

The background of the entire image is a stylized, low-poly geometric pattern in shades of purple, blue, and orange. Overlaid on this is a dark silhouette of a person from the waist up, with their arms raised in a gesture of prayer or worship. The person's head is tilted slightly back, and their hands are positioned near their head. The overall mood is spiritual and contemplative.

TEMPLES OF GOD

A STUDY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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TEMPLES OF GOD

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3 ESSENTIALS FOR THIS STUDY

Getting Started: On a scale of 1-10, how *comfortable* are you with the following statements? (1=not comfortable at all, 10=so comfortable I want to give it a big hug)

1. The Spirit dwells in me. _____
2. The Spirit leads me. _____
3. I cannot be fruitful, except by the Spirit. _____
4. I am sealed for redemption by the Spirit. _____
5. God's Spirit is my assurance of my future inheritance. _____

1. It's OK To NOT Know Some Things About The Holy Spirit

I hope it does not surprise you to read that I do not know everything about the Holy Spirit. The fact is you don't want me to claim all knowledge on the subject, because error often springs from those who claim to perfectly understand a topic which God did not fully reveal. An historical example of this is the Lord's Supper. What did Jesus mean when He said the bread "is my body"? At one point in church history a man named Thomas Aquinas applied the principles of scholasticism to the question. Scholasticism was the application of logic to the Bible in an attempt to understand the mysteries of the Scriptures. Aquinas began to reason about the "substance" and the "accidents" of the bread, concluding that the "substance" of the bread changed to the actual body of Christ, while its "accidents" (texture, taste, size, etc) remained the same. Thus, the concept of transubstantiation was given a logical foundation. Logical, but unscriptural.

Moses once said to the children of Israel, *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."* (Deuteronomy 29:29) The point: there were some things that God did not reveal to Israel. Those things were secret, they remained with God. However, whatever God revealed belonged to them... and should be followed! It is likely that we will have questions about the Spirit which the Scriptures do not answer. That's ok, the answer to those questions will remain secret. What we must do is study what God has revealed about the Spirit and abide by that knowledge.

2. Beware Of Reactionary Thinking

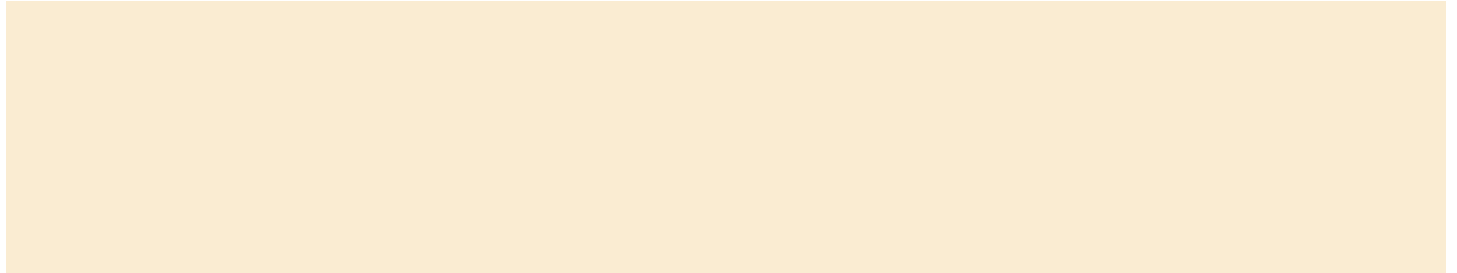
Reactionary thinking occurs when in an effort to respond to false or erroneous teachings, we either pervert the Scriptures ourselves or deny some of the truths that they teach. Here are a couple of examples:

- » Many hold false views regarding the role of faith in salvation. Some claim that only "belief" is necessary and that no obedience is required for the forgiveness

of sins. We would counter that the Scriptures clearly teach the necessity of baptism for sins to be forgiven (Mark 16.16; Acts 2.38). However, it would be reactionary to lessen the importance of faith and/or to ignore passages such as John 3.16; Ephesians 2.8-9; etc.

- » Many denominations preach a doctrine of “once saved always saved”. This doctrine is in clear contradiction to Biblical teaching (1John 1; 2Peter 2; etc.), but we should not over-react and deny the assurance that belongs to us as Christians (1John 3.1-3; Eph. 1.3-14; etc.).

Reactionary thinking can be a very real problem when discussing the Holy Spirit because there are so many erroneous things said about the Spirit. Can you name some?



But these erroneous doctrines should not cause us to deny truths that are found in the Scriptures. For instance, the statements found at the beginning of the lesson are all true! The Spirit does dwell within the Christian (1Cor. 6.19), we are led by the Spirit (Romans 8.14), our fruitfulness depends on the Spirit (Gal. 5.22-25), the Spirit seals us (Eph. 1.13; 4.30) and our future inheritance is guaranteed by the Spirit (Eph. 1.14). We will discuss exactly what those statements mean in this study, but we must first acknowledge that they are Scriptural and true.

3. Being Biblical Must Be Our Motive

Sadly, it seems that many Holy Spirit discussions today are born of wrong motives. And this is true of people on all sides of the issue.

- » It has become vogue in many denominations to constantly speak of the Spirit’s “leading”, crediting God and the Spirit for every circumstance in life. We will discuss how the Spirit leads in a future lesson, but I fear that many are adopting such language to sound like others of our day. That’s the wrong motive.
- » On the other side of the spectrum, some find any new understanding or teaching to be wrong and dangerous because it does not coincide with what has been traditionally taught. If our motive is to uphold a traditional doctrine, or church teaching, we have the wrong motive.

In short, our motive must be to follow what the Bible teaches on the subject. If our understanding of the Spirit matches what the Bible says, good. If the Bible reveals that our understanding is incomplete, then our understanding needs to grow. And if the Bible doesn’t answer all of our questions about the Spirit, then we need to accept that there are just some things we are not suppose to know.

“IN THE BEGINNING...”

Getting Started: what role did the Spirit have in Creation (Genesis 1)?

What role is ascribed to the Spirit in the wisdom literature (Psalm 104.30; Job 33.4)?

The trinitarian concept of God (Father, Son & Spirit) is not fully developed in the Old Testament, and certainly not in the opening chapters of Genesis. Consequently, most of us probably think of creation as the activity of the Father and the Son/Word (John 1.1-3). But, as the Psalmist declared, “When you send forth your Spirit, they are created...” (Psalm 104.30). The Spirit was also instrumental in creation.

Too many times when we discuss the Spirit we jump straight to more challenging passages like Romans 8. However, it’s important to go back to what happened “in the beginning” to lay a foundation of the Spirit’s activity throughout Scripture. And what we find is that from the beginning the Spirit has always been active in the following ways:

1. The Spirit forms the people of God.
2. The Spirit leads/guides the people of God.
3. The Spirit is how people experience the presence of God.

Our study of the Spirit will focus on how these three aspects of the Spirit were at work in the people of God historically, and in God’s people today.

Important note: the Hebrew word *rûah* is translated as “Spirit” in Genesis 1.2. However, the same word is translated as “breath” in Genesis 6.17 and as “wind” in Genesis 8.1. Our english translations use context to give the concept the translators think is intended, but it’s important to remember that when the Israelite people heard or read these accounts, they would hear/read *rûah* each time. I do not mean to imply that every time the word “wind” is found in the Old Testament that it was actually the Spirit, but it may not be as cut and dry as we assume from reading our English translations.

The Spirit forms the people of God.

“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2, ESV)

When we think of how God created the heavens and earth, we think of God speaking and whatever He spoke coming into existence: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1.3). However, before God even spoke, His

Spirit (*rûah*) was hovering over the face of the waters. While nothing more is made of that fact in Genesis 1, other inspired writers attribute God's creative acts to the Spirit:

- "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath (*rûah*) of his mouth all their host." (Psalm 33:6, ESV)
- "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground." (Psalm 104:30, ESV)

Furthermore, consider this parallel with Gabriel's announcement to Mary: "And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35, ESV) Just as the Spirit "hovered over" the face of the waters, God's Spirit would also "overshadow" Mary. Creation, whether of the world or of the Son's human body, occurred by the Spirit.

The Spirit would also seem to be instrumental in the creation of man. God declared in Genesis 1.26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" and then in Genesis 2.7 we see that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." It may be that all this verse intends to reveal is that man became animated. Note that the phrase "living creature" is used for other aspects of creation in Genesis 1.21,24. Furthermore, the word translated as "breath" in Genesis 2.7 is *nišmāt* rather than *rûah*. However, other Old Testament passages associate the "breath of life" with the Spirit:

- » "as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils," (Job 27:3, ESV)
- » "But it is the spirit in man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand." (Job 32:8, ESV)

Finally, note Jesus's actions in John 20.22: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Just as God had breathed life into man, Jesus breathed new life, the Spirit, into His followers.

The Spirit leads/guides the people of God.

This point will be much more apparent when we turn our attention to the Spirit's role in leading the people of Israel, but spiritual guidance is certainly of great import in the creation narratives. God gave man guidance with His command in Genesis 2.16-17: "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Following God's guidance would have resulted in continued life with God in Eden; disobeying would result in death. However, Satan gave contradictory guidance in Genesis 3.1-5. Woman and man followed the wrong guidance and death resulted.

God's inspired word is ascribed to the Spirit in various passages (2Samuel 23.2; 2Timothy 3.16; 2Peter 1.21; etc.). Also, note Jesus' words in John 6.63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." The point: to follow the word of God is to follow the Spirit, and to follow the Spirit is life!

The Spirit & The Presence of God.

After man and woman sinned by eating of the tree we read how they hid themselves "from the presence of the Lord God" while He was "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (Genesis 3.8, ESV). I do not wish to have this passage say more than it does, but there are a couple of interesting points. First, the word translated as "cool" is again the term *rûah*, thus some commentators translate the phrase as "in the breeze of the day". Second, God's presence in the Tabernacle was described as "walking" in Leviticus 26.12; Deut. 23.14; etc. Thus, it may be that God's presence in the garden was via the Spirit (understanding that distinctions between God and the Spirit are probably not as clear cut as we would like to have them).

Of greater significance are God's words as He observed the wickedness and repented of making man; "And the LORD said, 'My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt. Their days will be 120 years.'" (Genesis 6:3, CSB) Man's destruction in the flood was because God's Spirit would no longer remain with man. Furthermore, note that when "God remembered Noah" in Genesis 8.1, He made "a wind (*rûah*) blow over the earth, and the waters subsided." Perhaps all we are to take from the passage is that a very strong wind caused the waters to subside, but the original audience could not help but make a parallel to "the Spirit (*rûah*) of God... hovering over the face of the waters" in Genesis 1.2. If the passages are parallel, then the point would be that Noah was rescued by the presence of God.

GOD'S SPIRIT & THE FORMATION OF ISRAEL

Getting Started: after the exodus from Egypt, God led Israel to Mt. Sinai. In His own words, "I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself" (Exodus 19.4). What do you think God meant by that statement? How did God bring Israel to Himself?

In Genesis 15 we read of how the Lord made a covenant with Abram, giving surety to the Patriarch that God would in fact keep all of His promises. Significantly, God also revealed to Abram that his "offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years... and they shall come back here in the fourth generation" (Genesis 15.13,16). Abraham's descendants would become a great nation while in Egyptian bondage (Exodus 1.7), but it was the Exodus that would form them into the people of God. And as we shall see, the Spirit had an integral part in the formation of God's people.

The Spirit & Joseph

"And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life." (Genesis 45:5, ESV)

Joseph spoke those words to his brothers years after they sold him into bondage (Genesis 37) and after he had risen from slave to Pharaoh's right-hand man (Genesis 41). While Joseph had the power to execute vengeance on his brothers, he recognized that God was at work in his life and had exalted him so that he could provide for his family. However, the Lord had been at work in Joseph's life even when he was a slave.

Genesis 39 details Joseph's life as a slave in Potiphar's house and then as a prisoner. Note that we twice read how "the Lord was with Joseph" (Genesis 39.2,21). Interestingly, that the same phrase is used for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Genesis 21.22; 26.24,28; 28.15). Now, the phrase could simply mean that Joseph experienced the Lord's favor (note "showed him steadfast love" in vs. 21), but it could be that more is intended; it could be that we are to understand God's presence was in fact with Joseph (and the other patriarchs).

I believe Genesis 41 sheds some light on what it meant for the Lord to be with Joseph. In this chapter Joseph is finally brought out of prison in order to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. Recall that Joseph had previously interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, having exhorted them with the words "do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me" (Genesis 40.8). Joseph would also declare to Pharaoh that the interpretation of dreams "is not in me; God will give

Pharaoh a favorable answer" (Genesis 41.16). Now note Pharaoh's declaration after Joseph gives the interpretation: "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" (Genesis 41.38). "The Lord was with Joseph"; the "Spirit of God" was in Joseph. It would seem that the two expressions may mean the same thing. God's Spirit was at work preparing the people of God.

The Spirit & Moses

Let's fast forward to Exodus 3-4. Jacob's family had spent four hundred years in Egypt and Israel had become a great nation (Exodus 1.7). Moses had been born, but raised in Pharaoh's house. He had then fled from Egypt after he slew an Egyptian who was oppressing one of the Hebrew slaves. The Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush and declared that He would "send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt" (Exodus 3.10). Now note the Lord's words to Moses in vs. 12: "But I will be with you..." How was the Lord with Moses?

Exodus 3-4 detail two ways in which the Lord was with Moses. First, there were the "signs" that Moses would be able to perform (see Exodus 4.1-9). Second, the Lord promised that "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (Exodus 4.12; cf. vs. 15). Now note the summary statement of Moses and Aaron's work in Exodus 4:30: "Aaron spoke all the words that the Lord had spoken to Moses and did the signs in the sight of the people." Now consider this summary statement of the apostles' work: "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs" (Mark 16.20). Moses engaged in the same work as the apostles (inspired teaching plus signs); the Lord was with them. How? Through His Spirit (cf. John 16.13; Acts 2.1-4; etc.).

