

The Seven Spirits of God

Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; (Rev 4:5)

Does God have more than one Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit singular or plural? What does this reveal about the Holy Spirit?

In researching the question of whether God has more than one spirit, there is an Old Testament reference to the seven lamps found in Zechariah's fifth prophecy (Zech 4:1-14). During this period, Cyrus the Great encouraged the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4), and Zerubbabel, appointed as governor of Judah returns with the high priest Joshua to lead the construction (Hag 1:1). In response to local hostility and construction delays (Ezra 4:1-4), the prophet Zechariah's message was intended to encourage Zerubbabel and Joshua in their rebuilding of the Temple by affirming that the Spirit of God was with them.

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its **seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps** which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side." Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, **but by My Spirit,**' says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? But **these seven** will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth." (Zech 4:1-10)

Note that Zechariah is told that the seven lamps on one lampstand (Zech 4:2) is God's Spirit in the singular sense (Zech 4:6). However, Zechariah later refer to these seven as separate entities and describes them as the "eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth" (Zech 4:10).

The understanding that the seven lamps represent the Holy Spirit is corroborated in the apostle John's account of the heavenly Temple in which God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are in each other's holy presence.

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. (Rev 1:4-5)

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Not only is the Spirit of God an individual Being, but the apostle John indicates that Jesus Christ can possess the Holy Spirit of God.

To the angel of the church in Sardis write: **He who has the seven Spirits of God** and the seven stars, says this: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." (Rev 3:1)

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And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. (Rev 5:6)

In this passage, the apostle John indicates that the seven eyes of the Lamb represent the seven Spirits of God; thus, the lampstand containing the seven lamps is a figure of speech for the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, this passage supports the view of the Holy Spirit having the attribute of omnipresence as It is “sent out into all the earth” (Rev 5:6) and ranges “to and fro throughout the earth” (Zech 4:10).

A number of scholars understand Isaiah 11:1-2 as a description of each of the seven Spirits of God.

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. (Isa 11:1-2)

The seven Spirits are understood to be: 1) the Spirit of the Lord, 2) the Spirit of wisdom, 3) the Spirit of understanding, 4) the Spirit of counsel, 5) the Spirit of strength, 6) the Spirit of knowledge, and 7) the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.

While this is possible, it still open to debate if Isaiah was speaking in the context of the seven Spirits of God.

The Holy Spirit, as a personal Being, does appear to be comprised of seven individual entities described as the seven Spirits of God. What these seven Spirits are and their significance is unknown. However, the biblical passages support the understanding that the Holy Spirit is an individual Being, a part of God and omnipresent, and possessed by Jesus Christ.