

Is the Holy Spirit Greater than God?

Written by Institute of Religion

Thursday, 10 January 2013 03:03 - Last Updated Saturday, 19 January 2013 14:23

Is the Holy Spirit Greater than God?

I have often found the responses given to the above question a bit perplexing, I have received statements varying from the insane down to the profane, at times. Of course there is always the exemption of a few truly exemplary Christians who follow the edit of scriptures to prove all things '(1 Thes 5:21). But over the years what I have discovered based on statements from a lot of holy spirit' filled Christians is that persons rarely take the time to question what it is they say they believe.

Is the Holy Spirit greater than God? Why would I even think about asking such a question? Well, allow me to explain, please. The vast majority of Christendom teaches the view that there are three distinct personalities or '=consciousness' that comprises the God Head: God the Father (Yahweh), God the son (Jesus Christ) & The Holy Spirit (-----). It is said that the three are one and they are one in three, all co-equal, co-eternal, omnipotent, uncreated beings, if anyone of the three were to be removed there would be no God! It is the view of the triune God, popularly known as The Trinity. My question comes in light of the fact that if their interpretation of God is true, that all three members of the Godhead are co-equal then how should one go about interpreting the following scripture:

Mt 12:31-32. And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.. NIV

If Trinitarians were to hold to the view of the Holy Spirit being a distinct hypostasis (=consciousness') from the Father and the Son, then clearly Mt. 12:31 would be in total contradiction of the forgiving and loving God Christianity professes, as well as it violates the Trinitarians own premise of co-equality within the God Head. But before we delve into Mt. 12, let us also look at the views and the most common arguments for the Trinitarians:

John preached it!

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In defending the Trinity I think there is no clearer scripture than 1st Jn 5:7 "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one". (KJV)

The Holy Spirit is God:

Ac 5:3-4 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 to men but to God." (NIV)

The Spirit has all the attributes of God: Eternal (Heb 9:14); Omnipresent (Ps 139:7), Omniscient (1Co 2:10-11)

The Holy Spirit displays traits of personhood:

Ro 8:26-27 "...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (NIV)

The Spirit intercedes for us, helps us in our weaknesses, but most importantly, v 27, the Spirit has a mind therefore proving he possesses consciousness.

Other acts of the spirit: The Spirit gives gifts (1Co. 12:11), (Ac 2:4); Teaches (Lk 12:12), (Jn 14:26), (Jn 16:13); Talks, instructs and commands (Ac 8:29), (Ac 10:19-20), (1Ti 4:1), (Rv 2:7), (Rv 22:17); Can be grieved (Eph 4:30)

Personal pronouns used to describe the Holy Spirit

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Jn 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
KJV

There are several notes suggesting the personality of the Holy Spirit in the above text. The designation another Comforter,' taken in connection with the description of his work, is one. The fact that he is sent or given is another. And another is seen in the specific work which the Spirit is to do. Another is the masculine pronoun employed here. In v 26 the function of the Spirit is indicated: He is to bring to "remembrance all that I said unto you." In Jn 15:26 this is made even more comprehensive: "He shall bear witness of me," and yet more emphatically in Jn 16:14, "He shall glorify me..."

The God Head

Now that I have presented the Trinitarians view of the Holy Spirit, let me now state my position..... I am in full agreement with the Trinitarians as it relates to the plurality and unity of the Godhead i.e., only as it relates to the Father and the Son being God. The Father and Son are clearly shown to have distinct personalities in the bible (Jn 1:1-3), but not so with the Holy Spirit. In other words, I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct member of the God Head.

The Holy Spirit can be defined as the spiritual extension, presence or representation of the Father and the Son. So from that angle, it would be no divine mystery to see why the Holy Spirit possesses all the attributes of God.

But what of all the above texts that seem to be indicative of a third personhood within the

Godhead? Comma Johanneum...there are three that bear record in heaven...' 1st Jn 5:7.

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If this text was actually in the bible it would have been the only clear argument in support for the Trinitarians, but unfortunately, this text was not a part of the earlier more reliable Greek manuscripts. To prove my assertions; take a look at the NIV, RSV, NASB or any of the later versions of the bible, what you will find is that the above text has been omitted, also, a quick google search on the 'Comma Johanneum' would yield some startling facts of how this particular verse was deliberately inserted by 'mis'- translators of the bible.