The Spirit & The Exodus

Recall from our previous lesson that the Hebrew word *rûah* is translated as both "spirit" and "wind" in our English versions. It may be significant that wind (*rûah*) was prominently used in God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The eighth plague, locusts, was brought by a strong east wind (Exodus 10.13) and then taken away with a strong west wind (Exodus 10.19). I doubt anything more is intended in those texts than God used actual wind. However, the same may not be true in Exodus 14.21 when a strong east wind was used to part the Red Sea. Note these statements in Moses' song following this deliverance:

- » "At the blast (*rûah*) of your nostrils the waters piled up" (Exodus 15.8).
- » "You blew with your wind (*rûah*); the sea covered them" (Exodus 15.10).

Paul would say that Israel was "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1Corinthians 10.2). It would seem that baptism was one of both water and the Spirit (cf. John 3.5).

God's presence was with Israel in the pillars of cloud and of fire (Exodus 13.21-22) and He (His angel according to Exodus 14.19) led Israel to Mt. Sinai. In that sense, the Lord literally "brought you to myself" (Exodus 19.4). But it was also at Mount

Sinai that the Lord gave instructions for the construction of His tabernacle where “I may dwell in their midst” (Exodus 25.8). Significantly, immediately following the Lord giving these instructions to Moses, Israel would sin with the golden calf (Exodus 32). As a consequence, the Lord declared that He would send an angel before Israel to the promised land, but “I will not go up among you” (Exodus 33.3). Moses was able to intercede for the people and the Lord promised “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33.14). Now note this observation of Moses: “Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face on earth?” (Exodus 33.16).

Some seven hundred years later, the prophet Isaiah recounted “the steadfast love of the Lord” (Isaiah 63.7ff). Note how the prophet declared how the Lord “put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses” (vss. 11-12) and that “the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name” (vs. 14). The Lord’s presence, His Spirit, formed Israel and brought them to Himself. And as we will explore further in a subsequent lesson, His presence/Spirit is what would make Israel His special people.

GOD'S SPIRIT & THE GUIDING OF ISRAEL

Getting Started: The Lord promised that He would be with Moses (Exodus 3.12). How was the Lord's presence evident?

At the conclusion of our last lesson we noted how God's presence was with Israel because His Spirit was with Israel (see Isaiah 63.7-14). Note the prophet's words in vs. 11: "Where is he who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses..." We know that the Lord led His people out of Egypt, His presence being found in the pillars of cloud and fire (Exodus 13.21-22), but He also led them by giving His Spirit to the shepherds of His flock, the leaders of Israel.

Moses & The Spirit

In our previous lesson we noted how the Lord's presence with Moses was seen in both miraculous signs and inspired speech (Exodus 4.1-9,12). It would seem that the Lord's presence with Moses was not limited to the times when he worked miracles or declared the oracles of God. In Numbers 11 we read of yet another occasion when the people of Israel complained against the Lord, and suffered the consequences of their ingratitude. Moses lamented to the Lord that "I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me" (vs. 14). The Lord responded by instructing Moses to gather 70 men from among the elders and officers of Israel. Now note what the Lord said He would do for these 70: "I will take some of the Spirit that is on you and put it on them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone."

True to His word once Moses had gathered the men together in the tabernacle, "the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it" (Numbers 11.25). Many years later, Nehemiah reflected on the fact that the Lord "gave your good Spirit to instruct them" (Nehemiah 9.20). From the inception of Israel as the people of God, the Lord sought to lead them and guide them; He did so by giving His Spirit to His chosen leaders.

The Spirit & The Leaders of Israel

Joshua was apparently one of the 70 who received a portion of the Spirit, because we read in Numbers 27.18 that he was "a man in whom is the Spirit". Significantly, this passage details how Joshua was to be the next leader of Israel. Moses was to lay his hands on Joshua and commission him in the sight of all the people (vss. 18-23). Now note how Joshua is described in Deuteronomy 34.9: "Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him." For Joshua to be able to lead the people, he needed the same guidance Moses had; he needed the Spirit to be with him. Perhaps, this is what the Lord meant when He promised Joshua, "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Joshua 1.5).

The Lord was with Joshua and it was while he led the people that "the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers" (Joshua 21.43). Alas, following the death of Joshua and his generation "there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel" (Judges 2.10). The time of the Judges was one of national unfaithfulness and calamity. However, the Lord had not forgotten His people or the promises that He had made, so He "raised up judges, who saved them out of the hand of those who plundered them" (Judges 2.16). God was with these leaders of Israel; His Spirit was upon them.

- » "The Spirit of the Lord was upon" Othniel (Judges 3.10).
- » "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon" (Judges 6.34).
- » "The Spirit of the Lord was upon Jephthah (Judges 11.29).
- » "The Spirit of the Lord began to stir" Samson when he was young (Judges 13.25). The Spirit would also "rush upon" him at various times (Judges 14.6,19; 15.14).

Even though Israel's request for a king was a rejection of their true King (see 1Samuel 8.7), the Lord still anointed His chosen with the Spirit. Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel by Samuel in 1Samuel 10.1 and was then told that a sign would confirm that he was the Lord's anointed. A part of that sign was that "the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy... and be turned into another man" (1Samuel 10.6; compare Numbers 11.25). God did exactly as He promised, and His Spirit rushed upon Saul (1Samuel 10.10). Significantly, once Saul turned aside from following the Lord and another man was anointed, "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1Samuel 16.14).

David was the Lord's chosen to replace Saul, "a man after His own heart" (1Samuel 13.14). When he was anointed by Samuel, "the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward" (1Samuel 16.13). The Lord's Spirit being with David would not only allow him to prophesy (2Samuel 23.2), but would lead God's anointed "on level ground" (Psalm 143.10). Significantly, when David sinned against the Lord (Psalm 51.4), his fear was that like Saul before him, the Lord's presence would be removed: "Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51.11).

Finally, we must consider the Spirit's role in the work of the prophets. These

spokesmen of God who were moved by the Spirit (see 2Peter 1.21) were sent by the Lord to lead the people to repentance and back to the ways of the Lord. The Spirit was known to be with Elijah and then Elisha (see 1Kings 18.12; 2Kings 2.15-16) and His Spirit commissioned both Isaiah (Isaiah 48.16) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2.2).

The Spirit & The Messiah

The Lord both made Israel into His special people and also guided them. Thus, His Spirit was with the leaders of the people and when the people departed from the ways of the Lord, His Spirit was with the prophets who sought to bring the people back. And the Lord declared regarding the future Messiah, the "shoot from the stump of Jesse", that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11.1-2). The Lord's Spirit would continue to guide His people.

GOD'S PRESENCE WITH ISRAEL

Getting Started: In Paul's letters to the Corinthians, he states 3 times that we are the Temple of God:

- » "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- » "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- » "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

What is the significance of us being God's Temple?

"'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

(Exodus 19:4-6, ESV)

God spoke these words to Israel after He had formed Israel into His people and guided them out of Egypt and to His mountain. They were to be His people, He would be their God. However, note God's instructions in vss. 10-13 where Moses was warned that no one was to approach or touch the mountain, lest they perish! The Point: Israel was unfit to be in God's presence. Chapters 20-24 form the basis of Israel's covenant with God as the book of the covenant is read to the elders of the people, they swear fidelity, and sacrifices are made ratifying the covenant with their blood (Exodus 24.3-8). Significantly, it was immediately following this scene that Moses received instructions for God's sanctuary, a place "that I may dwell in their midst" (Exodus 25.8).

The Tabernacle

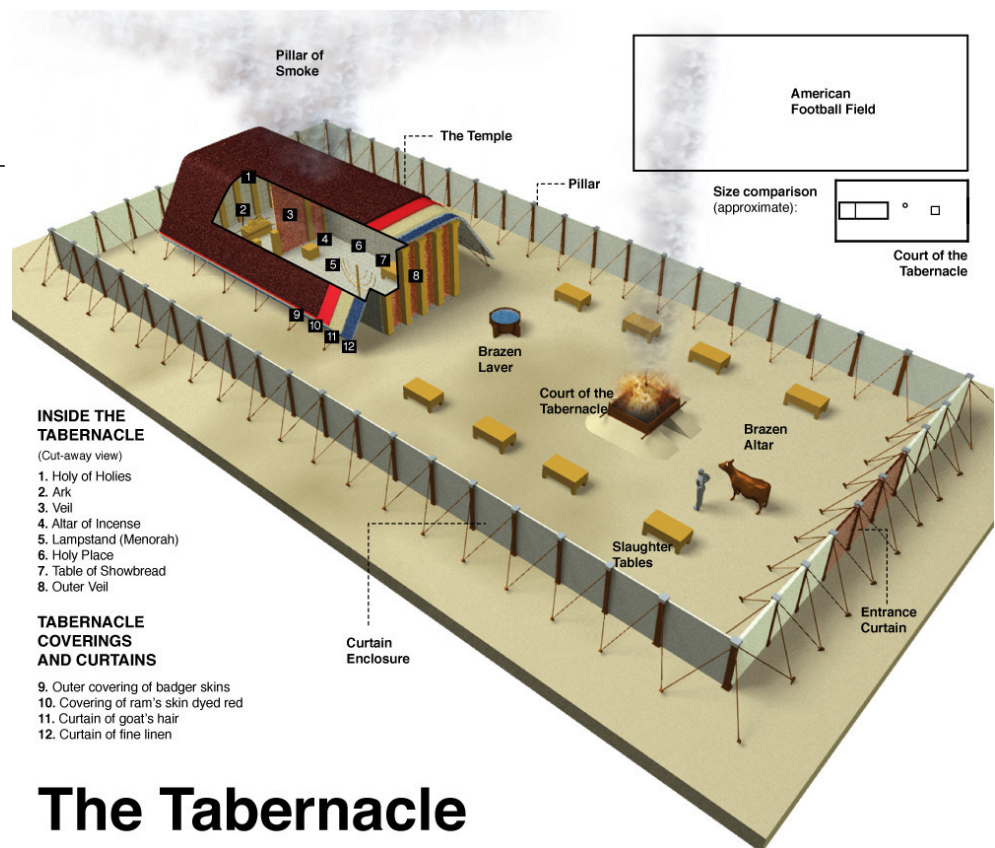
Exodus 25-31 record the detailed instructions God gave Moses regarding the construction of His sanctuary. If you've not read these chapters in a while, I encourage you to do so. Take note of these features of the tabernacle that would allow God to dwell in the midst of His people.

- » The tabernacle would be made from the finest materials available. Significantly while the tabernacle was made from physical materials, those materials were contributed by the people (Exodus 25.1-7).

- » The tabernacle must be constructed by God's exact specifications (Exodus 25.8-9).
- » The articles in the tabernacle would represent both God (the ark of the covenant, Exodus 25.10-22) and the people (the table of bread, Exodus 25.23-30; Leviticus 24.5-6).
- » The tabernacle visually represented the separation of God and the people (Exodus 26).
- » The tabernacle would be where necessary sacrifices were made for God's presence to remain with the people (Exodus 27.1-8).
- » A consecrated priesthood would represent the people before God (Exodus 28-29). Note how the garments of the priests visually represented their affiliation with God, using the same colors as the curtains of the tabernacle, while also bearing the names of the twelve tribes.
- » The priesthood could only serve after washing with water (Exodus 30.21).
- » The tabernacle, all of the articles within, and the priesthood must be anointed with a sacred oil (Exodus 30.22-33).
- » Bezalel, the craftsmen intrusted with making the tabernacle, articles of the tabernacle and the priestly garments, was "filled... with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship" (Exodus 31.1-11; 35.30-35). The dwelling place of God would be crafted by one with His Spirit.

The Golden Calf

Sadly, immediately after God gave the instructions for the construction of His sanctuary, Israel broke it's covenant with Jehovah by constructing a golden calf and worshipping it (Exodus 32). Moses' throwing the tablets to the ground and breaking them (Exodus 32.19) wasn't simply an act of righteous anger, it was symbolic of Israel's forsaking their covenant with God! The Lord was ready to righteously punish the nation, but the intercession of Moses stayed God's anger. While



The Tabernacle

This portable temple was built in the wilderness by the Israelites circa 1450 BC after they were freed from Egyptian slavery. The tabernacle was the first temple dedicated to God and the first resting place of the ark of the covenant. It served as a place of worship and sacrifices during the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness.

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the Lord relented, note His words to Moses: "Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people." (Exodus 33:3, ESV)

Moses was terrified by the prospect and entreated the Lord: "If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:15-16, ESV) The presence of God with His people, not the Law, would distinguish this people. However, His presence with them depended on fidelity to the covenant, the nation keeping His Law.

God's Spirit With His People

Exodus 35-39 records the construction of the tabernacle while Israel was at Mt. Sinai. In Exodus 40 the tabernacle is erected and sanctified by blood sacrifice, all culminating with the glorious event recorded in vs. 34-35, "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." Significantly, these events are referred to in Isaiah 63.11-14 as the time when God "put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit". God's presence, the Holy Spirit, was now in a holy sanctuary among the people. His presence as symbolized by the ark of the covenant would lead the people into the promised land (Joshua 3:13-17) and give them victory over their enemies (cf. Joshua 6:6-11).

GOD'S PRESENCE REMOVED

Getting Started: read Solomon's prayer of dedication following the building of the Temple (1Kings 8.22-53). What stands out to you in Solomon's words?

