

2D: *The Holy Spirit & Matthew 28:19*

Baptized in the Name of...

Insight on the Scriptures, Vol. 2 states:

At Matthew 28:19 reference is made to "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." A "name" can mean something other than a personal name. When, in English, we say, "in the name of the law," or "in the name of common sense," we have no reference to a person as such. By "name" in these expressions we mean 'what the law stands for or its authority' and 'what common sense represents or calls for.' The Greek term for "name" (*o'no-ma*) also can have this sense. Thus, while some translations (*KJ, AS*) follow the Greek text at Matthew 10:41 literally and say that the one that "receiveth a prophet *in the name of* a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man *in the name of* a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward," more modern translations say, "receives a prophet *because he is* a prophet" and "receives a righteous man *because he is* a righteous man," or similar. (*RS, AT, JB, NW*) Thus, Robertson's *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (1930, Vol. I, p. 245) says on Matthew 28:19: "The use of name (*onoma*) here is a common one in the Septuagint and the papyri for power and authority." Hence baptism "in the name of the holy spirit" implies recognition of that spirit as having its source in God and as exercising its function according to the divine will.¹

The Greek word, *onoma* (name), is used 229 times in the New Testament². *Onoma* refers to the name of a place four times.³ Barring these place names and one reference in Revelation,⁴ in every other

[1] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. "Entry for "SPIRIT."" Insight on the Scriptures, Volume 2, 1989. Pp. 1019, 1020.

[2] This can be easily verified by doing a simple search in E-Sword on Strong's number for *onoma*, which is 3686. 214 verses with 229 hits appear in search results: Matthew 1:21, 1:23, 1:25, 6:9, 7:22 (3 times), 10:2, 10:41 (2 times), 10:42, 12:21, 18:5, 18:20, 19:29, 21:9, 23:39, 24:5, 24:9, 27:32, 28:19; Mark 3:16, 3:17, 5:9 (2 times), 5:22, 6:14, 9:37, 9:38, 9:39, 9:41, 11:9, 11:10, 13:6, 13:13, 14:32, 16:17; Luke 1:5 (2 times), 1:13, 1:26, 1:27 (2 times), 1:31, 1:49, 1:59, 1:61, 1:63, 2:21, 2:25, 5:27, 6:22, 8:30, 8:41, 9:48, 9:49, 10:17, 10:20, 10:38, 11:2, 13:35, 16:20, 19:2, 19:38, 21:8, 21:12, 21:17, 23:50, 24:13, 24:18, 24:47; John 1:6, 1:12, 2:23, 3:1, 3:18, 5:43 (2 times), 10:3, 10:25, 12:13, 12:28, 14:13, 14:14, 14:26, 15:16, 15:21, 16:23, 16:24, 16:26, 17:6, 17:11, 17:12, 17:26, 18:10, 20:31; Acts 1:15, 2:21, 2:38, 3:6, 3:16 (2 times), 4:7, 4:10, 4:12, 4:17, 4:18, 4:30, 5:1, 5:28, 5:34, 5:40, 5:41, 8:9, 8:12, 8:16, 9:10, 9:11, 9:12, 9:14, 9:15, 9:16, 9:21, 9:27, 9:29, 9:33, 9:36, 10:1, 10:43, 10:48, 11:28, 12:13, 13:6, 13:8, 15:14, 15:17, 15:26, 16:1, 16:14, 16:18, 17:34, 18:2, 18:7, 18:15, 18:24, 19:5, 19:13, 19:17, 19:24, 20:9, 21:10, 21:13, 22:16, 26:9, 27:1, 28:7; Romans 1:5, 2:24, 9:17, 10:13, 15:9; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1:10, 1:13, 1:15, 5:4, 6:11; Ephesians 1:21, 5:20; Philippians 2:9 (2 times), 2:10, 4:3; Colossians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Timothy 6:1; 2 Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 1:4, 2:12, 6:10, 13:15; James 2:7, 5:10, 5:14; 1 Peter 4:14; 1 John 2:12, 3:23, 5:13 (2 times); 3 John 1:7, 1:14; Revelation 2:3, 2:13, 2:17, 3:1, 3:4, 3:5 (2 times), 3:8, 3:12 (3 times), 6:8, 8:11, 9:11 (2 times), 11:13, 11:18, 13:1, 13:6, 13:8, 13:17, 14:1, 14:11, 15:2, 15:4, 16:9, 17:3, 17:5, 17:8, 19:12, 19:13, 19:16, 21:12, 21:14, 22:4. Please note the translation (or lack of translation) of G3686, *onoma*, in Revelation 11:13: *And the same hour was there a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of [onoma] men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.* (KJV) *Onoma* in Revelation 11:13 still refers to persons, but nonetheless an odd application inconsistent with others, which are otherwise uniformly translated as "name," "names," "name's," "named," "surnamed," and "called" in the KJV. One does find references to seven thousand "names" (or similar) in 13 of the 51 translations I consulted (see Foreword, Bibles Consulted section for more information)...But the variation is worth noting.

