

2H

The Holy Spirit Speaks...Or Does He?

Reasoning from the Scriptures states:

While some texts say that the spirit "spoke," other passages make clear that this was done through angels or humans. (Acts 4:24, 25; 28:25; Matt. 10:19, 20; compare Acts 20:23 with 21:10, 11.)¹

Insight on the Scriptures, Vol. 2 elaborates further:

While some texts refer to the spirit as 'witnessing,' 'speaking,' or 'saying' things, other texts make clear that it spoke through persons, having no personal voice of its own. (Compare Heb 3:7; 10:15-17; Ps 95:7; Jer 31:33, 34; Ac 19:2-6; 21:4; 28:25.)²

What do the Scriptures cited say?

Acts 4:24, 25

[24] *And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: [25] Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? (KJV)*

[24] *And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, [25] who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, `WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS? (NASB)*

[24] *When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them. [25] You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? (NIV)*

[24] *Upon hearing this they with one accord raised their voices to God and said: "Sovereign Lord, you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things in them, [25] and who through holy spirit said by the mouth of our forefather David, your servant, 'Why did nations become tumultuous and peoples meditate upon empty things? (NWT)*

The Holy Spirit spoke through David.

Acts 28:25

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers, (KJV)

[1] Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. "Entry for 'Spirit.'" Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985. P. 380.

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

And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers, (NASB)

They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: (NIV)

So, because they were at disagreement with one another, they began to depart, while Paul made this one comment: "The holy spirit aptly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to YOUR forefathers, (NWT)

The Holy Spirit spoke through Isaiah.

Matthew 10:19, 20

[19] But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. [20] For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. (KJV)

[19] "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. [20] "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. (NASB)

[19] But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time, you will be given what to say, [20] for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. (NIV)

[19] However, when they deliver YOU up, do not become anxious about how or what YOU are to speak; for what YOU are to speak will be given YOU in that hour; [20] for the one speaking are not just YOU, but it is the spirit of YOUR Father that speaks by YOU. (NWT)

The Holy Spirit speaks through us.

Acts 20:23

Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. (KJV)

except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. (NASB)

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. (NIV)

except that from city to city the holy spirit repeatedly bears witness to me as it says that bonds and tribulations are waiting for me. (NWT)

The Holy Spirit told Paul that he faced imprisonment.

Acts 21:10, 11

[10] And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. [11] And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. (KJV)

[10] *As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. [11] And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' "* (NASB)

[10] *After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. [11] Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it, and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"* (NIV)

[10] *But while we were remaining quite a number of days, a certain prophet name Ag'a-bus came down for Ju-de'a, [11] and he came to us and took up the girdle of Paul, bound his own feet and hands and said: "Thus says the holy spirit, 'The man to whom this girdle belongs the Jews will bind in this manner in Jerusalem and deliver into the hands of people of the nations.'"* (NWT)

The Holy Spirit spoke through Agabus, saying Paul would be arrested and given up to the Romans. But also please note in Acts 20:23 above that Paul said that the Holy Spirit had told him he would be imprisoned in **every** city. Agabus is only **one** instance in **one** city that the Holy Spirit spoke through a human being. This neither proves nor disproves that the Holy Spirit spoke through a human being **every** time, in **every** city. It only proves the Holy Spirit spoke through a person, Agabus, on this single occasion. The Holy Spirit may very well have spoken through human beings in the other cities. Or not. I do not know, for the Scriptures do not say. This, therefore, is a matter we cannot be dogmatic about. The WTBS cannot demand the Holy Spirit spoke through human beings in every other city any more or less than I can demand that the Holy Spirit did not.

For brevity's sake, Hebrews 3:7 (cited by [Insight on the Scriptures, Vol. 2](#) above) indicates the Holy Spirit as speaking yet quotes Psalms 95:7-11 and again Hebrews 10:15-17 (also cited above) indicates the Holy Spirit as speaking yet quotes Jeremiah 31:33, 34. (More on this later.)

Basically, since the Holy Spirit is indicated to speak, yet quotes the Old Testament, the WTBS asserts that the Holy Spirit is not speaking at all. In other cases, the WTBS asserts that since the Holy Spirit is indicated to speak through people, the Holy Spirit isn't speaking with a personal voice, either. Since, according to the WTBS, the Holy Spirit is speaking through people, the fact that the Holy Spirit speaks is not to be understood as an indication of personality.

Does the Holy Spirit speak through people?

Yes.

Does that demand that the Holy Spirit isn't a personal being?

No.