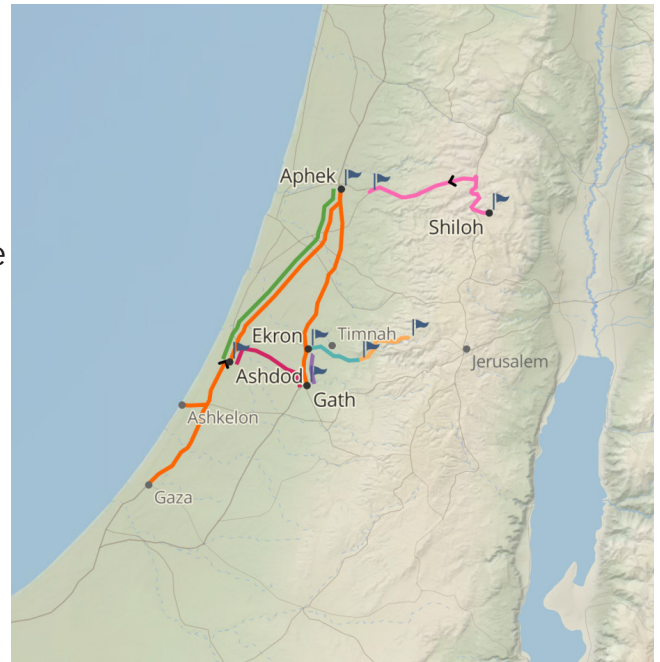
"For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?" (Exodus 33:16, ESV)

With their worship of the golden calf (Exodus 32) Israel almost forfeited their special status as God's special people; their sin almost resulted in God removing His presence from their midst (Exodus 33.3). However, with the intercession of Moses, God relented and promised to go with the people. The tabernacle, where He would dwell among the people (Exodus 25.8) was constructed and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40.34). However, it is significant to note that immediately following God relenting from His threat to depart from the people, He commanded Moses to make a second set of stone tablets (Exodus 34.1) as He renewed His covenant with the people (Exodus 34.27). But that covenant would still require the people to "observe what I command you this day" (Exodus 34.11). God's presence among His people would be contingent on their faithfulness.

Israel In The Days Of The Tabernacle

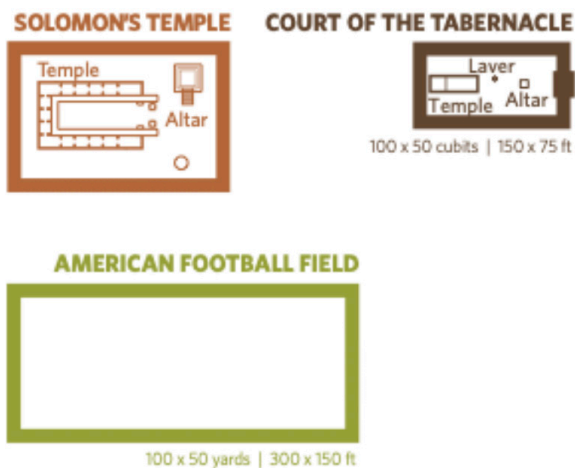
Space will not allow for a full accounting of Israel's history during the days of the tabernacle, however a couple of episodes will illustrate how the people failed to grasp the blessing of having God's presence dwell among them. The first occurred shortly after the tabernacle was erected and the people left Mt. Sinai. The Lord instructed Moses to "send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel" (Numbers 13.1). Twelve spies were sent, but ten returned with the report that "we are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are" (Numbers 13.31). Only Joshua and Caleb said that they could take the land; they alone believed that they could defeat the Canaanites because "their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us" (Numbers 14.9). Alas, the people refused to trust in the Lord and as a consequence that generation was doomed to die in the wilderness (Numbers 14.26-30). They perished, even though God's presence resided in the tabernacle.

Fast forward to the days of the Judges. The Lord had fulfilled His promise by giving the land to the people (Joshua 21.43), yet subsequent generations did not know Him (Judges 2.10) even though the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (Joshua 18.1). In 1Samuel 4 we read how the Israelites were defeated by the Philistines at Aphek. The people didn't understand why "the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines" so they devised a solution: "Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh, that it may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies" (1Samuel 4.3). Not only was Israel defeated again, but the ark was captured by the Philistines (1Samuel 4.11). God's presence was of no benefit to the people because they were not being faithful to His covenant!



The Temple

The ark would return to Israel and reside at Kiriath-jearim until the days of David (1Samuel 7.2; 1Chronicles 13.5). Once the Lord confirmed him in his kingdom, David brought the ark to his new capital, Jerusalem (2Samuel 6). However, while king David desired to build a house for God, the Lord declared that it would be his son who would "build a house for my name" (2Samuel 7.13). David would accumulate supplies for the construction of the temple and charge his son Solomon to "build a house for the Lord, the God of Israel" (1Chronicles 22.6). Solomon was faithful to the charge and the construction of the temple is detailed in 1Kings 5-6. No expense was spared in its construction and to consecrate God's new dwelling place, and after the ark was placed in the inner sanctuary, "a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1Kings 8.10-11).



Solomon's prayer of dedication recorded in 1Kings 8.22-53 shows that he understood the significance of God's presence with the people. He did not presume that God could be contained by such a structure (vs. 27) and recognized that God's presence among the people was essential to their future blessings and well-being. Significantly, Solomon reminded the people that for the Lord to "maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel," (vs. 59) the people must have hearts "wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in His statutes

and keeping His commandments, as at this day," (vs. 61).

However, there are also indications in the text that Solomon's temple was NOT the true fulfillment of the Lord's promise that a son of David would build a house for His name. Consider:

- » While the tabernacle was constructed from the free will offerings of the people (Exodus 25.1) and by a Spirit filled artisan (Exodus 31.2-4), the materials for Solomon's temple were procured from a foreign king (1Kings 5.1-11) and constructed in part with forced labor (1Kings 5.13-16).
- » In 1Kings 6.2 we read the dimensions of the temple (approximately 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high). Now note how Solomon's house was even bigger (1Kings 7.2) measuring 150 feet in length, 75 feet in width and 45 feet in height!
- » Finally, it may be significant that Solomon's prayer was that when the people sinned and prayed toward the temple, the Lord would "listen in heaven" (1Kings 8.28-30), whereas the tabernacle was to be the place where God dwelt among His people (Exodus 25.8).

God's Presence Removed

Recall Solomon's final exhortation to the people as the Temple was dedicated: "Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day." (1 Kings 8:61, ESV) Tragically, Israel failed to keep Solomon's charge, repeatedly violating the Lord's covenant.

- » Solomon's unfaithfulness to the covenant resulted in the dividing of the Kingdom after his death in ~931 B.C. (1Kings 11:9-13).
- » In 722 B.C. the Assyrian Empire removed the northern kingdom of Israel because God's people "despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them," (2Kings 17:15).
- » The southern kingdom of Judah, the kingdom still ruled by the Davidic line, would hang-on for 100 years longer, but ultimately God used the Babylonians to remove the majority from the land, destroying the capital of Jerusalem and the temple. As horrible as the punishment seems, it was just for the people "kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy" (2Chronicles. 36:16).

Ezekiel was God's prophet to the Jews in captivity before Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. He was charged with speaking God's word to a people who were rebellious (Ezekiel 2.3-5), a people who had misplaced confidence in the fact that the temple still stood in Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 7.4). However, Ezekiel had a stark message for the captives: the temple may exist, but its Glory was gone! Chapters 7-11 are significant in understanding God's message to this stubborn people:

- » Their covenant breaking, continued wickedness, was denounced in chapter 7.
- » Their rampant idolatry, in the temple no less, was cataloged and condemned in chapter 8.

- » God's vengeance on the city of Jerusalem is pictured in chapter 9.
- » The Glory of the Lord departs the temple (Ezekiel 10.18-19) and then the city (Ezekiel 11.23).

God's presence cannot be with a people who disregard His word, who violate His covenant. And as is seen in the captivity, when God's presence is not with a people, the result is disaster!

PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESENCE RESTORED

Getting Started: read the dimensions of the temple from Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 42.15-20). What stands out to you?

We concluded our last lesson by noting how in a vision the prophet Ezekiel saw the Lord's glory leaving the Jerusalem temple (Ezekiel 10.18-19). Furthermore, the Lord revealed that He was going to "profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes..." (Ezekiel 24.21). Sure enough, Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (2Chronicles 36.17-19). The Lord's presence was no longer with Israel. Would He return? Yes! "As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple." (Ezekiel 43:4-5, ESV)

The Second Temple

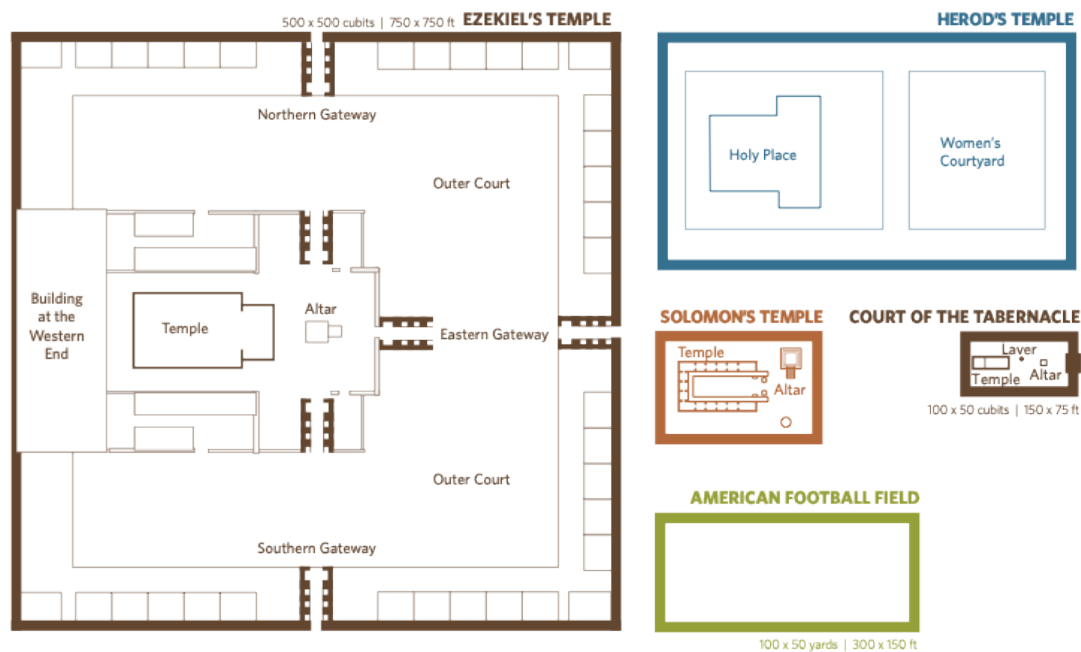
Some 200 years before it happened, God promised that the Persian king Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (Isa. 44:28). The opening chapters of Ezra record how the first group of returning captives undertook the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, its completion being noted in Ezra 6:15. "This temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar; it was the sixth year of the reign of King Darius." However, something was missing. Recall that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40.34-35) and Solomon's temple (1Kings 8.10-11) at their respective completions. No mention is made of the glory of the Lord filling this second temple.

The Lord fulfilled His word and brought Israel out of captivity and back to their promised land, but His presence did not dwell among them as He had before. In addressing those who built this second temple, God said through the prophet Haggai, "'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?'" (Haggai 2:3, ESV) Yet, He promised that a day would come when "The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former... and in this place I will give peace," (Haggai 2.9). The Lord had something better and more glorious in mind for how His presence would dwell among men in the future.

We've already noted how in a vision Ezekiel saw the Lord's Spirit returning to the temple (Ezekiel 43.1-5). However, that temple was described in Ezekiel 40-42 and

its dimensions were far greater than the one built by Solomon; the area around this temple was 750 feet by 750 feet! (Ezekiel 42.15-20). The temple built by those who returned from captivity was even smaller than the one built by Solomon, thus those who had seen the former temple wept when the foundation of the new was laid (Ezra 3.12). God's was going to inhabit a new temple... but it wasn't the one built at the conclusion of the old testament record.

Temple Size Comparisons



God Promises To Send His Spirit

Through Isaiah, God rebuked Israel for their rebellion and for the fact that they "grieved his Holy Spirit" (Isaiah 63.10), the very Spirit He put in their midsts (Isaiah 63.11). Interestingly, one of the charges God made against Israel was that they put their faith in foreign nations, rather than He who dwelt in their midsts: "'Ah, stubborn children,' declares the LORD, 'who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who make an alliance, but not of my Spirit...'" (Isaiah 30:1, see also Isaiah 31.3). This people had utterly turned away from the Lord; there was no redeeming them. Thus, God declared that desolation was coming "until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high... My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32.15-18; see also Ezekiel 39.29).

However, unlike when the Lord's glory filled the tabernacle and the temple, this time His Spirit was going to fill His people!

- » "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams." (Isaiah 44:3-4, ESV)
- » "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh," (Ezekiel

11:19, ESV)

- » “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezekiel 36:26-28, ESV)

Ezekiel 37 records the most vivid picture of what God was promising. There Ezekiel is taken to a valley full of bones and the question is posed, “can these bones live?” (vs. 3). Ezekiel is then told to prophesy to the bones that God would “cause breath (rûah) to enter you, and you shall live” (vs. 5). He was then commanded to “prophesy to the breath (rûah)... come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live” (vs. 9). God was going to bring His people back to life with the promise that “I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live” (vs. 14)!

But how and when would this promise truly be kept? Only when “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” appeared “And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:2; see Isaiah 42.1). We will turn our attention to Him in our next study.

THE SPIRIT & THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (PART 1)

Getting Started: if Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 1.32) and God in the flesh (Matthew 1.21; John 1.1,14), why did He receive the Spirit (Matthew 3.16)?

In this study we have proposed that the Spirit's activity can be traced throughout Scripture in the following ways:

1. The Spirit is instrumental in forming the people of God.
2. The Spirit leads and guides the people of God.
3. The Spirit is how God's dwells among His people.

We are close to seeing how all of those areas are true in the lives of Christians, but we must first examine the Spirit's role in Jesus' life and ministry. This lesson will focus on what the gospel accounts record regarding the Spirit forming and guiding God's people, while the next lesson will focus more on the Spirit's presence with God's people.