[3] Mark 14:32, "Gethsemane;" Luke 1:26, "Nazareth;" Luke 24:13, "Emmaus;" and Revelation 3:12, "Jerusalem." (All KJV) Robert M. Bowman, Jr. in his book, Why You Should Believe in the Trinity, An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses (1989, P. 115) also cites Acts 28:7, which refers to "...the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius..." (KJV) Publius, however, is the name of the chief **man** of the island, **not** the island. (See Acts 28:8.)

instance, *onoma* refers to a person.⁵ While not proof of personality (there *is* the one instance of *onoma* referring to an inanimate object in Revelation 11:13, see preceding footnote), the fact that *onoma* refers to a person or persons by a factor of 98% is highly indicative of how *onoma* should be considered here.

The name, *onoma*, refers to a person or persons by a factor of 98%. As such, the application of *onoma* to personal beings is highly indicative that the Holy Spirit is a personal being as well.

A study of the phrase "in the name of" (*eis/en/epi onoma*) in Scriptures, however, is even more significant. The phrase occurs 29 times in the New Testament⁶ and 36 times in the Old Testament,⁷ for a grand total of 65 occurrences in the entire Bible⁸. In **all** of these occurrences, "in the name of" refers to a person, **never** an object, abstract concept or impersonal force/being. A person. Always. At no time do we find, "in the name of the law," "in the name of common sense," or any such similar phrase in the Bible. These are modern idioms foreign to the times and cultures in which the books of the Bible were written. The meaning the WTBS suggests simply did not exist in those cultures at those times. The phrase "in the name of" always refers to a person. **Always.**

The WTBS cites Matthew 10:41:

Matthew 10:41

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. (KJV)

"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. (NASB)

[4] Revelation 8:11: *And the name of the star is called Wormwood...*(KJV) While I fully admit Revelation is a book saturated with symbolic and figurative language, the word that *onoma* (name) here refers to is universally interpreted as a "star."

[5] Robert M. Bowman, Jr. in his book, Why You Should Believe in the Trinity, An Answer to Jehovah's Witnesses (1989) states that, barring four place names, *onoma* "...always refers to persons." (P. 115) This is not so, as one can clearly see in Revelation 8:11: *And the name of the star is called Wormwood...*(KJV) so noted in the preceding footnote. Unless the star called Wormwood here is symbolic of a personal being, in this one instance *onoma* refers to an inanimate object.

[6] Matthew 10:41 (twice), 10:42, 21:9, 23:39, 28:19; Mark 11:9, **11:10** (lacks *onoma*); Luke 13:35, 19:38; John 3:18, 12:13; Acts 2:38, 3:6, 4:18, 5:40, 8:16, 9:27, **9:29** (lacks *onoma* but includes conjunctive *kai* "and" to link to preceding verse/s; inferred), 10:48, 16:18, 19:5; 1 Corinthians 1:13, 5:4, 6:11; Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; James 5:10, 5:14. References in bold type differ slightly (except where noted) in that they lack or vary the preposition in the Greek. Strictly adhering to *onoma* paired with the prepositions *en*, *eis*, or *epi*, (omitting the variances) would occur 27 times rather than 29.

[7] Deuteronomy 18:5, **18:7**, 18:20, 18:22, 21:5, **25:6**; 1 Samuel 17:45, 20:42, 25:9; 2 Samuel 6:18; 1 Kings 18:32, 22:16; 2 Kings 2:24; 1 Chronicles 16:2, 21:19; 2 Chronicles 18:15, 33:18; Ezra 5:1; **Esther 3:12** (lacks phrase in LXX, though *shem* appears in the Hebrew); Psalms 20:5, **118:10, 118:11, 118:12**, 118:26, 124:8, 129:8; Isaiah 50:10; Jeremiah 11:21, **26:9, 26:16, 26:20, 44:16; Micah 4:5** (twice – *onomati*, which is a form of *onoma*, however, is only used once in the LXX); **Zephaniah 3:12**; Zechariah 13:3. These references were checked against the LXX to better compare Greek to Greek. References in bold type differ slightly (except where noted) in that they lack or vary the preposition in the Greek with the exception of Esther 3:12, which differs drastically. Some examples of minor variation, in Psalm 118, the preposition is omitted but can be inferred by the structure: and the name Lord defend you (Psalm 118:12) for example. Strictly adhering to *onoma* paired with the prepositions *en*, *eis*, or *epi*, (omitting the variances) would occur 25 times rather than 36.

[8] Please see the preceding two footnotes. Omitting variances, there are 27 total New Testament occurrences and 25 total Old Testament occurrences for a total of 52 rather than 65.

Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. (NIV)

He that receives a prophet because he is a prophet will get a prophet's reward, and he that receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will get a righteous man's reward. (NWT)

Insight on the Scriptures, Vol. 2 contends that "more modern translations" replace the phrase "in the name of" with the phrase "because he is a" to reflect the power and authority represented (instead of a personal name) and quotes A.T. Robertson to support the WTBTS position. One must, however, note that the power and authority represented in Matthew 10:41 as well as in every other occurrence of the phrase (regardless of how it's translated) is attributed to **a person**. Not an object, not an abstract quality or concept, not an impersonal being or force. **A person. Always.**

The phrase "in the name of" always refers to a person or persons in both the Old and New Testament. As such, the use of this phrase referring to the Holy Spirit identifies the Holy Spirit as a personal being.

