may so be called) of the Holy Spirit of God is that it exists anywhere/everywhere, it bears record of the Father and the Son, and carries much of the daily (if it may so be called) work of God, and numerous other traits beyond the scope of this discussion.

What fascinates me particularly is how the Holy Ghost is used in the masculine sense when referred to in the scriptures, despite the seeming non-terrestrial or biological aspects of God’s existence.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the **Spirit** of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, **he** shall testify of me;

John 16

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the **Comforter** will not come unto you; but if I depart, **I will send him unto you.**

8 And **when he is come, he** will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness because I go to my Father, and they see me no more;

11 Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged.

12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

13 **Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.**

14 **He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.**

If we look back to one of the opening scriptures from Genesis referenced earlier, take careful note of the pronouns being used:

Genesis 4:9 (Inspired Version) And in that day, **the Holy Ghost** fell upon Adam, **which** beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying, **I am** the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever; that, as thou hast fallen, thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.

The writer – Moses – changes person quickly because he first refers to the Holy Ghost using the term “which” – which suggests an abstract term, but quickly changes to the first person narrative of what the Holy Ghost said, namely, “I am.”

If we parse through what Moses recorded, did you notice that the Holy Ghost spoke to Adam saying, “**I am** the Only Begotten of the Father”? That necessarily requires us to ask how the Holy Ghost can be called the Only Begotten of the Father when it was Jesus Christ who was the Only Begotten Son of the Father?

This is an example of the self-defining nature of God, which is the only possible definition because there is no other being to whom God can be compared. We see some indication of this in the letter to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

The nature and existence of God is unique. No other being has a comparable state of being. God **is** because he **is**. That is exactly what he told Moses:

Exodus 3

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM hath sent me unto you**.

15 And God said, moreover, unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you; this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Or in perhaps in other terms, God exists and cannot not exist. His existence is not dependent upon anything or anyone else.

We consider Jesus to be the Only Begotten Son of God, in part because he said he was, but also because we know that there is something to be said about that “Begotten” part of that title. Jesus was born as a baby to Mary and grew up into manhood having flesh like us. But it is not just that Jesus was born as a baby, but because the conception was of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 2:3 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a vision, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for **that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost**.

Mosiah 8

28 And now, Abinadi said unto them, I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men and shall redeem his people;

29 And **because he dwelleth in flesh, he shall be called the Son of God**;

30 And having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son--**the Father because he was conceived by the power of God, and the Son because of the flesh**--thus becoming the Father and Son;

31 And they are **one God, yea, the very eternal Father of heaven and of earth**.

This has been a point of contention among many people, but that is not the purpose in bringing these scriptures to light. The very “I AM” -ness of God dictates that nothing changed in his character due to the birth of Jesus. God is timeless as we see from these passages:

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, **with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning**.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ--**the same yesterday, and today, and forever**.

Alma 5:35 **Neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left** nor from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round.

Mormon 4:68 For do we not read that **God is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing**.

The fact of Jesus’ birth did not change in any way the existence of God. We must remember that it was by Jesus that all things were created which were created:

John 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made.

The unchangeable nature of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus Christ makes clear that these are immutable things – they cannot be made into anything other than what they are. Jesus is called the Word made flesh, not because the Word didn't exist before Jesus' birth, but because He did exist. What Abinidi prophesied to the people was that Jesus was called the Son because he dwelt in flesh, not because he was a created being. Remember, Jesus is as immutable as any character trait of God. The flesh in this case is almost compared to a pair of clothes he is wearing for our benefit, while underneath it is pure God.

This was the handiwork of the Holy Ghost, as the Lord explained to Joseph in a vision. We are reminded of the Spiritual quality of God by how Aaron explained the existence of God to the king of the Lamanites in the Book of Mormon:

Alma 13

40 And now, when Aaron heard this, his heart began to rejoice; and he said, Behold, assuredly, as thou livest, O King, there is a God.

41 And the king said, **Is God that Great Spirit** that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?

42 And Aaron said unto him, Yea, **he is that Great Spirit**, and he created all things, both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this?

43 And he said, Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things; and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words.

We may perhaps we associate the term “spirit” with something that does not have a physical or temporal existence, much like we might think of smoke as being something to see and smell, but not having a solidity or structure that we can feel with our hands. With Jesus that Spirit came to earth in a body of flesh so that we might be able to associate the important Spiritual presence of God with a being that we can interact with, and who was able to live as we do so that he might make intercession for us by becoming one of us in that body. He was able to endure the chastisement of crucifixion in a perfect way that we are not able to because we are not immutable as he is, but very mutable and subject to sin. It took an unchangeable being to endure the weakness of flesh until death to bring about the unchangeable, immutable will of God.