The Spirit Forming The People Of God

From the opening verses of the New Testament the inspired apostles and prophets make it clear that a new beginning was taking place. Matthew begins, "the book of the genealogy (Greek genesis) of Jesus Christ..." (Matthew 1.1). Just as the opening chapter of Genesis culminated with the creation of man (Genesis 1.26-27), the New Testament opens by declaring that a new man was going to be formed: "to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1.12-13).

However, before any of us could become children of God, His true Son first had to come into this world. And while He is eternal (John 1.1.), His coming into this world was accomplished through the Spirit!

- » "And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35, ESV)
- » "But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'" (Matthew 1:20, ESV)

If Jesus' life in this world was the product of the Spirit, it should not surprise us

that His disciples would also be products of the Spirit. Recall again the words in the beginning of John's gospel, those who believe in Jesus have "the right to become children of God," they are born "of God" (John 1.12-13). And Jesus tells us how we are born of God:

- » "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:5, ESV)
- » "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (John 6:63, ESV)

Recall that the Lord promised through Ezekiel that the day would come when He would cleanse His people with water and give them "a new heart, and a new spirit... I will put my Spirit within you" (Ezekiel 36.25-27). Jesus' declaration was that the time had come when this new birth through water and Spirit could take place. And just as God's people are formed through the Spirit, as we continue in the words of Jesus the Spirit continues to give life!

The Spirit Leading & Guiding The People Of God

While Jesus' life on earth was a product of the Spirit, it's significant that His ministry didn't begin until another act of the Spirit. Each of the four gospel accounts record the baptism of Jesus and recount how the Spirit descended on Him. However, note the wording in Matthew and John's accounts:

- » "And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;" (Matthew 3:16, ESV)
- » "I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'" (John 1:33, ESV)

The Spirit descending AND remaining on Jesus harkens back to what occurred when David was anointed as king: "And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward" (1Samuel 16.13). Jesus was the true descendant of David, He is the "branch" from the roots of Jesse... and God promised that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Isaiah 11.1-2).

The Spirit descending and remaining on Jesus wasn't simply meant to signify that He was the prophesied "branch". Read Isaiah 11.1-9 and note what would result from the Spirit resting on Him:

1. The Spirit is described as the Spirit of "wisdom and understanding... counsel and might... knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (vs. 2).
2. Thus He would be able to render righteous judgments (vss. 3-4).
3. Peace would result from His leadership (vss. 5-8).
4. All would have knowledge of the Lord (vs. 9).

Significantly, Jesus referenced another passage from Isaiah to explain the purpose of Him having the Spirit. He declared to His hometown of Nazareth that "'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to

the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor'" (Luke 4:18-19; see Isaiah 61.1-2). Matthew also commented on how the Spirit was upon Jesus so that He could "proclaim justice to the Gentiles" (Matthew 12.18-21; see Isaiah 42.1-3). Jesus rules over all, and He guides by the Spirit.

Jesus made it clear to His followers that they would be led by the Spirit, even after His departure from this world. To His apostles He promised that when they were arrested and put on trial they wouldn't have to worry about what to say in their defense because "it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Matthew 10.20). But the Spirit would do much more than help them in times of trial, the Spirit would continue to provide guidance for disciples for all time.

- » "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26, ESV)
- » "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (John 15:26, ESV)
- » "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (John 16:13, ESV)

Recall that in Numbers 11.16-17,25 the Lord took some of the Spirit from Moses and put it on seventy elders of the people. A parallel can be drawn to John's testimony about what Jesus would do: "John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.'" (Luke 3:16, ESV) The Spirit rested on Jesus, thus He could give that Spirit to others; and He did so to insure that His people were guided by Spirit (see 2Timothy 3.16-17).

THE SPIRIT & THE MINISTRY OF JESUS (PART 2)

Getting Started: what do you think Jesus meant by His statement in Matthew 28.20, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age"?

In a previous lesson we noted how in the Old Testament, when the Lord promised that He was with someone that meant more than God was favorably inclined toward the individual; no, He was actually with that person. In the case of Moses, the Lord was with him (Exodus 3.10) and that was evident by the signs Moses could perform (Exodus 4.1-9) and the Lord giving him words to speak (Exodus 4.12). As we learn later, the Spirit was on Moses (see Numbers 11.17).

When Jesus issued the great commission in Matthew 28.18-20, He promised to be with His disciples always. He was not promising to be favorably inclined toward His disciples, He was promising to be with them. In this lesson we want to explore what the gospels teach about this promise.

Jesus Has The Spirit, Can Give The Spirit

Recall that when Jesus was baptized the Spirit descended "from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him" (John 1.32). Significantly, in the very next verse John the Baptist stated how the Lord revealed to him that "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (John 1.33). The Son of God would be one who not only received the Spirit, but could give the Spirit. The Lord took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and gave it to the seventy elders (Numbers 11), but Jesus would Himself give the Spirit to His followers!

John the Baptist gave further testimony for Jesus in John 3.22-26. Note his words in vs. 34: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure." Israel's leaders had been granted the Spirit (see Numbers 27.18; Judges 6.34; 1Samuel 16.13; 2Peter 1.21), but only Jesus was granted the Spirit "without measure". That fact lies behind Jesus' words in John 6.63: "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." His words are Spirit, because He is full of Spirit.

Finally, consider Jesus' words in John 7.37-39. Vincent shares this background on what occurred during the last day of the Feast of Booths: "It was called the Day of the Great Hosanna, because a circuit was made seven times round the altar with 'Hosanna'... Every morning, after the sacrifice, the people, led by a priest, repaired to

the Fountain of Siloam, where the priest filled a golden pitcher, and brought it back to the temple amid music and joyful shouts. Advancing to the altar of burnt-offering, at the cry of the people, 'Lift up thy hand!' he emptied the pitcher toward the west, and toward the east a cup of wine, while the people chanted, 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'" Jesus chose this time to declare that "if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (John 7.37). Jesus wasn't being metaphorical, He was declaring that He would fulfill the Lord's promise to the prophets that a fountain would be opened which would "cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13.1). The fountain that would be opened would be "the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive" (John 7.39).

Jesus With His Apostles

Let's consider what Jesus' words in Matthew 28.18-20 meant for the apostles. Like Moses, they were being sent to lead people out of captivity and to the Lord; that's what making disciples for Jesus is all about. And Jesus would be with His apostles just as the Lord had been with Moses. First, the apostles were empowered with great signs that would confirm the message of the gospel: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs." (Mark 16:19-20, ESV) These signs were given through the Holy Spirit (see Hebrews 2.4).

Second, just as Moses would not need to worry about the words he was to speak (Exodus 4.12), the apostles would know what to say because the Spirit was with them.

- » The Spirit would be "another Helper", i.e. an advocate or counselor like Jesus (John 14.16-17).
- » The Spirit would "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14.26).
- » The Spirit would "bear witness about" Jesus (John 15.26).
- » The Spirit would guide the apostles "into all the truth" (John 16.13).

Jesus was not going to leave His apostles alone "as orphans" (John 14.18); He was going to be with the apostles through the Spirit.

Jesus With Us

But what does Jesus' promise to be "with you always, to the end of the age" mean for us? Jesus' primary audience may have been the apostles, but His extending the promise "to the end of the age" brings in all disciples because the "end of the age" has not yet occurred (see Matthew 13.39). Once again, Jesus' ability to give Spirit would seem to be how this promise is fulfilled.

John 17 records a prayer of Jesus where He first prayed for Himself (vss. 1-5), then His apostles (vss. 6-19) and then concluded with praying for "those who will believe in me through their word" (vss. 20-26); Jesus prayed for us! And in that prayer Jesus asked the Father that "they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I

in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (vs. 21). Jesus had said something similar to the apostles in John 15: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit in itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (vss. 4-5). Jesus had just told them that He would be leaving them and that where He was going they could not follow (John 13.33), yet they would still be in Him and He would be in them! How could that be possible? The Spirit is the answer.

John records several of Jesus' teachings which point to the ongoing role of the Spirit in the lives of His people.

- » Those who are part of the Kingdom are those who are born of the Spirit. And those who are born of the Spirit ARE spirit (John 3.5-6).
- » Jesus declared that His words "are spirit and life" (John 6.63). Significantly, to have Jesus abide in us is to have His words abide in us (John 15.7).
- » Jesus promised the Samaritan woman that He has water that "will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4.14). Later, we learn that promise was in reference to the Spirit whom believers are to receive (John 7.37-39).
- » Finally, when Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, John records this: "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (John 20:22, ESV) A new creation was beginning (compare with Genesis 2.7), one in which the sins of His people would be forgiven (vs. 23) and they would receive His Spirit.

The "end of the age" has not yet occurred, but the Lord is still with us; His Spirit is still with us. And the rest of this study will seek to unpack exactly what that means.

MAN'S NEED FOR A NEW SPIRIT

Getting Started: in Ephesians 2.3 the apostle Paul declared that when we “lived in the passions of our flesh” we “were by nature children of wrath”. What do you think Paul meant by that?

When reviewing some of my old sermons on the Holy Spirit, I concluded that they weren't very good. They weren't unScriptural, but neither were they completely Biblical. They fell short of simply acknowledging what the Bible says regarding the Spirit: we receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2.38). I'm saying this in order to acknowledge that my understanding of the Spirit has grown, and I hope will continue to grow. However, for my understanding of the Spirit to grow, so must my understanding of the Scriptures. This class is an attempt to grow our understanding of the Spirit by looking at the Scriptures. Even then, our understanding of the Spirit may be limited, because if God hasn't revealed something to us then it isn't for us to know (Deuteronomy 29:29). So, let it be enough for us to ascribe to the Spirit the attributes and the work that are credited to Him in the Scriptures.

So far in our study we have traced how the Spirit's activity has been involved in forming and leading God's people, and is how God's presence is with His people. That was not only true of Israel in the Old Testament, but as the gospel accounts make clear, would be true of God's new people as well. In this lesson we start looking at how the Spirit forms the new people of God, but we must first look at why people who were created in the image of God (Genesis 1.26-27) need to be reformed in the first place.

Our Spiritual Nature

We are spiritual beings. Yes, we have physical bodies, but we are flesh AND spirit. It's biblical to say that the “real you” is a spirit, just note these parallels found in Scripture:

1. The spirit is synonymous with heart. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17, ESV). Note also Exodus 35.21 and Hebrews 4.12.
2. The spirit is synonymous with mind. “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,” (Philippians 1:27, ESV).
3. The spirit is the inner man. “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,”

(Ephesians 3:16, ESV) Note also Romans 7.22.

Gnostics in the 2nd and 3rd centuries perverted this truth to justify sinful practices in the flesh, reasoning that since we are really spirit, then any sinful activity is a product of the flesh and has no effect on the spirit. However, the Lord made clear that the sinful actions of our flesh originate from our inner man, "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander." (Matthew 15:18-19, ESV)

Our Need For A New Spirit

The importance of man being a spiritual being reaches back to the Creation account. In Genesis 1 we read how Creation culminated with the creation of man in God's own image (vss. 26-27). Jesus stated in John 4.24 that "God is spirit", thus for us to be in His image, we must also have spirit. It seems that this spiritual creation is what is described in the fuller account of man's creation in Genesis 2: "then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature." (Genesis 2:7, ESV)

However, being created in God's image has moral implications. God is holy (Leviticus 11.45), righteous (Psalm 89.14), faithful (Exodus 34.6), etc., so for man to have been created in His image would entail him having the same moral nature. Indeed, everything God created was "very good" (Gen. 1.31). Yet, as we know man did not remain very good. Because of his sin, unholy man was separated from holy God. The very nature of God's creation had changed!

Paul makes it clear that what was begun by Adam and Eve has been repeated by God's creation since the beginning. And man is experiencing God's wrath because "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." (Romans 1:19-20, ESV) Paul said that God can be known through His creation, and while our mind might go to the heavens or the magnificent vistas on the earth, nothing shows His "divine nature" more clearly than man. We are truly without excuse because God's nature is evident in us, but since each of us have chosen to "not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him" (Romans 1.21), we "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23).

The course of human history has been one of each man and woman engaging in sinful practices, with terrible consequences for each individual. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." (Ephesians 2:1-3, ESV) Through our own sins we have corrupted our nature into that of "children of wrath," not that of children created in God's image. We, each of us, needed a new spirit; we needed to be born again.

WATER & THE SPIRIT

Getting Started: why were you baptized (or why should you be)? What did baptism accomplish?

The book of Exodus not only describes how Israel became a great nation, but how they were figuratively born as God's people. First, they were rescued from Egyptian bondage and brought to God so that they could be "my treasured possession among all peoples" (Exodus 19.5). Furthermore, God intended to dwell among this people, but for that to happen two things had to take place:

- » First, the people must be in covenant relationship with Him (Exodus 24). God's covenants are always based on His gracious promises (see Exodus 19.4-6) and are contingent on the people following the requirements of the covenant (Exodus 24.3). Finally, the covenant is ratified with blood (Exodus 24.5-8).
- » Second, a holy sanctuary had to be constructed, a place suitable for the Lord to dwell in the midst of the people (Exodus 25.8).

It will probably come as no surprise that all of the elements of the Exodus story (deliverance from bondage, covenant with God, dwelling place for God) are fulfilled in Christ. And, as we will see, since they are all fulfilled in Christ, then baptism takes on even greater significance than we may have once thought.

All fulfilled in Christ

The New Testament makes it clear that Christ is the true fulfillment of the Exodus story:

1. It is Christ who delivers us from the bondage of sin (John 1.29; Hebrews 2.14-15).
2. Christ has ratified a new covenant in His blood (Luke 22.20).
3. Christ makes His people "into a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2.21-22).