God also spoke through the prophets:

Matthew 1:22 (see Isaiah 7:14)

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (KJV)

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: (NASB)

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: (NIV)

All this actually came about for that to be fulfilled which was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet, saying: (NWT)

Matthew 2:15 (see Hosea 11:1)

And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. (KJV)

He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." (NASB)

where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (NIV)

and he stayed there until the decease of Herod for that to be fulfilled which was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet, saying: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (NWT)

Luke 1:67-70

[67] And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, [68] Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, [69] And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; [70] As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: (KJV)

[67] And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: [68] "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, [69] And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- [70] As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- (NASB)

[67] His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: [68] "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. [69] He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David [70] (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), (NIV)

[67] And Zech·a·ri'ah its father was filled with holy spirit, and he prophesied, saying: [68] "Blessed be Jehovah the God of Israel, because he has turned his attention and performed deliverance toward his people. [69] And he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David his servant, [70] just as he, through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, has spoken (NWT)

One would hardly deny Yahweh's personal voice simply because he chose to speak through human beings (prophets) and neither should we deny the Holy Spirit a personal voice attesting to his personality for the same reason.

The fact that the Holy Spirit speaks through prophets does not indicate that the Holy Spirit has no personal voice and does not demand that the Holy Spirit is an active force rather than a personal being.

Unclean spirits are also personal beings according to the WTBT, but they speak through people as well:

Mark 1:23-25 (parallel passage: Luke 4:33-35)

[23] And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, [24] Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. [25] And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. (KJV)

[23] *Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, [24] saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are--the Holy One of God!" [25] And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"* (NASB)

[23] *Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, [24] "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!" [25] "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!"* (NIV)

[23] *Also, at that immediate time there was in their synagogue a man under the power of an unclean spirit, and he shouted, [24] saying: "What have we to do with you, Jesus you Naz-a-rene? Did you come to destroy us? I know exactly who you are, the Holy One of God." [25] But Jesus rebuked it, saying: "Be silent, and come on out of him!"* (NWT)

And again,

Mark 5:8, 9 (parallel passage: Luke 8:29, 30)

[8] *For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. [9] And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.* (KJV)

[8] *For He had been saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" [9] And He was asking him, "What is your name?" And he said to Him, "My name is Legion; for we are many."* (NASB)

[8] *For Jesus had said to him, "Come of this man, you evil spirit!" [9] Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."* (NIV)

[8] *For he had been telling it: "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit." [9] But he began to ask him: "What is your name?" And he said to him: "My name is Legion, because there are many of us."* (NWT)

The WTBTs does not deny that unclean spirits are personal beings. Yet, in the two events noted above, unclean spirits spoke through men.

Since unclean spirits speak through human beings and are considered personal beings by the WTBTs, speaking through human beings does not demand the subject is an impersonal force rather than a personal being.

There are also many instances in which the Holy Spirit speaks in the New Testament when his speech is **not** attributed to human beings, but to himself, the Holy Spirit, alone:

Acts 8:29

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. (KJV)

Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." (NASB)

The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." (NIV)

So the spirit said to Philip: "Approach and join yourself to this chariot." (NWT)

The WTBTs may argue that an angel speaks here because an angel is said to speak to Philip in Acts 8:26, sending Philip down the road upon which he meets the Ethiopian eunuch. But Scripture does not

state that the angel speaking in Acts 8:26 is also speaking in Acts 8:29 and there is nothing in the text to indicate this is so. The text does not indicate in any manner whatsoever that the angel and the Spirit are the same speaker and the fact that they speak in **different locations** and **at different times** further supports different speakers.

John Gill agreed, "...Not the angel, a ministering Spirit, as in Act 8:26 but the Holy Spirit, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions read..."³ Adam Clarke also differentiated the angel in 8:26 from the Spirit in Acts 8:29.⁴

Acts 10:19, 20

[19] *While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. [20] Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.*" (KJV)

[19] *While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. [20] "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."* (NASB)

[19] *While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. [20] So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."* (NIV)

[19] *As Peter was going over in his mind about the vision, the spirit said: "Look! Three men are seeking you. [20] However, rise, go downstairs and be on your way with them, not doubting at all because I have dispatched them."* (NWT)

JW apologists propose that an angel is speaking here rather than the Holy Spirit. In Acts 11:11-14, Peter retells the events of Acts 10:19, 20. Peter was puzzling over his vision of the clean and unclean animals (Acts 10:10-16, 11:5-10) when men arrived to invite him to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea. An angel had directed Cornelius to send the men to Joppa for Peter. JW apologists contend that since an angel directed Cornelius, an angel must have directed Peter, too.

The fact that an angel directed Cornelius does **not** demand nor imply that an angel spoke to Peter, too. At no point does the text indicate or imply that an angel spoke to Peter. The text clearly states that the Holy Spirit spoke. That's it.

JW apologists also point to Peter's vision as a support to their assertion that an angel spoke to Peter rather than the Holy Spirit. A voice from heaven spoke to Peter during his vision of the clean and unclean animals. (See Acts 10:9-16 and Acts 11:5-10 for full accounts of Peter's vision.) Peter identified the person speaking as "Lord." At no time is the voice from heaven inferred, implied or in any way identified as belonging to an angel.

