

1016 The worship place in New Testament

(Verses refer to those in NASB unless otherwise specified, and by Whirlwind.)

First let us take a look at the Greek word G4145 "πνεῦμα" with transliteration "pneuma" in Strong's Concordance. In the English translation, it can be translated as the Holy Spirit with a big letter "Spirit" or as an ordinary spirit like my spirit started with a small letter "spirit". Therefore, this causes arguments for some verses. In one controversial verse, this word appears twice. We'll discuss why the first appearance should be translated as "Spirit", and the second appearance as "spirit". We then testify through this verse that revelation is needed when studying the Bible. At the same time, we talk about the fact that not every supernatural event comes from the Holy Spirit from both the New Testament and the Old Testament.

Let us first describe the verse that caused the problem. In John 4:21-24, "Jesus said to her (the Samaritan woman), "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ...God is spirit (G4151), and those who worship Him must worship in spirit (G4151) and truth.""

As said earlier, there is only one word G4151 in Greek, and thus no distinguishing between the words "Spirit" and "spirit". In this case, there are four possibilities in English translation since the same word appears twice in the last verse. As a matter of fact, if you check on the web, you can find in different translations all four possibilities [1]. This is a case when which one is correct cannot be told by surrounding verses. We must tell from the consistency of the Bible. We'll examine which one should be correct according to the consistency of the Bible.

Secondly, we know that the Holy Spirit is a pure spirit, and cannot be seen by our physical eyes according to our experience. The Bible says so too. Why? In John 14:16-17, it says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." The Helper is the Holy Spirit, who cannot be seen apparently by physical eyes in the verses.

Based on this, we can see God the father isn't a spirit by the following verses in Exodus 33:19-23, it says, "And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."...But He said, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" ...Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen."" Why? Because Moses can see Him with the price to die. Therefore, he only saw His back. Nevertheless, a pure spirit like the Holy Spirit cannot be seen.

From the consistency of the Bible, we can say that God is the Holy Spirit due to the Trinity. Thus, we cannot say that God is spirit or a spirit. The first appearance of G4151 should be translated as "God is Spirit."

Thirdly, let us explain why the second appearance should be translated by the lower case "spirit". The first fact is that we can worship at any time. This fact alone is sufficient to show that the second appearance cannot be translated as "Spirit" since the Holy Spirit cannot be controlled by us. We cannot put the cart before the horse if we want to understand the Bible!

Then, why my spirit? After we are saved, we all have a new spirit as Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

The Bible says clearly in the New Testament and the Old Testament that a human consists of three parts - spirit, soul, and body [2]. The old spirit died when Adam disobeyed and thus sin entered the world. We need a new spirit. The new spirit is the only place in us not contaminated by sin. Hence, the inside abiding Holy Spirit can reside here. Although the Bible doesn't say where the new spirit is, we can worship the abiding Holy Spirit, one of Trinity, anytime in the new spirit. Thus the verse in John 4:24 should be translated as "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

In Ephesians 1:17, Paul prayed, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Thus, we often say that revelation is needed in Bible study. This is real. Let me testify through this verse about what happened. When trying to search if the Bible says that the spirit cannot be seen by physical eyes, this verse suddenly appeared in my mind, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17) This cannot be proven since it appears in the mind just like any other testimony involving God's words in the mind. We have to believe the witness who doesn't lie. As a matter of fact, we live in our daily life in various beliefs.

Even though I have read John 14:16-17 many times, I wasn't aware of the way to use it as described earlier. Without the spirit of revelation leading me, I didn't see it even though it was in front of me. Is it not this way with so many verses in the Bible study? This also let me suddenly become aware of this example of the fact Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 4:7, "For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"

In particular, one has to be aware of the fact that not every supernatural event comes from the Holy Spirit. The Bible clearly says in 1 John 4:2-3, "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." And "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

Now we conclude our sharing with an example from the Old Testament, which says again that not every supernatural event comes from the Holy Spirit. In Job 4:12-21, it says, ""Now a word was brought to me stealthily, And my ear received a whisper of it. "Amid disquieting thoughts from the visions of the night, When deep sleep falls on men, Dread came upon me, and trembling, And made all my bones shake. "Then a spirit passed by my face; The hair of my flesh bristled up. "It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; A form was before my eyes; There was silence, then I heard a voice: 'Can mankind be just before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? 'He puts no trust even in His servants; And against His angels He charges error. 'How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, Whose foundation is in the dust, Who are crushed before the moth! 'Between morning and evening they are broken in pieces; Unobserved, they perish forever. 'Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them? They die, yet without wisdom.'"

We mentioned before that the Holy Spirit doesn't make the hair of his flesh bristled up, etc. When we examine closely what the voice said, it used the same style as when Satan seduced Eva, where the sentences mixed right and wrong. Is not it a work from an evil spirit?

Some related knowledges

[1] Please go to the web site "<https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/John%204:24>" to get different translations. Among them are the following with four possible combinations. **KJV**, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."
NASB, "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."
NIV, "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."
NABRE, "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

[2] That human consists of three part is discussed in detail on our web site "a-christian-voice.com." under "On spiritual understanding about life' entitled "1012 The first appearance of Jesus after resurrection." In its example on Ecclesiastes 3:21, there is a detailed discussion why both the Old Testaments and the New Testaments say so. Here, we can see logically one more time on this fact.