In future lessons we will focus on how we have become God's holy temple, but for now let's take a moment and consider the new covenant which is ratified in Christ's blood. God had foretold that He was going to make a new covenant with His people, a covenant where His law would be written on their hearts and "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31.31-34). It was this covenant Jesus inaugurated with His blood, a covenant where forgiveness of sins could be found, where each member of the covenant would "know" God. Christians, disciples of Christ, are members of this new covenant, one that is "enacted on better promises" (Hebrews 8.6).

But what is meant by “better promises”? Our mind likely goes to the true forgiveness of sins found in this covenant, forgiveness promised in Jeremiah 31.34 and truly accomplished by Christ (Hebrews 10.12,14). But that’s not the only better promise of the New Covenant; there was the promise of God pouring His Spirit on His people (Isaiah 44.3-4; Ezekiel 36. 25-27; 39.28-29).

Water & The Spirit

“Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5, ESV)

Jesus spoke these words to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, after he came declaring his faith that Jesus was from God. Jesus’ words are clearly taken from the Lord’s promise in Ezekiel 36:25-27, and point to the truth that to be in His Kingdom will require a new birth; a new birth that is of both water and the Spirit! The New Testament makes clear baptism (water) is how we become united with Jesus. We are baptized into His death and raised to newness of life (Romans 6.3-4); through baptism we “put on Christ” and become sons of God (Galatians 3.26-27). And in Christ, the Exodus story is fulfilled in us:

- » We are redeemed from bondage (Ephesians 1.7; Colossians 1.13-14).
- » We are part of His new covenant (Hebrews 9.15; 13.20-21).
- » We are sanctified (1Corinthians 6.11; Hebrews 10.14).

But the new birth isn’t just a matter of water, it is also one of Spirit. “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,” (Titus 3:4-6, ESV) The terms “regeneration” and “renewal” both convey the idea of making something new (Jesus speaks of the world to come in this way, see Matthew 19.28). Through sin we became “children of wrath” (Ephesians 2.3), but through water and the Spirit we are reborn... “that which is born of Spirit is spirit” (John 3.6)! Truly, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2Corinthians 5.17).

The Gift Of The Spirit

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38, ESV)

The first gospel sermon following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension resulted in a multitude of people being pricked in their hearts and asking Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter’s response is well known, but what did he mean that they would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”? Sincere brethren have long debated what is meant by receiving “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” some concluding that the gift is what the Spirit gives, while others believe with equal conviction that the “gift” is the Spirit. For most of my life I believed that the gift was from the Spirit, that the gift was salvation. Perhaps this was some reactionary thinking on my

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part. After all, some have taken Acts 2:38 to infer that if we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, then we should be able to speak in tongues, heal the sick and do any other miracle that the apostles could perform. Peter's use of Joel 2 earlier in the text clearly indicates that the Spirit coming upon the apostles resulted in miraculous works, but even that prophecy carried the promise that the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh.

Seeing the Spirit as the gift is the most natural way to look at the text, particularly from the standpoint of Peter's Jewish audience. They knew that the pouring out of God's spirit had been promised (Isaiah 44; Ezekiel 36,39; etc.), now they were told that by being baptized they could receive the promised Spirit. The promise of the new covenant wasn't simply that they would receive forgiveness of sins, but that they would receive a new spirit... His Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27). Peter's audience knew that they didn't simply need some sins forgiven, they needed a complete rebirth; they needed a new spirit.

Future lessons will further explore how in Christ we receive a new spirit, His Spirit. But as we conclude this lesson let's make sure we understand this fundamental truth: if the Holy Spirit is important to you, then so is baptism! The **ONLY** way to be renewed by His Spirit and to enjoy His presence is to be baptized into Christ.

A NEW SPIRIT (1)

It cannot be stressed enough just how wretched each of us become. Even if our sins seem trivial or relatively minor compared to the horrific things that take place in our world, our sinful conduct corrupts our very nature (Eph. 2:1-3). What God created as holy, we make unholy. What God made as living and pure, we defile and bring down to death. Adding to the horror is the fact that while we have the power to defile our nature through sin, we are powerless to return to holiness on our own. For that, we require God's grace and aid. So, how would God create a new spirit within us?

It was not going to be through law. Granted, if Israel had followed God's Law they would have been "holy, for I am holy," (Lev. 11:45), but the problem was that no one followed the Law! Paul deals with this dilemma in Romans 7-8 and for us to understand the indwelling of the Spirit we must spend some time in these passages.

No Problem With The Law, But It's Not The Spirit

Earlier in Romans Paul had firmly placed the Law on the side of sin and death (Romans 5.20-21; 6.14; etc.). Undoubtedly, some Jewish Christians began to accuse Paul of licensing sinful activity. After all, if we are not under Law, why would sin be wrong? Paul had emphatically stated that we cannot continue in sin, because when we were baptized into Christ we died to sin and the epoch of Adam, being raised to life and the new epoch of Christ (6.1-14). Furthermore, since the Law was placed in the old epoch of sin and Adam, we died to it too and are now joined to Christ (7.1-6).

But what does this mean for the Law? Paul had just stated that "while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (7.5). Was the Law at fault? "Is the Law sin?" (7.7) In this passage Paul endeavored to explain the connection between the Law and sin, placing the blame on flesh and on sin while declaring the Law to be holy, righteous and good (7.7-13). He then related his personal experience of living under the Law, desiring to do God's will, but experiencing sin reign in His flesh (7.14-25).

All of this prepares us for the Spirit's introduction in chapter 8. The Law may have been holy, righteous and good, even spiritual in nature, but it was not the Spirit. And as we have previously noted, the work of the Spirit and His contrast with the Law was revealed in the prophets (see Jeremiah 31.31-33; Ezekiel 36.25-27).

Sin Took Advantage Of The Law (vss. 7-13)

"Is the Law sin?" Of course not! Paul will rightfully describe the Law as "holy and righteous and good," (7.12), even referring to it as "spiritual," (7.14). In giving His Law, God declared that "if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you

high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God," (Deut. 28.1-2). So, what was the problem?

The problem was man! Specifically, the problem was man when ruled by his flesh. When Paul speaks of "flesh" (Greek *sarx*) he's not simply referring to man's physical bodies. After all, our physical members can be presented to God as instruments of righteousness (see Romans 6.12-13). Rather, "flesh" was the dominant principle of our old lives. "Flesh" typified our lives in the old epoch of Adam, sin and death. Thus, Paul said, "For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death" (Romans 7.5). Paul will return to the struggle of trying to serve God while in flesh in Romans 7.14-25, but having shown that the Law aroused sin when we were in the flesh, Paul must show that the Law was not at fault.

Law shows what is wrong, and Paul's point was that when we're dominated by flesh, we corrupt this positive aspect of law; we desire to do what is wrong simply because it's wrong. Thus Paul could state that "apart from the law, sin lies dead", i.e. sin uses the prohibition to entice the flesh. David McClister offers this explanation: "The Law of Moses, by its nature as an external law, had a serious problem associated with it in that it mainly addressed our actions, the things we do in the flesh. Even those parts of the Law that attempted to transform our inner selves (such as the tenth commandment which prohibited coveting) eventually became issues with the flesh... Like a parent's good instruction to a little child, 'Don't touch the stove,' the process of announcing that good commandment started a process in motion. The child was not thinking about touching the stove until the parent said something about it, then his natural curiosity takes over and drives him to touch the stove. In a similar, but more serious way, that part of us that wants to control itself (our flesh) found itself excited by the Law's prohibition and prompted us to do the very thing God said not to do." (Blessed Be God, Page 77)

You can see how this was true when Eve sinned in the Garden. God's commandment (Gen. 2.17) made one tree out of bounds. This commandment was for her good, but the commandment also increased her desire for it, a desire that Satan was able to prey upon (Gen. 3). Consider also that Israel did not make an idol (Exodus 32) until after God forbade it (Exodus 20.4-5). Paul says the same thing occurred with him and coveting. Coveting what others have is a "natural," i.e. fleshly, desire, but the Law declares it sinful. Being declared wrong intensified Paul's fleshly desire, leading to his spiritual death.

So, no fault should be found with the Law, but so long as man is governed by flesh the Law will only incite sin in him. What man needs is to be freed from the flesh, to be governed by the Spirit. This is exactly what Paul says happens in Christ, which is the focus of chapter 8.

Note, while not Paul's, this passage does effectively destroy any notion of our inheriting Adam's sin (i.e. original sin). Note Paul's words in vs. 9, "I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died."

The Law, the command to not covet, was given ~1500 years before Paul lived (see Exodus 20.17), but Paul was spiritually alive before he came to understand the obligation of this commandment ("when the commandment came"). This is what we mean by speaking of an "age of accountability". While that phrase is not used in the Scriptures, the point is made in this passage and others (see Ezekiel 18.20; Isaiah 7.16). Paul died when he transgressed God's Law, not when Adam transgressed.

The Struggle Between The Inner Man & The Outer Man (vss. 14-25)

The most important question to decide on when examining this passage is at what stage in life was Paul referring? Many hold (and reasonably so) that Paul was referring to his present, Christian life. The main reason for taking this position is that Paul uses the present tense. The other position is that Paul was speaking of his former life, when he was still under the Law and in the epoch of Adam. This position seems best for the following reasons:

- » Paul speaks of this time as being "sold under sin" (7.14). However, as we read in 6.7, "he who has died is freed from sin." While we recognize and admit that Christians still sin (1John 1.8-10), that is a far cry from the bondage Paul is describing in this passage.
- » Paul will contrast this time with living under the Spirit in chapter 8. That existence is typified as being free from condemnation because "the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8.2) What Paul is describing in 7.14-25 is anything but freedom.
- » It is best to treat the entirety of Chapter 7 as Paul's explanation of the problems of living while dominated by the flesh. While the Law is not at fault, being holy, just and spiritual (7.12,14), the flesh is provoked by the Law to sin (7.5,14). Paul, having been a conscientious Jew, knew all too well the struggle of desiring to follow God, but seeing sin reign in his flesh. That agony is what Paul describes in this passage, but that agony could only be relieved by Christ and the giving of the Spirit (7.25, chapter 8)
- » But what about Paul's use of the present tense? The best answer to me is that Paul is relating this as a personal story. Such stories, while occurring in the past, are often told in the present tense.

Paul's point is simple, yet emphatic. While the Law may be holy, righteous and good, even described as "spiritual," man in the flesh (belonging to the epoch of Adam) is sold into the bondage of sin. The Law may reveal the will of God to him, he may even desire to do the will of God in his inner man, yet he will find himself doing the very evil that he did not wish to do.

What did Paul mean by "no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me," (vs. 17,20)? We can easily rule out one thing: Paul was not refusing to take responsibility for his actions. He has already stated that he was responsible for his own sin and spiritual death (vs. 9). The likely solution is that Paul has personified sin, emphasizing its power contrasted with his own will while in the flesh. This seems to agree with Paul's words in vss. 18-19, 22-23 and the last portion of vs. 25.

Paul's purpose has been to show the hopeless condition of a good man under the Law. The flesh is too weak, sin is too powerful. So, Paul exclaims, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (vs. 24) While Paul has applied this to himself, his intent was to convince his fellow Jewish Christians that they were not justified by the Law... they couldn't be.

Man's hope? "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (vs. 25). While Paul summarizes his former struggle at the end of vs. 25, he will return to the solution in chapter 8. Christ has freed us from this body of flesh, by giving us the Spirit! Note: each of us can identify with Paul's struggle in this passage, but I would ask you to remember that Paul was speaking of his inner conflict under the Law, not in Christ. Christians will continue to have some struggles, even sin, but being in bondage to sin is what happens outside of Christ. If we are feeling "sold under sin" (7.5) and "wretched" (7.24) something has gone terribly wrong; we're "living in the flesh" (7.5) and not "according to the Spirit" (8.4).

A NEW SPIRIT (2)

As we previously noted, being created in God's image has moral implications, for just as God is holy, righteous, faithful, etc., so was man who was created in His image. Thus, everything God created was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Yet, as we know man did not remain very good. Because of his sin, unholy man was separated from holy God. The very nature of God's creation had changed!

That horrific change in God's creation is at the heart of Romans. The gospel is needed because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (3.23). The glory of God is His very nature that we have failed to uphold and emulate. We were once created in His very image, but we have come to be defined by sin and death, we have all become part of the epoch of Adam, "just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (5.12). We, each of us, needed a new spirit. Significantly, God promised that when His Spirit came His people would be given a new spirit: "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." (Ezekiel 36:25-27, ESV)

At the close of chapter 7 Paul lamented on his failures to keep God's will while he belonged to Adam's age (i.e. before he was a Christian). "but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:23-24, ESV) The answer was/is Christ. Chapter 8 expounds on that answer showing the complete transformation that occurs in Christ, including the new spirit that God had promised through Ezekiel. The age of Adam is over for the Christian. Everything has changed.

No Condemnation For Those In Christ Jesus (Romans 8.1-11)

The epoch of Adam was one of condemnation. Condemnation because all were guilty of sin. Condemnation because none kept God's Law. Condemnation because all were deserving of death (Romans 3.23; 5.18; 6.23). It was the condemnation Paul experienced under the Law while governed by his flesh. So, he exclaimed, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7.24). Thankfully, in Christ everything has changed. So, Paul could exultantly proclaim that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (8.1) The passage goes on to show why this statement is true.

First, there's a new dominant principle (law) in our lives (vs. 2). Many question what the two "laws" are in this passage, but the best option would be to take up what

Paul described in 7.22-25 where there was the “law” of Paul’s mind that wanted to serve God, but the “law” of sin in Paul’s flesh prevented that and won. But in Christ, everything has changed. So, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” refers to the Christian’s ability to finally follow the Law of God, i.e. the law of my mind finally wins, while the “law of sin and of death” refers to the former reality of being unable to follow God, to succumbing to the flesh time and again.