And if an angel did speak during Peter's vision (to which I strongly disagree), it would still be irrelevant because this event (his vision) is independent of the subsequent event (the arrival of Cornelius' men). The men's arrival is not part of the vision. Acts 10:16 and Acts 11:10 wrap up the vision. The accounts of the arrival of the men begin in Acts 10:17 and Acts 11:11. Peter was thinking about the vision when the men arrive (Acts 10:17) and the Holy Spirit told him to go with them to Caesarea.

Demanding that an angel is speaking in Acts 10:19, 20 instead of the Holy Spirit is, therefore, unwarranted.

[3] Gill, John. "Commentary on Acts 8:29." John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, 1690-1771.

[4] Clarke, Adam. "Commentary on Acts 8:29." Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible, 1832.

Acts 13:2

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (KJV)

While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (NASB)

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (NIV)

As they were publicly ministering to Jehovah and fasting, the holy spirit said: "Of all persons set Bar'na·bas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them." (NWT)

Revelation 14:13

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. (KJV)

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, `Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." (NASB)

Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." (NIV)

And I heard a voice out of heaven say: "Write: Happy are the dead who die in union with [the] Lord from this time onward. Yes, says the spirit, let them rest from their labors, for the things they did go right with them." (NWT)

Revelation 22:17

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (KJV)

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. (NASB)

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (NIV)

And the spirit and the bride keep on saying: "Come!" And let anyone hearing say: "Come!" And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free. (NWT)

The Holy Spirit was not speaking through angels or human beings in any of the Scriptures noted above. He spoke, with his own personal voice, using personal pronouns such as "I" and "me."

The WTBS assertion that the Holy Spirit spoke only through angels and human beings is without merit. The Holy Spirit is indicated, in Scripture, to speak with a personal voice, and as such, provides evidence that the Holy Spirit is a personal being.

The WTBS and JW apologists claim that the fact that the Holy Spirit speaks independent of human beings or angels does not, however, indicate personality because impersonal beings/inanimate objects are also said to speak in the Bible.

For instance, in Genesis 4:10, Abel's blood is said to cry out and in Hebrews 12:24, Jesus' blood is said to speak better than Abel's blood. Wages are also said to cry out in James 5:4. But please note that in none of these verses are blood or wages quoted.

Quotations from impersonal beings, inanimate objects and abstract concepts are available in other passages, however. In Galatians 3:8, the Scriptures spoke to Abraham and is quoted, as is wisdom, crying in the streets in Proverbs 1:22. In Revelation 16:7, the altar in Heaven is also quoted, as is Balaam's ass in Numbers 22:28-30 – including the use of the personal pronouns "I" and "me."

Does this nullify the fact that the Holy Spirit speaks with his own personal voice?

No.

The altar speaks, yes, but does the altar evidence emotions, intelligence, and will? What about Balaam's ass? It spoke but does the Bible also give it the essential attributes of personality? Is Balaam's ass also spoken of in personal terms and as a personal being throughout the Bible? Has anyone ever believed Balaam's ass, the altar in Heaven, wisdom and the Scriptures were personal beings? Did the Ante-Nicene fathers speak of the altar, wisdom, the Scriptures and Balaam's ass in personal terms, as a personal being and directly state that any of these things are a person?

No.

On the surface, WTBS and JW apologist objections seem perfectly logical. But only on the surface. A deeper analysis of each of the subjects offered for comparison with the Holy Spirit reveals that these subjects, while perhaps exhibiting one behavior (speech) attributed to the Holy Spirit, lack in every other respect. The comparisons the WTBS demands are shallow and do not at all reflect the broad scope of the argument. The issue is not narrowly limited to a consideration of whether personal beings speak in Scripture. The issue is whether or not a behavior (speech) can indicate personality and as such, speech must be considered within the context **of** personality. Yes, Balaam's ass speaks using the personal pronouns "I" and "me," but the comparison is superficial unless we also consider Balaam's ass in the broader context of personality. If the WTBS could also show that any of the above examples also exhibited a wide variety of behaviors that indicate personality throughout Scriptures, possess the same essential attributes of personality as the Holy Spirit does, and possesses further support of personality in any way matching that of the Holy Spirit, the comparisons would be suitable, insightful and lead us to a greater understanding of the overall issue. As is, these comparisons are weak and frivolous.

Since examples cited by the WTBS and JW apologists of impersonal beings/inanimate objects speaking in the Bible are not considered against the broader context of personality (which *is* the issue in question), the fact that impersonal being, etc. are quoted as speaking in Scripture does not nullify the fact that the Holy Spirit speaks and that his speech should be considered as evidence supporting the personality of the Holy Spirit.