It is therefore useful to remember the first part of that title or name, “Holy Spirit.” By distinguishing the Spirit of God as “Holy” we recognize that this also is not a changeable character trait. The Holy Spirit is Holy because it always has been and always will be. There cannot be a time when the Holy Spirit has been or will be anything less than Holy. The Spirit of God did not “become” holy, nor did the Spirit of God achieve holiness, nor did the Spirit of God make itself holy. It IS because it IS. It is the perfect self-definition of what Holy is.

But what exactly is “holy”?

The answer is interestingly difficult to provide because there are different ways to measure it. To the Jews of the New Testament that did not follow Christ, “holy” was something defined by the law because of the ordinances and sacraments of the law, but the apostles would probably have disagreed. Under the old testament law, there were indeed ordinances and sacraments associated with purity and being purged of iniquity, but these alone were insufficient means for becoming a “holy nation and a peculiar people”

Deuteronomy 14:2 For thou art a holy people unto the Lord, thy God; **and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.**

By this definition the nation of Israel was designated to be a holy people, but it is evident that during the history of Israel that followed this decree, Israel was anything but a pure and clean nation having no iniquity. They were chosen to be a prototype for all people in this perfection God described for them, but they did not satisfy the demands of that decree. God chose them to be peculiar, but they many times chose to be like all the other nations around them, and they suffered quite brutally for their disobedience.

The apostle Peter brings this subject up again for review in his first epistle to the church. He declares in his letter:

1 Peter 2

9 But **ye are** a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation**, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,
10 Which **in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God**, which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

This is again the calling of the spiritual nation of Israel – the true followers of Jesus Christ – to be that holy nation, embodying the character and persona of the people of God – those that have obtained mercy from God.

What makes this nation “holy” is that they have been chosen by God by reason of their faith. It cannot be that a faithless nation can be called a holy nation. This is the nation of people who please God -- because they have faith.

But is faith the only reason why God can be pleased with this chosen people? Let’s examine that a bit further.

Ether 5

27 And when I had said this, the Lord spake unto me, saying, Fools mock, but they shall mourn; and my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; and if men come unto me, I will show unto them their weakness.

28 I give unto men weakness, that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them.

29 Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness; and I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me the fountain of all righteousness.

In our printed scriptures verse 29 is one that I have often struggled with on a conceptual basis, and I have come to the realization that my struggle has been due to the punctuation used in the sentence. I would suggest we read verse 29 as follows:

29 Behold, I will show unto the Gentiles their weakness; and I will show unto them that faith, hope, and charity bringeth unto me, the fountain of all righteousness.

Note the extra comma. To my mind it changes the context of the sentence to show that these three (faith, hope, and charity) will bring you to Christ, who is the fountain of all righteousness. The printed version without the extra comma makes this an effort to bring the fountain of all righteousness to Christ, which to my mind seems unnecessary since he *is* the fountain of all righteousness.

From a doctrinal perspective it shows that these three things – faith, hope, and charity -- are necessary for righteousness to exist within us in order for us to become one with Christ – or in other words, to be granted the change of character which makes us more like Christ. It is Christ that can make us holy because he is holy, and he is holy – in part at least – because these are traits that he possesses perfectly by virtue of his unchangeableness. It is Christ that can decree that we are holy because he is the only being in whom holiness is the only state of being. Holiness therefore is one of the defining qualities of the Spirit of God – possessing perfect cleanness, perfect faith, perfect hope, perfect love, perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, perfect mercy, perfect justice – all of the perfections that can ever be attributed to a perfect being.

Matthew 5:50 Ye are, therefore, commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

3 Nephi 5:92 Old things are done away, and all things have become new; therefore, I would that ye should be perfect, even as I or your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

We could further define the Holy Spirit through the effects of the Holy Spirit upon us – the gifts that he gives us.

1 Corinthians 12

4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.

5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;

9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.

11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many.

These are gifts that can be given by the Spirit, so it seems rather obvious that the Spirit of God must also possess these gifts in order to be able to give them, along with others not named here. This helps us to add to the definition of what a Holy Spirit truly is. That is to say, these gifts and the ability give them to us are innately central to the existence of God, along with all of the other things we have discussed concerning traits God has in perfection.

We could perhaps spend an eternity trying to define what the Holy Spirit is, and we might never complete that task because the Spirit of God is infinite and eternal. But we have a hope that we can enjoy the presence of that being because of the promises he has made.

Acts 17

24 God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands,

25 Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation,

27 **That they should seek the Lord if they are willing to find him; for he is not far from every one of us.**

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch, then, as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent,

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by him whom he hath ordained; and he hath given assurance of this unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

He is not very far from us because he is everywhere, and listens for us to call upon him in faith with hope and the pure love of Christ.