Second, Jesus has fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Law (vss. 3-4). Paul gives all credit to God, but says that God freed us from condemnation not through the Law (recall Romans 5.20-21; 7.7-12), but through Jesus. His perfect life in the flesh and His death condemned sin! What man could not do, even with the Law of God, God did through His Son! The result is that “the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.” God’s Law was something that was to be kept (2.13), something Paul desired to keep, but failed to keep (7.22-25). But now because Christ’s death “condemned sin in the flesh” (vs. 3), it is now possible to walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh.

Third, we now walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh (vss. 5-8). We can now do what was not possible before: we can walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh. Remember, this was the struggle Paul said he had, and even though he delighted “in the law of God, in my inner being” (7.22), he still found himself “captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members” (7.23). But because Christ has done it is now possible to walk “according to the Spirit.” Note, this is done with the full agency of man; man must set his mind on the Spirit and not on the flesh. Only when man sets his mind on the Spirit can he find life and peace. But wasn’t that what Paul said he tried to do, yet he failed? Yes, but something occurs in Christ that changes everything...

Finally, God’s Spirit now dwells within us (vss. 9-11). This is what makes the difference; we aren’t in the flesh but in the Spirit. Yes, we still have human bodies, but we aren’t dominated by the flesh anymore and that’s because we now have the Spirit of God dwelling in us! Note a few things about this wonderful passage:

- » The terms “Spirit”, “Spirit of God” and “Spirit of Christ” are used interchangeably (as is “Christ is in you”). To have one is to have them all!
- » This is the fulfillment of God’s promise in Ezekiel 36.25-27, the reality proclaimed by Jesus (John 3.5) and the apostles (Acts 2.38).
- » I do not believe this is teaching that we receive God’s Spirit that will dwell alongside our spirit, but rather that we are once again in God’s image with a spirit like His (Genesis 1.27; 2.7).
- » But won’t we make the same mistake as Adam, and thus find ourselves condemned? Yes, we will make mistakes, sin is still a problem. But the difference is Christ! He “condemned sin in the flesh” (vs. 3) and we are saved by His life (Romans 5.10). We are in Him if we have God’s Spirit, and in Him is life!
- » Note: I take the phrase “the body is dead because of sin” to speak to the reality of our physical bodies dying, also the result of sin. We may have new Spirits, but our bodies still die. Yet, vs. 11 shows that our mortal bodies will also have life!

Truly, there is no condemnation!

**Application: we are debtors to live by the Spirit and not by the flesh
(Romans 8.12-17)**

Recall that in Romans 6.16-19 Paul stated that we are all slaves of one of two masters: either of sin or of God. Paul returns to that idea in Romans 8.12-13 by saying we are "debtors, not to the flesh" but to the Spirit. The fact that in Christ, with His Spirit, we find ourselves free from condemnation is what makes us debtors to the Spirit! Note again that this involves the full agency of man (see Romans 6.19; 8.5-6), we must "live by the Spirit" and be "led by the Spirit of God". Recall that we stated at the beginning of this study that God's Spirit both forms the people of God AND leads them. That is evident in this passage: we've been formed by the Spirit (vss. 9-11), but we must also be guided by His Spirit (vss. 12-14)!

Furthermore, we have a new relationship with God; He's now our Father! (vss. 15-17) Those who are still characterized by the flesh have a relationship with God based on fear. He is their Creator, but nothing more. He is the One who will judge them, who's wrath they will experience. But in Christ, everything has changed. Our relationship is that of adopted sons, those who can approach God as their Father. We can do this because of the working of His Spirit along with our spirit (i.e. our spirit now remade in God's image continuing to follow His Spirit). Now, instead of fearing wrath and condemnation, we have become fellow heirs with Christ.

Paul's Picture Of Man In Romans 5-8

Creation	Epoch of Adam	Epoch of Christ
Created in God's image (Genesis 1.26)	Main Characteristics (Romans 5.12-21) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Death reigning 2. All sinning 3. Judgment resulting in condemnation 4. Law caused sin to increase. 	Main Characteristics (Romans 5.12-21) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grace, righteousness & life reign 2. Many made righteous through Christ's obedience 3. Justification
Made of flesh, Spirit breathed into him (Genesis 2.7)	Dominated by flesh (Romans 7.7-25) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incited by the Law 2. Sold into bondage of sin 3. Not doing what one wants to do 4. Wretched! 	Characterized by Spirit (Romans 8.1-17) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Now walking according to the Spirit. 2. Spirit of God now dwells in 3. Led by His Spirit 4. His children
Paul was once "alive" (Romans 7.9)	When he understood the commandment, sin became alive and he died (Romans 7.9)	Since Paul was in Christ, no condemnation! (Romans 8.1)

**Baptism
(Romans 6.1-7)**

IN GOD'S IMAGE, AGAIN

God's people are always formed by His Spirit. That was true in the beginning when "the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature" (Genesis 2.7). And it was true when God made Israel into His special people. The prophet Isaiah recounted how the Lord "put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit, who caused his glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses" (Isaiah 63.11-12) and that "the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name" (Isaiah 63.14). The Lord's presence, His Spirit, formed Israel and brought them to Himself.

However, the Scriptures record how through sin, all men have fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3.23). Even God's special people, Israel, rejected their Creator and went after other gods. But God foretold that the day would come when He would have a people who were once again in His image; this people would have His Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27). Christians are those people; we've been born again (John 3.5) and have received what He promised... a new spirit, His Spirit (Acts 2.38).

The New Testament Theme Of Recreation

The promise of the Holy Spirit is one of recreation, i.e. man being restored to what God purposed for him, to be in His image. This recreation was promised in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36.25-27) and a recurring theme in the New Testament. We've already seen this theme found in Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3.3-9. There we saw that entrance into the Kingdom requires a second birth, one of water (baptism) and the Spirit. We've also seen the same theme in Paul's words in Titus 3.5-6, "he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior". Let's note some other New Testament passages where this idea of recreation is found.

2Peter 1.4-8

- » What has God allowed us to become partakers of?
- » How does this shape our conduct?

Ephesians 4.22-24

- » What are we to put off?

- » What are we to put on?
- » How are we now created?

2Corinthians 3.18

- » What are we beholding?
- » How are we beholding this image?
- » Into what are we being transformed?

Through the prophets God foretold that He would pour His Spirit onto His people (Isaiah 44.3; Joel 2.28), but for what purpose? Not to reveal new truths to each individual, for revelation came through the Spirit to the apostles and prophets of the first century. Not to overpower our will, for to have God's Spirit requires one to set his mind on the Spirit (Romans 8:6). No, the purpose is for our spirits to become new, to be recreated in the image of God's Spirit!

Now One With Christ

Consider Paul's words in 1Corinthians 6:17, "But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." I once conducted the funeral of a sister in Christ who had been married to her husband for 60 years. While they had distinct personalities, they embodied the "one flesh" concept that is God's ideal for husband and wife (Genesis 2.24). In many ways it was hard to tell where one ended and the other began. That is God's intent for us. We are joined to Christ, we are to become one with Him... we are one spirit with Him! Consider Jesus' illustration of the vine and the branches: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:4-5, ESV) Where does the vine end and the branch begin? Where does Christ's influence in me end, and where do I begin? If I'm one spirit with Him, there is no beginning and ending.

Results Of A New Spirit

1. If I've become one spirit with the Lord, then I am truly His temple, the place where God now dwells among men. Remember, if we've joined ourselves to the Lord, we've become one spirit with Him (1Corinthians 6.17). Significantly, it's just two verses later that Paul states, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you..." (vs. 19). We are God's sanctuary because our

spirits have become one with His Spirit!

2. If I've become one spirit with the Lord, then I am truly His child. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:14-17, ESV) If I'm being led by the Spirit (setting my mind on the Spirit, making His will, my will) then I have the assurance that I'm God's child, the Spirit bearing witness with my spirit because they are united!
3. If I've become one spirit with the Lord, then I am fruitful. Since I am being led by the Spirit, I will naturally bear the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," (Galatians 5:22-23). Since I'm in the Lord, and He is in me the natural thing is for me to bear His fruit (John 15:4-5). This is where a Christian's intuition, conscience and feelings play an important role. No, the Spirit doesn't lead us through these (there's no support in the Bible for such a notion), it's much better than that! Since our very nature, our spirit, has become one with God we begin to think how He thinks about things, feel about people the way He feels about them. Yes, we can still stumble at times (consider Peter's stumble in Galatians 2), but since we have set our mind on the Spirit, it's little wonder we begin to feel and act differently than we once did.
4. If I've become one spirit with the Lord, then I am sealed. "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit," (Ephesians 1:13, ESV) An ancient seal was a mark of authentication. A king would place his seal on a letter or legal document, authenticating it as belonging to him. How do we know that we belong to the Lord, what authenticates us? Having His Spirit as our spirit shows that we belong to Him!
5. If I've become one spirit with the Lord, then I have a guarantee. "who (the Spirit) is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:14, ESV) How do we know that heaven is our inheritance? By becoming one spirit with Him we are now in His image and of His nature (2 Cor 3:17-18; 2 Peter 1:4). And it is those who are like God who will ultimately be in Heaven with Him.

THE SPIRIT & THE WORD

Christians, those who have been baptized for the remission of their sins, have received the promised Spirit; we've been born of both water and Spirit (Ezekiel 36:25-27; John 3:5; Acts 2:38). We should have no problem saying that because the New Testament Scriptures make it abundantly clear that the Spirit does in fact dwell in us. (Consider Acts 2:38; Romans 8:9,11,26-27; 1Cor. 6:19; 2Cor. 1:21-22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13; 2Tim 1:14; Heb. 6:4; 1John 4:13; etc.) There may be some hesitancy to say that the Spirit is given to us (Acts 2:38) or that we are the dwelling place of the Spirit (1Cor. 6:19) because of the erroneous things that are sometimes said about the Spirit and His indwelling. However, as was noted in our first lesson, we must not be reactionary in our approach to this topic. If others distort what it means for the Spirit to dwell in a believer, it should not prevent us from affirming what the Scriptures teach: we are God's temple, we are where His Spirit now dwells.

There is reason to be concerned over historical and current misunderstandings regarding the indwelling of the Spirit. Most disturbing are those teachings that would credit the Spirit with leading us into knowledge that is not found in inspired Scripture. However, true appreciation of God's Presence with us will lead to greater appreciation for the God-breathed word.

God's Presence & His Word In Israel

When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, they were not fit for His Presence. Thus, Israel was warned against touching the mountain when God was about to descend upon it (Exodus 19:10-13) and later the elders of Israel could only worship from afar (Exodus 24:1). A tabernacle was to be built, a sanctuary where God could dwell among the people (Exodus 25:8), but its construction was not left to Moses' desires or the will of the people.

- » How did they know God's will for His sanctuary? (Exodus 25:9).
- » Do you think God's Presence would have entered the sanctuary if it was not constructed according to His pattern?

The point: there is a definite link between following God's revealed will (pattern) and receiving His Presence.

This was further illustrated in the construction of the ark of the covenant. Affixed to the top of the ark was a mercy seat constructed between two cherubim. Note the significance of its placement: "And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two

cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel." (Exodus 25:21-22, ESV) The tabernacle was where God's presence resided among the people, particularly His presence rested on the mercy seat. And below the mercy seat, within the ark, was found the two tablets that contained God's covenant with Israel (see Deuteronomy 10.2). God's presence among the people rested on His covenant, His revealed will to the people.

It's important to remember that even though God's presence was with the entire nation, He selected certain people through whom He would reveal His will. As Peter reminded Christians in the first century, "no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," (2Peter 1:20-21). Moses was the first prophet in the nation of Israel and is known as the Lawgiver. However, God foretold that there would be other prophets. Deuteronomy 18.15-18 is a prophecy with Messianic fulfillment (Peter says that Jesus fulfills the prophecy in Acts 3.22), but the first application of the prophecy is to the nation of Israel. God would send other prophets among the people and it was their responsibility to heed the prophet's words. However, it was the prophet's charge to only speak the words of God, he must not speak "a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak," (Deut. 18:20).

God's Presence & The New Covenant

The basis of the new covenant was first declared by Jesus, the very Son of God (Hebrews 1.1-2). Later, the Hebrew writer exhorted his readers to "pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Hebrews 2.1-3) The "message declared by angels" referenced the law that was given to Moses (see Deuteronomy 33.2; Acts 7.53) and every Jew recognized it as the very words of God. God has now revealed His will through His Son, and it deserves the same kind of reverence. While on the earth, Jesus was quick to point out that His teaching did not originate with Him, but was from the Father (John 7.16). This did not diminish His authority, but correctly pointed out that His words were God's words. John's gospel focuses on the life-giving nature of Jesus' words:

- » Following His word makes us His disciples where there is truth and freedom (John 8.31-32).
- » Those who keep His words will not experience death (John 8.51).
- » Those who hear His voice are His sheep and will have eternal life (John 10.27-28)

However, Jesus would not remain on this earth (John 13:33), so how would these life-giving words continue to be given?

- » What Helper would Jesus send? (John 14.16-17)

- » What would this Helper do? (John 14.26; 16.13)
- » To whom did Jesus make this Promise?

Much confusion and error can result when the context of Jesus' words is not considered. For instance: "Father, You sent Your Holy Spirit to be a Counselor to me. He came straight from You to me and other believers. He is the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, and He faithfully testifies truth to me concerning Your Son, Jesus (John 15.26)." (Beth Moore. *Praying God's Word Day By Day*). If Jesus was making this promise to all believers, we could assume that God's will would be revealed to each of us directly. Thus, it must be emphasized that Jesus' words in John 13-16 were not directed to all disciples for all time, but to the 11 apostles who remained faithful to Him. The Helper would deliver the words of God to them, they in turn would deliver the words of God to the rest of the world. This is the force of the great commission in Matthew 28.19-20, where the apostles were told that they were to make disciples and continue to teach the commandments of Jesus. The same arrangement is described in Hebrews 2.3: the word of God was first declared by Jesus, but it was then delivered to future disciples (the "us" in the passage) by "those who heard" (the apostles). The revealed will of God would not come through the Spirit to each saint, but would come to the saints through God's chosen apostles and prophets.