But what is the name?

Some believe "the name" refers to one, single personal name.

Needles to say, if "the name" refers to a single personal name, the Holy Spirit is most assuredly a personal being.

Others claim "the name" is a title. Isaiah 9:6 and Matthew 1:23 are cited as cases in which "the name" is used as a title.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (KJV)

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (NASB)

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (NIV)

For there has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. (NWT)

Matthew 1:23

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (KJV)

"BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." (NASB)

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" - which means, "God with us." (NIV)

"Look! The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will call his name Im-man 'u-el," which means, when translated, "With Us Is God." (NWT)

Please note in the above Scriptures that the title represents **a person**, not an inanimate object or active force. If "the name" represents a title only, that title still does not demand that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal being. If anything, the fact that this "title" consistently refers to a person identifies the Holy Spirit as a person as well.

If "the name" signifies a title and since this "title" is consistently applied to a person, referring to the Holy Spirit with "the name" as a title identifies the Holy Spirit as a person as well.

Yet others (such as the WTBTS above) believe "the name" refers to power and authority only. As indicated above, the phrase "in the name of" always refers to a person or persons in both the Old and New Testaments.

If "the name" denotes power/authority and since the power/authority represented by the phrase "in the name of" always refers to a person or persons, referring to the Holy Spirit with "the name" as representing power/authority strongly identifies the Holy Spirit as a person.

SUMMARY: Regardless of whether "the name" that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit share in Matthew 28:19 signifies a personal name, a title, or represents power/authority, none of these meanings demand that the Holy Spirit is an active force. All of these meanings, in fact, identify the Holy Spirit as a personal being.

Onoma in Matthew 28:19 is also singular. In the *name* of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The three are grouped together to share one name, not three names. The Father (who is a person) shares the name with the Son (who is also a person) and the Holy Spirit. The most natural reading of the text indicates the Holy Spirit as is person as well. The reading becomes unnecessarily and unnaturally awkward only when insisting the Holy Spirit is impersonal: in the name (singular) of the Father (a person), and of the Son (a person), and of the Holy Spirit (an active force)?

The most natural reading of Matthew 28:19 indicates the Holy Spirit is a person.

We also read in *The Watchtower* article entitled "One God in Three?":

Does the fact that God, his Son and the holy spirit are mentioned together prove that they share divinity, eternity and equality, as the Trinity⁹ dogma claims? If so, then it might equally be asserted that the Trinitarian "Godhead" is made up of God, Christ and the angels! (See Mark 13:32; 1 Timothy 5:21.)

Mark 13:32

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (KJV)

"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (NASB)

[9] The WTBTS rejects the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is quite outside the scope of this article, however. The Trinity will be addressed in later chapters of this site, but will not be discussed here. This quotation (and subsequent quotation) should be considered in light of *what the WTBTS says about the Holy Spirit alone*, **not** what the WTBTS says about the Trinity.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (NIV)

"Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father. (NWT)

1 Timothy 5:21

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. (KJV)

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality. (NASB)

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. (NIV)

I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels to keep these things without prejudgment, doing nothing according to a biased leaning. (NWT)

Yes, the Scriptures cited by the WTBTS list three persons (more actually – angels is plural), but isn't that the point? This hardly supports the WTBTS position that the Holy Spirit is not a person. Also, please note that none of the persons listed in either of the verses cited by the WTBTS are said to be united in sharing one singular name. Whether the name represents a single personal name, a single title or singular authority, the fact remains that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are united so that **all** share that **single** name. None of the Scriptures cited by the WTBTS above indicate that the persons are united to share a single anything.

The Watchtower also states:

A Biblical statement that church teachers often use to support the Trinity is Jesus' command that his followers make disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." (Matthew 28:19) This passage certainly mentions three entities, but it does *not* say that they are three persons or that they are all one.¹⁰

I beg to differ. As noted above, the use of the phrase, "in the name of," which **always** applies to a person or persons in the Bible, very clearly identifies the Holy Spirit as a person and none of the three meanings for "the name" suggested above demand that the Holy Spirit is devoid of personality. In fact, each of the three meanings proposed for "the name" strongly identify the Holy Spirit as a personal being.

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all three united in sharing the one single name in Matthew 28:19.

Adam Clarke stated:

"Is it possible for words to convey a plainer sense than these do? And do they not direct every reader to consider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three distinct persons?"¹¹

I agree.

[10] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. "The 'Blessed Trinity' – Is It in the Bible?" *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1987.

[11] Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Matthew 28:19." Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, 1832.

SUMMARY: Contrary to the WTBTS assertion to the contrary, absolutely nothing in the text of Matthew 28:19 demands or even implies that the Holy Spirit is an active force. In fact, Matthew 28:19 strongly identifies the Holy Spirit as a personal being.
