

CF506 THE NAMES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Introduction

I have been fascinated with names all my life, perhaps because my name, Elmer, is not a common one. I have both liked and disliked my name since I was a small boy. I remember some friends making fun of my name in the first grade. It seems there was a comedy character on radio named Elmer at whom people laughed, he was considered dumb. When I asked my mother why I had that name, she told me it was because "I loved your father." I was named after him. So I liked the name after that, no matter what others said.

My fascination with names led me to write *The Names of Jesus* (Accent Books, 1988). In the appendix, I listed more than 800 names, titles and references to Jesus.

Then I wrote *My Father's Names* (Regal Books, 1991), primarily analyzing the names of God in the Old Testament. I listed in the appendix more than 100 of His names and titles.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity, I naturally wanted to write a book on His name. This book finishes the trilogy. I have listed more than 100 names, descriptive phrases and titles for the Holy Spirit in appendix 1.

In this study, however, you will learn more than the Spirit's names. You will also learn about His personality, and what He does for you today. This book is, therefore, more than a doctrinal study of the names of the Holy Spirit. I want you to learn about Him, to know Him and to experience Him in your life.

People usually do not think of the term "Holy Spirit" as a name. Instead, they think of the phrase as a description. Maybe this is because they do not think of the Spirit as a person. People think of Him as an influence and give Him a title just as they give a title to boats, cars or hurricanes. They think of Him as an influence, as "the spirit of democracy," or "the spirit of the Yankees."

Because people pray to "Our Father in heaven," or they pray, "Dear Jesus," they know of the Father and the Son as persons. But most people never pray to the Holy Spirit, perhaps because they do not think of Him as a person. Some do think the command, "Pray the Lord of the harvest" (Matt. 9:38) is directed to the Holy Spirit; also, "the Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17).

And Scripture shows examples of prayer to the Lord as the Spirit present among His people-- instances in which the Spirit responds to the prayers being offered (see Luke 2:25-29; Acts 10:9,13-15,19; 11:5,7,8,12; 13:2; 15:28).

I can't write about the names of the Holy Spirit and not write about the Trinity. When

describing the Trinity, I like to use the statement written by the Early Church fathers in the Athanasian Creed: "We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance."

To explain how the doctrine of the Trinity works, I have used the following statement: "The members of the Trinity are equal in nature, separate in person but submissive in duty." In this book, therefore, I have emphasized three things. First, this book equally emphasizes the deity of the Holy Spirit with God the Father and God the Son they all have the same nature, attributes and character.

Second, this book separates the personality of the Holy Spirit from the personality of the Father and the personality of the Son the Godhead consists of three separate persons.

Third, this book emphasizes the duties of the Holy Spirit, who was sent by the Father and the Son to carry out the work of God in the world.

When I asked some authorities to read this book, most of them were surprised. They indicated that they had never seen all these names for the Holy Spirit gathered in one place. I taught this series in the Pastor's Bible Class at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, where approximately a thousand people gather weekly to study the Scripture. Just as in my two previous books, *The Names of Jesus* and *My Father's Names*, the congregation was fascinated with the content, wanting to know more. I feel my best books have been hammered out in the arena of a class's receptivity before being offered to the publisher.

This book is aimed beyond the study of Bible facts. I want you to feel the Holy Spirit living through you. I wrote this book to do more than fill academic curiosity. It should help you live successfully for God. Each chapter, therefore, concludes by offering principles to be applied to life.

One name or title is missing in this study: the term "ghost," as in Holy Ghost. The original King James Version (1611) translated the word *pneuma* "Ghost" as in, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 1:5), and, "after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). This has resulted in confusion in some minds.

Some think the word "ghost" refers to a phantom, as in "the ghosts of Halloween." But the word *pneuma* should be translated as "Spirit." The word "ghost" had a different meaning in 1611 than it does today and this difference blurs the personality of the Third Person of the Trinity for some. The solution to this confusion is simple. Every time the term "Holy Ghost" is found in the original *King James Version*, it should be translated "Holy Spirit." If you prefer to use the name Holy Ghost, do so, as long as you understand the meaning of the name you are using. For the Holy Spirit is the furthest thing from a phantom. He is very real.

His primary name, Holy Spirit, has a twofold implication. First, when we take the Holy Spirit into our lives, He should make us holy, as His name implies. "Or do you not know that your

body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19). Second, when we live by the principles of the Holy Spirit, He will make us spiritual, because we become like Him. You should become holy and spiritual as you study the Holy Spirit.

I want to thank the many people who have helped me understand the Holy Spirit. My theology of the Holy Spirit was transformed by reading *He That Is Spiritual* by Lewis S. Chafer (Zondervan, 1964), founder of Dallas Theological Seminary. Before this, I was afraid of the Holy Spirit because of some extremes I saw in some churches. I had an unfortunate experience as a young believer and was turned off to any emphasis on the Holy Spirit throughout my life.

I also want to recognize John R. Rice for convincing me that power in service comes from the Holy Spirit. He urged me to seek His power. I appreciate how Larry Gilbert clarified my thinking about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Douglas Porter, a former student and a graduate of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, challenged me to think about the many names of God. We discussed these matters for hours, and he helped in the research for this book.

Many have contributed to my thinking about the Holy Spirit, but in the last analysis, we are all a product of our teachers and friends. Just as every tub must sit on its own bottom, so I must take responsibility for all the weaknesses and omissions of this volume.

May God make you more holy and more spiritual as you study these terms for His Holy Spirit.

*From *The Names of Jesus* by Elmer L. Towns (Denver, CO: Accent Publications, 1987), adapted.