A Note About Miracles...

Space will not allow a thorough discussion of miracles, but a few points should be made as they relate to this matter.

- » Miracles were given for a distinct reason and purpose: confirming the word that was given (Mark 16.20; Hebrews 2.4).
- » Baptized believers receiving the Spirit did not receive miraculous powers. There are two instances in the New Testament where the Holy Spirit descended on people, granting them miraculous abilities: when the Spirit descended on the apostles (Acts 2:1-4) and when the Spirit descended on the first Gentile converts (Acts 10:44-45).
- » The only other means by which saints received miraculous abilities was through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8.18). The Scriptures never attribute the giving of miraculous powers to any other means, certainly not to baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2.38).
- » The miraculous gifts that confirmed the word ceased when the word was completely delivered. This is the meaning of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10 when he said that the things in part (prophecy, tongues and miraculous knowledge) would be done away when the perfect came. The "perfect" in context could only be the completion of that which was formerly "in part," the revealed will of God.

Just as God's presence only entered the tabernacle after the inspired pattern was followed, people today can only receive the Spirit when they follow the inspired word (Galatians 3.2; Ephesians 1.13). This is exactly what is seen in Acts 2. The apostles received the promised Helper (Acts 2.1-4) which allowed them to proclaim the inspired gospel message; when people obeyed the inspired message they received the promised Spirit (Acts 2.38). Furthermore, even though every Christian receives the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2.38), they must still rely on inspired teaching to know what God would have them do (Matthew 28.20). In Ephesians 3:1-7 the apostle Paul states that the baptized believers in Ephesus, all of whom had received the Spirit (1:13), could only understand Paul's insight into the mystery of the gospel when he wrote it down for them. The Spirit did not reveal the mystery directly to every believer, He revealed it through Paul. The point is emphatic throughout the New Testament: the indwelling of the Spirit does not direct Christians in what they should do, the inspired word does! And this word must be followed, or else God's Spirit, will not remain with us. "Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9, ESV) Let the importance of that verse sink in. Stay true to God's revealed will and you have God; leave His revealed will and you don't!

TONGUE SPEAKING & SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN CHURCH HISTORY

By Steve Patton | May 2025

The role of miraculous spiritual gifts in church history is more extensive than many realize. Among these gifts—prophecy, healing, and tongue speaking—the latter has perhaps seen the widest and most persistent belief across centuries. This article offers a cursory examination of the historical presence of tongue speaking, while occasionally touching on healing and prophecy. Given the diversity of practice and interpretation surrounding these gifts, focusing on one offers a more manageable and representative overview.

Most references to the actual practice of these gifts throughout history are anecdotal. The specific phrase “speaking in tongues” appears in English as early as the 14th century, in the Wycliffe Bible. The term glossolalia was first used in 1879 by Frederic Farrar.

This is a historical survey, not a theological argument. I approach this as a Cessationist, believing that miraculous spiritual gifts ceased with the passing of the apostles and those to whom they passed these gifts (Acts 8:14–19; 19:1–7). Though I am not a scholar or professional historian, I deeply value and enjoy studying church history.

Defining Tongue Speaking

- » **Glossolalia** refers to ecstatic utterances that resemble language but lack any recognized linguistic structure or meaning.
- » **Xenolalia** is the miraculous ability to speak a known human language never learned by the speaker.

Scholars have long debated whether the miracle resided in the speaker’s tongue or the hearer’s ear. Over time, tongue speaking came to be seen as a sign of anointing by the Holy Spirit—evidence of divine favor.

Tongue Speaking Beyond Christianity

Glossolalia is not unique to Christianity. Anthropological and religious studies have found similar phenomena among various non-Christian groups, including Inuit shamans, practitioners of Kundalini yoga, Tibetan and Chinese pagans, and Sufi Muslims. These occurrences are often accompanied by intense emotional or ecstatic states.

Early Church (2nd Century)

The earliest centuries offer scant evidence regarding the continuation of miraculous gifts. However, some second-century movements—especially Montanism—

are often cited. Montanus and his followers claimed prophetic authority and ecstatic speech but were condemned as heretics for challenging the authority of Scripture. Tertullian (ca. 160-240 AD), a Montanist for part of his life, mentions spiritual gifts but never explicitly describes glossolalia. Later, he distanced himself from Montanism, possibly because of the more radical practices.

Early church fathers such as Irenaeus (c. 130-202 AD), Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-390 AD), John Chrysostom (c. 344-407 AD), and Augustine (354-430 AD) refer to the miraculous ability to speak unlearned human languages. (Augustine believed its application had become “corporate” - the church was now spreading the gospel in all languages and the personal gift was no longer necessary.) However, actual firsthand references are rare. Most of their references are either secondhand or general in nature.

Benjamin Warfield observed, “The writings of the so-called Apostolic Fathers contain no clear and certain allusions to miracle working or to the exercise of the charismatic gifts contemporaneously with themselves.”

Middle Ages

Mentions of tongue speaking during the Middle Ages are almost non-existent. Pentecostals often attribute this to suppression by the Catholic Church. Still, some isolated references exist, such as:

- » **Hildegard of Bingen** (12th century), who reportedly spoke and wrote Latin without formal education.
- » **Evangelistic friars and priests** who claimed to preach in foreign tongues they had never studied.

However, these are largely anecdotal and not indicative of widespread practice.

The Reformation and Beyond

During the Reformation, several fringe groups claimed to exhibit spiritual gifts:

- » **The Moravians** (15th century) were accused by critics of speaking in “disconnected jargon.”
- » **The Camisards** (17th century) in France reportedly spoke in unknown languages during ecstatic episodes.
- » **John Wesley**, founder of Methodism, accepted the possibility of spiritual gifts in his day.
- » **Quakers, Shakers**, and early **Mormons** (including Brigham Young) embraced speaking in tongues.

Mainstream reformers were cautious. While many believed in miracles, they rejected the emotional and unstructured practices commonly associated with glossolalia.

The Rise of Modern Pentecostalism (19th-20th Century)

The charismatic movement gained momentum in the 1800s, notably through Edward Irving and his followers in Scotland. Irving believed the Apostolic gifts were still available but restrained by a lack of faith. Though ultimately expelled from the

Church of Scotland, his movement spread globally and influenced the development of Pentecostalism.

The **Azusa Street Revival** in Los Angeles (early 1900s) marked the modern explosion of Pentecostal belief, including tongue speaking, healing, and prophecy. The **Assemblies of God**, founded in 1914, became the largest Pentecostal denomination.

Throughout the 20th century, groups like the **Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship, Faith Healers** like **William Branham** and **Oral Roberts**, and media pioneers like **Pat Robertson** and **Jim Bakker** helped spread Pentecostalism through television and radio.

Restoration Movement and Spiritual Gifts

Born out of the frontier revivals of the early 19th century, the **Restoration Movement** sought a return to biblical Christianity. Revivals like the **Cane Ridge Meeting (1802)** in Kentucky showcased ecstatic behavior, which included physical manifestations and emotional outbursts.

However, leaders such as **Barton W. Stone** and others chose a more reasoned, scripture-based approach. Consequently, the Churches of Christ and Disciples largely rejected modern spiritual gifts.

Not until the second half of the 20th century did a minority within the Restoration Movement begin to accept or tolerate tongue speaking and spiritual gifts, mostly among progressive congregations.

The Growth of Pentecostalism in Modern Times

The post-World War II era saw a rise in **faith healers** who popularized spiritual gifts among poorer populations. Figures like **Oral Roberts** were among the first to harness mass media for evangelism.

Television ministries, especially through **CBN, PTL Club**, and the **Trinity Broadcasting Network**, helped normalize charismatic worship. Tongue speaking, healing, and prophecy were often featured on air.

Closing Observations

Across church history, charismatic movements often arise when traditional religion is seen as lifeless or overly institutional. These groups emphasize revival, ecstatic worship, and a fresh experience of the Holy Spirit.

They often equate tongue speaking with spiritual authenticity and divine favor. Many preachers within these movements claim direct communication from the Holy Spirit and give it central focus in their messages.

While we must be cautious of extremes—either overreaction to tradition or to emotionalism—we must also appreciate the enduring work of the **Holy Spirit**. The **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** remain active, working together to fulfill God's purposes in the world.

A PROBLEM FOR CALVINISM

We've noted the Scriptural truth that God's Presence (i.e. the Holy Spirit) and the Word are tied together. The Holy Spirit revealed the Word of God to the apostles (John 14.26-27; 16.13) and when we follow the Word we receive the Spirit (Acts 2.38; 2John 9). We still have more to discuss and learn about the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but let's first address some doctrinal errors that result from a basic misunderstanding of the connection between the Spirit and the Word.

What Calvinism Says About The Holy Spirit's Role

For those unfamiliar with the basic tenants of Calvinism, they can be summarized with the following five-point acronym:

- **T**otal Depravity: man is completely lost and evil, cannot even desire to do good.
- **U**nconditional Election: God chooses who will be saved. Man has no say.
- **L**imited Atonement: Jesus' sacrifice was only for the elect, those predestined.
- **I**rresistible Grace: God acts in an irresistible way on the elect.
- **P**reservation of the Saints: the elect can never be lost.

It is in the matter of Irresistible Grace that Calvinism teaches error regarding the Holy Spirit. "God sends His Holy Spirit to work in the lives of people so that they will definitely and certainly be changed from evil to good people. It means that the Holy Spirit will certainly - without any and's, if's and but's - cause everyone whom God has chosen from eternity and for whom Christ died to believe on Jesus."¹

You will most likely not be surprised to learn that there is no Scripture that describes the Holy Spirit working in such a way. So, why would a Calvinist claim such? First, it is important to note that in any "system" of theology, each point stands or falls with the others. So, if it is true that man is completely depraved even to the point where he cannot desire to do good, then "acceptance of Christ cannot be left partially to man, for then all would refuse, and Christ's atonement would have been in vain. Thus limited atonement points to the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit."² However, the Calvinist also claims that the Scriptures support his argument.

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out... No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6.37,44)

- » "Jesus says here that the Father has given certain people to Jesus, and that every single one of them 'will come to me.'... That can occur, of course, only if God irresistibly causes them to come."³
- » Is that what Jesus was saying? Look closely at vs. 45.

¹ Palmer, Edwin H. The Five Points of Calvinism. Page 58.
² Ibid. Page 61.
³ Ibid.

"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." (John 10.16)

- » "Some belong to the flock already, others do not. Those that do not He will certainly bring into the fold. He does this by sending the Holy Spirit to work in their lives and to draw them irresistibly to the fold."⁴
- » Can you find any support for this in the passage?

"One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." (Acts 16.14)

- » "He had of late commended her godliness; and yet he showeth that she could not comprehend the doctrine of the gospel, save only through the illumination of the Spirit. Wherefore, we see that not faith alone, but all understanding and knowledge of spiritual things, is the peculiar gift of God, and that the ministers do no good by teaching and speaking unless the inward calling of God be thereunto added."⁵
- » How does the passage argue against this interpretation?

Three Problems For Calvinism

1. **Calvinism has it backwards.** The doctrine of irresistible grace necessitates that one receive God's Spirit and only then can he hear and respond to the Word of the gospel. This is not Biblical teaching. We receive the Spirit when we obey the gospel message (Acts 2.38). The Word is our means of receiving the Spirit (Galatians 3.2; Ephesians 1.13). Following God's word is what makes us fit for the Spirit, not the other way around.
2. **God's Spirit is not found in unholy places.** We have noticed throughout the Scriptures that God's Presence is found in holy, consecrated sanctuaries. If man is totally depraved, Calvinism would have God's Presence coming into a completely unholy sanctuary. However, only after we are sanctified and consecrated can we actually become a temple of God (see 1Cor. 6.11,19).
3. **The Word is not deficient in power!** Calvinists charge that we give too much credit to man with regards to his salvation. I agree with their point that all credit for man's salvation should go to God. However, the Calvinist actually takes credit away from God by claiming that the Word alone is insufficient. The Scriptures teach that the gospel is God's power for salvation (Romans 1.16), that the Word is able to bring forth fruit in our lives (Matthew 13.23) and give us true freedom (John 8.31-32). The Scriptures supply all we need to be pleasing to God (2Timothy 3.16-17).

Being Biblical About Conversion

One of the chief, if not the chief, issues with systems like Calvinism is that every verse of Scripture must be tortured to fit a few base principles/assumptions. In the case of Calvinism, the system depends on God's absolute sovereignty (i.e. determinism) and man's complete depravity. For those two principles to be true, man cannot come to God on his own; God must irresistibly draw man to Himself. But the assumptions of Calvinism contradict the plain teaching of Scripture; to argue that one cannot come to Christ without the irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit is simply not Biblical. Note just a few examples of conversion from the book of Acts:

- » Those on Pentecost were "cut to the heart" when they "heard" the message of Peter (Acts 2.37). They then asked what they needed to do, and once they were told they responded.
- » Acts 4 records that "many of those who had heard the word believed" (Acts 4.4).
- » The Ethiopian eunuch was reading the prophet Isaiah and needed someone to explain the Scripture to him. Once Philip "told him the good news about Jesus" from the Scriptures, the eunuch responded to the gospel message (Acts 8.26-40).
- » After telling the Philippian jailer that he needed to "believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16.31), Paul "spoke the word of the Lord to him" (Acts 16.32). It was then that the jailer and his household responded to the message.

A Biblical understanding of conversion certainly emphasizes the role of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that delivered the words of life to the apostles, and when men respond to that message they receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2.38). But a Biblical understanding of conversion also shows that man can either respond to the Spirit's message or reject it. As Paul said to the Jews who rejected the gospel, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles" (Acts 13.46).

