

Use Of The Word “Spirit”

John Isaac Edwards

Not knowing how the word “spirit” is used in the Scriptures has led some to misunderstand Bible teaching concerning the Holy Spirit. Thus, we study.

1) ***The First Rule Of Grammar.*** The first rule of grammar states: “No word is a part of speech until it first appears in context.” Words often have different meanings, depending on the context in which they are used. Take the word “bear” for example. Cain said, “My punishment is greater than I can **bear**” (Gen. 4:13). An angel told Sarai, “Behold, thou art with child, and shalt **bear** a son...” (Gen. 16:11). God commanded Israel, “Thou shalt not **bear** false witness” (Ex. 20:16). David said to Saul, “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a **bear**...” (1 Sam. 17:34). Would you expect to encounter an animal every time you come across the word “bear” in the Bible? Yet, about every time some see the word “spirit” in the Scriptures, they think they have found the Holy Spirit! Some do not stop there, but conclude it is some miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit!

2) ***“Spirit” And “Holy Ghost”.*** The King James

Version often uses the terms “spirit” and “ghost” interchangeably. For example Luke 23:46 records, “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my **spirit**: and having said thus, he gave up the **ghost**.” This is also true of the Holy Spirit. “And Jesus being full of the **Holy Ghost** returned from Jordan, and was led by the **Spirit** into the wilderness” (Lk. 4:1). Other examples include John 1:33; 7:39; Acts 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:3.

3) ***Capitalization And Presence Or Absence Of “Holy” Or “The”.*** Use of the word “spirit” is not determined by whether or not it is capitalized. There are places where the word is not capitalized, yet the Holy Spirit is represented by the word. In Matthew 22:43 Jesus said, “How then doth David in **spirit** call him Lord, saying...” Mark’s parallel account says, “For David himself said by **the Holy Ghost**...” (Mk. 12:36). Thus, “David in spirit” is equivalent to “David...by the Holy Ghost”. Also, there are settings where the word “Spirit” is capitalized, but the context shows that the use of the word has to do with one’s attitude or disposition; not the Holy Spirit.

“...the **Spirit** of adoption” in Romans 8:15 is the antithesis of “the **spirit** of bondage” in the same verse. We do not have the disposition of a slave, but of a son. Also, “...he hath given us of his **Spirit**” in 1 John 4:13 has to do with the disposition of love. Nor is the use of the word “spirit” determined by whether it is preceded by “holy” or “the”. In Matthew 22:43, neither “holy” or “the” come before “spirit”, yet the parallel passage (Mk. 12:36) makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is the use of the word.

4) ***“Spirit” Used As The Cause For The Effect.*** A figure of speech known as *Metonymy of the Cause* must not be overlooked when studying about the Holy Spirit. “Metonymy of the *Cause* is when the cause is put for the effect: i.e., when the doer is put for the thing done...” (*E. W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, p. 538*). An example is when the author is put for his writings. The eunuch “...**read Esaias** the prophet” (Acts 8:28). Was he literally reading the person Isaiah? No, he was reading the writings of the prophet (Acts 8:32-33; Is. 53:7-8). In the same sense, Paul talked about “...when **Moses is read**...” (2 Cor. 3:15), another

case where the author is put for his writings. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is put for the word of God which was revealed by the Spirit. We are "...born of *the Spirit...*" (Jn. 3:6) or "...born... by the *word of God...*" (1 Pet. 1:23). As well, the Spirit is put for the gifts and operations which He empowered men to perform (Acts 2:4; 8:17-18; 19:6).

5) A Good Way To Study.

The word "spirit" occurs more than 500 times in the Bible. It is put to use in several, distinct ways in both the Old and New Testaments. Get your Bible, a complete concordance, a pencil and paper. Look at every text where the word "spirit" is used. Allow the context to determine

the use of the word. Once the proper meaning has been determined, write down the different uses. Beneath each heading, jot down the passages in which the word spirit is used that way. Some headings and passages to get you started:

Holy Spirit
Matthew 4:1

Unclean Spirits, Demons
Matthew 8:16

Immaterial, Invisible Part Of Man
Luke 8:55

The Element In Man By Which He Perceives, Reflects, Feels, Desires
Acts 17:16

Character
Romans 1:4

Purpose, Aim
2 Corinthians 12:18

Attitude, Disposition
Galatians 4:6

Angels
Hebrews 1:7

Moral Qualities And Activities
1 Peter 3:4

Once you have grouped together all of the Holy Spirit passages, carefully read and study every Scripture to learn all that can be known about the Holy Spirit!

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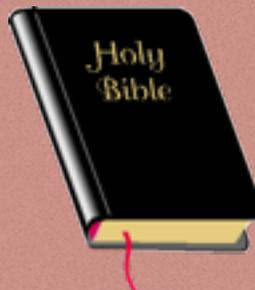
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