A more correct rendering of 1 Jn 5:7-8 would be .For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.. NIV.

Now in case someone still wishes to make an argument by saying that the spirit testifies, so he has to be a person, please bear in mind that the water and blood also testifies, so following on that train of thought; am I now to believe that each time I consume a glass of water I am guilty of cannibalism? No – it is a known fact that the bible uses literary devices such as personification quite often.

So how do these three elements—the Spirit, the water, and the blood—specifically bear witness? "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16).

Water is representative of baptism, which bears witness of the burial of the old self and the beginning of a new life (Rom. 6:1-6). The blood represents Christ's death by crucifixion, which pays the penalty for our sins, reconciling us to God (Rom. 5:9, 10). Therefore 1st Jn 5:7-8 cannot be accurately used as a defense for Trinitarianism.

The Holy Spirit called God

As outlined earlier in this article there are a few verses of scripture that seem to suggest that the Holy Spirit is God, I have no problem in accepting that, except to assert that this does not automatically means that the Holy Spirit is a distinct entity. Now if we were to agree that

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the Holy Spirit is the power, spiritual extension or representation of the father and the son, then it should be obvious as to why the spirit possesses all the attributes of God, for the spirit is God/Jesus himself. Take a look at 2 Cor 3:17-18: .Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.. NIV Was the apostle Paul wrong in saying that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Spirit? – Well, what did Christ himself say concerning the spirit?

John 14:16-18 .And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you..KJV

In verse 16 Jesus says that another comforter will come but as he continues to comfort his disciples, we read in verse 18 where he says he himself will come. This once more proves that the Lord God is the Spirit; again examine carefully Ro 8:9-10 how the spirit, the spirit of God and the spirit of Christ are used interchangeably.

The bible is not contradictory, the Lord God lives in us by means of his spirit-ual extension: (Jn 14:23); (1Jn 4:12); (2Co 13:5); (Gal 2:19-20); (Col 1:26-27). So from all these passages it should be clear that while the spirit is God/Christ himself, it is not a distinct entity.

Another text which clearly debunks the spirit as a distinct entity is 1 Co 2:11 it states: .For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.. NIV..... Notice the analogy between the Spirit of man and the spirit of God. Now let me ask, the spirit within you, is it a person or personality that is distinct or different from you? Is it any less human than you are? (For your sake I hope not!) Similarly, how can we believe that the spirit of God is something distinct from God himself? Again, I find the arguments for Trinitarianism to be lacking.

Personhood and personal pronouns.

Earlier I alluded to a literary device called personification. Trinitarians would like us to believe that just because we see instances where the spirit teaches, enables, helps, testifies,

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encourages, counsels, and prays then it has to be a person. Well then, how should one interpret: Proverbs 1:20-21 which states: .Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:. NIV. Here we find wisdom raising her voice, crying and making a speech, interestingly to note wisdom has a gender, it is called =her',,, now if this were to be taken literally, then I guess that wisdom is an emotional, loud and vulgar female that deservingly should be avoided, hmm,,,, ok, maybe that's why a lot of persons in today's society seem to refrain from wisdom's enlightening embrace.

A point of concession here, not all of these anthropomorphic texts can be adequately covered under the umbrella of personification, take for instance Rom 8:26 which states: .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 with groans that words cannot express. NIV

We find the spirit making intercession for us; some would argue that this is more than mere personification. However, in their hastiness to find scriptures to support a man-made dogma they forget that Christ (according to the bible) is the only mediator/intercessor between God and man. (1 Tim 2:4-6 & Ro 8:34). Also in this passage, the KJV uses the word itself' instead of himself' as it relates to translating the word spirit. If the spirit was a distinct entity why would he be called it'? (For a more detailed explanation into the Hebrew and Greek words used to connote spirit' send us an email)

It takes two

Another problem Trinitarians are faced with is the numerous instances where it seems that both Christ and the apostles blatantly disregard the Holy Spirit as being a distinct co-equal partner of the God Head. Examine the texts below and see for yourself:

Jn 1:1-3,14 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

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The Father and the Son will have ruler ship in the kingdom to come, why isn't the same said of

the Spirit? (Eph 5:5); (Ps 110); (Dan 7:13-14); (Heb 1:8); (Heb 1:13).

Jesus came to reveal the Father. (Lu 10:22); (Jn 1:18); (Mt 11:27).

No mention of the spirit being a part of the God Head by none of the apostles. (1st Pet 1:3); (1Co 1:3); (2Co 1:2); (Gal 1:3); (Eph 1:2); (Phil 1:2).

Even in the book of Revelation he is still missing from the God Head (Rv 1:1); (Rv 5:1,5,6,7).

Why didn't Paul mention that God was triune in nature to the young converts in Corinthians?

1st Cor 8:6 .yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. NIV

Another critical position which dismisses the view of the Spirit being a person is the visions of the throne of God. At the stoning of Stephen (Ac 7:56) he saw the throne of God and was able to see the two distinct persons of the God-head i.e. the Father and the Son at his right hand. Why did Stephen not mention the Spirit? If the Spirit is person why is it so difficult to locate him?

It would be more consistent to explain these 'absences' by supporting the view that the Spirit is the spiritual extension of God. Wherever God is at work the Spirit is also there, so there is no need for the Spirit to be a person because the Spirit encompasses all the actions of God.

Other Implications

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Let us for a moment accept the argument that the Spirit is a person, distinct from both the Father and the Son. Let's see how far one can hold to this view without facing serious discrepancies in the Bible. For instance how would one explain the Matthew 1:18 text which describe the incarnation of Christ, would Jesus be the son of God or the son of the Holy Spirit? Who is the real father of Jesus?

From the myriad of texts presented that shows the absence of the Holy Spirit in so many critical roles, this logically shows that the 'co-equal' attribute of the spirit is being brutally violated.

Apart from the fact that he will not be reigning in the kingdom to come; Christ forgot to reveal him, the apostles ignored him from all their salutations, we also see no instance or command given that we are to pray to him, if ever there was a case where justice is needed, this would be it.

The doctrine of the trinity has long been classified as a mystery and something that cannot be understood by the human mind:

"The mind of man cannot fully understand the mystery of the Trinity. He who would try to understand the mystery fully will lose his mind. But he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul" (Harold Lindsey and Charles J. Woodbridge, A Handbook of Christian Truth, pp. 51-52).

The bible however teaches us no such thing rather, it admonishes us to: ". . . Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you..."(1st Pet 3:15).

Speaking of being ready to give an answer, let us now revisit the above question (Mt 12:32). If the Holy Spirit is indeed a distinct member of the God Head then according to this scripture the Holy Spirit is greater than both the Father and the Son, right? Is this really the case?

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To understand Mt 12, we need to be cognizant of the premise that the Bible lays out for us precept upon precept' (Isa 28:10). In light of this let us examine some scriptures:

Num 15:30-31 .But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the LORD, and that person must be cut off from his people. 31 Because he has despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, that person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him.. NIV (Lev 24:14-16); (1 Kings 21:10); (2 Sam 12:14); (Isa 52:5).

Going back to the Matt 12 text (see also Lk 12:10), we find where Jesus after performing a miracle drew a lot of adoration from the crowd; persons immediately alluded to him as the son of David, equating him to the promised messiah. The Scribes and Pharisees who always sought the attention and adoration of men became filled up with pride and envy (just like Saul & David) that they took issue with the honor that was being ascribed to Jesus. They became so blinded by their own ego that they willfully rejected and denied the power and the presence of God that was being displayed through Jesus Christ. It is a biblical fact that if you keep on rejecting the convicting power of the Holy Spirit you will reach the point where your conscience becomes seared. (1 Tim 4:1-2)

In the words of Plummer (Luke ad loc.): "Constant and consummate opposition to the influence of the Holy Spirit, because of a deliberate preference of darkness to light, render repentance and therefore forgiveness morally impossible."

A similar idea is taught in Heb 6:4-6, and 1 John 5:16: "A sin unto death."..... Anyone who deliberately keeps on sinning by resisting the convicting power of the Holy Spirit will be lost.

There are so many texts in the bible that Trinitarians have not been able to adequately respond to as for me, I have long searched the Bible in hopes of finding solid evidence for a third member in the Godhead alas all my search has lead me in another direction. My question to all those who still believe that the Holy Spirit is a distinct entity is this... Is the Holy Spirit Greater than God?