LED BY THE SPIRIT

Getting Started: It is Scriptural to say that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.38). Not only is it Scriptural to say we receive the Spirit, but receiving the Spirit is the culmination of God's plan to redeem man! We who were created in the image of God (Genesis 1.26-27) can now, because of what Christ has done, be born again (John 3.5). And those who have been born again have been regenerated; they have received His Spirit (Titus 3.5; Ezekiel 36.25-27).

It is also Scriptural to say that the Spirit leads us, because that is what the Scriptures say:

- » "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." (Romans 8:14)
- » "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." (Galatians 5:18)

But how does the Spirit lead us? Many of our discussions about the Spirit's work are about this very question. So, let's spend a little time on this question.

Spirit Filled People Must Be Led By The Spirit

Paul wrote his epistle to the Galatians because he was concerned that they would turn to a "different gospel" (Galatians 1.6). That different gospel was one that relied on "works of the law" and thus brought with it a curse (Galatians 3.10). At the beginning of Galatians 3 Paul reminded these saints that they received the Spirit not through the Law but "by hearing with faith" (vs. 2). And if these saints were to truly be perfected, that wouldn't come through the Law, but by the Spirit: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5.25). But how is it that we are to be "led by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit"?

1. Through the word. This is generally agreed upon. After all, the Scriptures are inspired by God and guide us (2Timothy 3.16-17; etc.)
2. Through direct revelation? Many religious people think so. "Father, You sent Your Holy Spirit to be a Counselor to me. He came straight from You to me and other believers. He is the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, and He faithfully testifies truth to me concerning Your Son, Jesus (John 15:26)." (Beth Moore, Praying God's Word Day By Day)
3. Through feeling / intuition? This is perhaps the most common way that religious people think the Spirit is present in their lives. "Have you ever felt something alerting you to pay attention or pulling you in a particular direction? Perhaps you were listening to a sermon and you sensed God telling you to follow Him in obedience. Or maybe you walked into a restaurant and were filled with dread, as if you should leave quickly. If you are a believer, then most likely these feelings were the prompting of the Holy Spirit, who always guides you to understand and accept the Father's will. He is the One speaking to your heart, warning

you about danger and encouraging you to submit to God's purposes." (Charles Stanley, Tips for Being Led by the Holy Spirit. Charisma Magazine)

Before we move on, we should note that Paul was NOT divorcing the Spirit's leading from the word revealed by the Spirit. First, if Paul was telling the Christians in Galatia that the Spirit would guide them through direct revelation or intuition, why did Paul find it so necessary to write and warn them against turning to a different gospel? Wouldn't the Spirit have directly revealed that to them? Second, we must bear in mind that Paul's discussion of "flesh" vs. "spirit" is not contrasting our fleshly bodies with our spiritual selves. Rather, Paul was contrasting life under the Law (flesh) with the new reality in Christ (spirit). Thus, Paul's rhetorical question, "did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?" (Galatians 3.2). If we received the Spirit through hearing with faith, we should continue hearing with faith.

Some Things To Keep In Mind When Discussing Being Led By The Spirit:

1. First, what's your motive in this discussion? What has shaped your belief on this subject? If we want to bolster a long held belief, then our motive is wrong. If we want to "fit in" with the current religious climate, our motive is wrong. Our motive must be to understand what the Scriptures teach about this and every matter (John 8.31-32).
2. Know that there are very few occurrences of people being led directly by the Spirit in the Scriptures
 - Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness (Luke 4.1)
 - Phillip being led to the eunuch (Acts 8.29)
 - Paul being led to Troas (Acts 16.6-7)
3. Remember that Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would lead the apostles into all truth... not us. (John 14.16-17,26; 15.26-27; 16.13; Acts 2.1-4). Unfortunately, many religious teachers do not recognize this point and so seek to give greater weight to their teachings by claiming that the Spirit gave them the words, even when they contradict Scripture.
4. Spirit-filled saints were never told to rely on how they felt. They were told to rely on the Scriptures:
 - Some of the saints at Corinth received spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy (1Corinthians 12-14), yet God had revealed His mind through the Spirit to chosen messengers like Paul (1Corinthians 2.6-13).
 - The saints at Ephesus were sealed by the Spirit (Ephesians 1.13), but to understand the mystery they had to read what Paul wrote (Ephesians 3.1-7).
 - Timothy received the Spirit through the laying on of hands (2Timothy 1.6), but was constantly reminded to study and teach the word (1Tim. 4.6,16; 2Tim. 1.13; 2.2; 3.14-17).
 - Peter wrote to Christians who were "becoming partakers of the divine nature" (2Peter 1.4), but he wrote in order to remind them of God's will (vss. 12-15).

- All Christians receive the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2.38), but must be taught His commands (Matthew 28.19-20).
5. Being a disciple of Christ involves loving God with “all your mind” (Matthew 22.37) While Christianity is not simply a religion of the mind (i.e. simply knowing facts), we must not lessen the mind’s role. Cannot be led by the Spirit without setting your mind on the Spirit (Romans 8.4-5). Christ never downplayed the Word... neither should we (John 8.31-32). After all, His words ARE Spirit (John 6.63).
 6. If the Spirit is not shaping our intuition and emotions, we’re doing it wrong (Romans 8.14). If we’ve been recreated in God’s image, then we should be acting and feeling like He acts and feels!
 7. God’s special plan for you is that you bear fruit... wherever you are! (Galatians 5.16-26). We will have more to say about this in a future lesson.

JUDGING SPIRITUAL TEACHERS

Getting Started: the apostle John had heard, seen and touched Jesus while He was on the earth (1John 1.1-2), and John's knowledge of Jesus was the basis of his teaching: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." (1John 1.3, ESV) However, by the time the apostle penned his first letter, there were other teachers teaching a very different gospel about Jesus. And so John gave urged his brothers and sisters to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1John 4.1, ESV) We would do well to heed John's counsel.

What do you think of the following quotations? Without knowing the authors, would you be concerned with the accuracy of their teaching? (Note: the authors are revealed on the next page, but don't look until you've read and considered each quotation.

1. "Something mysterious, even supernatural must happen in order for genuine love for God to grow in our hearts. The Holy Spirit has to move in our lives."
2. "The "sixth" point, double predestination, is simply the flip side of unconditional election. Just as God chooses whom He will save without regard to any distinctives in the person (Ephesians 1:5-6; Acts 13:48; Revelation 17:8), so also he decides whom He will not save without regard to any distinctives in the individual (John 10:26; 12:37-40; Romans 9:11-18; 1 Peter 2:7-8)."
3. "I myself think of [inspiration] as analogous to the Incarnation, as in Christ a human soul-and-body are taken up and made the vehicle of Deity, so in Scripture, a mass of human legend, history, moral teaching etc. are taken up and made the vehicle of God's Word... The universally admitted unhistoricity (I do not say, of course, falsity) of at least some narratives in scripture (the parables), which may well extend also to Jonah and Job."
4. "In order to be saved, a child must possess his / her own personal faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The initial seeds of faith may or may not be in chronological union with the time of baptism. When a child professes faith at some point after baptism, that is the time in which the baptism and all that it signifies takes full effect."
5. "What God began to say to me about five years ago and I'm telling you it is in me on such a trek with him that my head is still whirling over it. He began to say to me, 'I'm gonna say something right now, _____. And boy you write this one down. And you say it as often as I give you utterance to say it. 'My bride is paralyzed by unbelief. My bride is paralyzed by unbelief.' And he said, 'Starting with you.' Amen."

Judging Spiritual Teachers

Read Deuteronomy 13.1-5 and answer the following:

- » What made this false prophet so dangerous?
- » What is the ultimate test of a prophet (i.e. spiritual teacher)?
- » Whose lives would be put into jeopardy by false teaching?

Now read 1John 4.1-6:

- » What was the particular false teaching?
- » Do you think these false teachers were wrong about everything?
- » Why should we listen to John and the other apostles? (See also 1John 1.1-4)

I have benefited greatly from a variety of Biblical scholars, teachers and authors over the years. However, I must always remember the true test of God's spokesmen given in Deuteronomy 13.1-3; do they say the correct things about God and his commands? This is the test for any teacher, myself included, and should be used to discern everything we hear and read.

Our religious climate is inundated with a variety of teachers, many going so far as to claim that their teaching is inspired by the Spirit. I've read many of them, gleaned some things that are profitable, but I must remember that they are "spiritual" only so far as their words agree with Scripture. I must always remember John's warning: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1).

Were the false teachers of John's day wrong about everything? I doubt it, but since they weren't saying the right things about the incarnation of Jesus, they were deemed false and not led by the Spirit (vs. 2-3). I do not accuse many modern teachers of purposefully distorting the Scriptures and I pray that they come to a better understanding of God's will (I pray the same for myself), but simply because they are Biblical on some things does not mean I should heed what they say on everything. Test the spirits! Remember, the Spirit delivered "all truth" to the apostles (John 16.13), not us! We must always go back to what they wrote if we are to be guided by the Spirit.

3. CS Lewis.
4. Tim Keller
5. Beth Moore

Quoted Authors
1. Francis Chan. Crazy Love.
2. John Piper.

A few other points to keep in mind:

1. One can be wrong about a point of doctrine and NOT be a false teacher. Apollos is a great example of this point as he taught many correct things about Jesus, but he had an incomplete understanding of baptism. To his credit, he readily accepted the instruction of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18.24-28).
2. Conversely, one can be right on some matters, yet be a false teacher. Paul knew that some preached Christ "from envy and rivalry" (Philippians 1.15) and while he could rejoice that Christ was proclaimed Paul also knew that such teachers were not true followers of Christ (see 2Cor. 11.13-15).
3. Scripture would seem to define a false teacher as one who teaches a doctrine contrary to the teachings of Christ and the apostles and who does so out of impure motive (2Peter 2.1-3).
4. Truly spiritual teachers will always rely on God's word and not their own gifts and abilities. Consider how Timothy had received spiritual gifts (2Timothy 1.6-7), but was to rely on the message of Jesus and Paul (2Timothy 1.13-14; 2.2,8,15; 3.14-17; 4.1-5).

SPIRIT FILLED LIVES

Getting Started: Acts 13.13-52 records how Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Antioch of Pisidia. The Jews of the city rejected the gospel and thus judged themselves “unworthy of eternal life” (vs. 46). However, the Gentiles heard them gladly and even though Paul and Barnabas had to leave the city under duress, “the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (vs. 52).

Later in his ministry, Paul wrote the saints of another city in Asia Minor. In his letter to the Ephesians the apostle exhorted them to be “imitators of God, as beloved children” (Ephesians 5.1). Part of their imitating the Father would be avoiding getting “drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5.18).

How can we know that we are filled with God’s Spirit? Some think the marks of the Spirit are the abilities to perform miracles or speak in tongues. Others believe that having the Spirit results in direct guidance in daily life, telling us where to go, what to do, etc. Is that what it means to be filled with the Spirit, or do the Scriptures teach something else?

Having the Spirit is MORE than gifts.

It’s not just a fringe element of Christianity that is interested in spiritual gifts like healing and speaking in tongues. Many sincere believers read the pages of the New Testament and wonder about those gifts. After all, if they were important in the New Testament church then, shouldn’t there be a place for them now? Wouldn’t receive a gift from the Spirit be the ultimate way of being filled with the Spirit?

In his correspondence with the Corinthian saints, the apostle Paul addressed many problems in the group including their fixation on spiritual gifts. We know best the apostle’s words in 1Corinthians 13 where he told these saints that their gifts were meaningless if they did not have love (vss. 1-3) and revealed to them that while their various gifts would pass away, “faith, hope and love abide” (vss. 8-13). Clearly, spiritual gifts are NOT the epitome of the Christian life.

Consider also Paul’s argument in 1Corinthians 12. The Corinthians’ dividing over spiritual gifts was ridiculous because all of the “varieties of gifts” were given by “the same Spirit” (vs. 4). No one should boast based on the gift they received because “all these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (vs. 11). Now, note Paul’s words in vss. 12-14. Paul’s point is that the true significance of the Spirit is NOT the various gifts like prophecy and tongues, rather all were baptized in one Spirit (cf. John 3.5) and all drink of one Spirit. In short, the Spirit is why we are the people of God, so let’s not get fixated on a few gifts. Being filled with the Spirit has always had much greater significance.

Furthermore, the true test of whether we have the Spirit is not measured by our gifts, but what kind of fruit we bear!

Bearing fruit comes from our connection with God.

Our study has endeavored to look at what it means for us to receive the Spirit. In Christ we are a new creation (Galatians 6.15; Eph. 4.22-24) having received a new spirit, His Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27; John 3.3-5; Acts 2.38) and are now partakers of the Divine nature (2Peter 1.4). How blessed we are in Christ!

However, the fact that we have received God's Spirit is not merely theoretical, it is practical! Jesus speaks to this in John 15.1-11.

- » Those in Christ are now clean through His word (vs. 3)
- » There is true unity in Christ. Just as you cannot tell where the vine ends and the branches begin, so Christ is in us, we are in Him (vss. 4-6)
- » Because of this unity with Christ we know that God hears us and answers (vs. 7)
- » However, this is only true if we bear fruit (vss. 1-2,8).

Branches bear fruit, it's what they're suppose to do. If a branch doesn't bear fruit, something is seriously wrong! Christians who have been remade in His image should bear fruit; our lives and actions should mirror His. If our lives are devoid of His characteristics, something is very wrong.

The Spirit is how Jesus' vine analogy is true. Jesus' disciples are "in the Spirit" and thus have "the Spirit of Christ" (Romans 8.9). However, disciples aren't just those who have the Spirit, they are also "led by the Spirit" (Romans 8.14) and to be led by the Spirit requires that they "set their minds on the things of the Spirit" (Romans 8.5). Those who have the Spirit, are led by the Spirit and set their mind on the Spirit will bear fruit: "to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8.6).

Becoming more like the Father is the true fruit of the Spirit.

Turning our attention to the book of Galatians, we find Paul making the same points he made in Romans 8: the Galatians had received the Spirit (Galatians 3.2,5,14) and were to be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5.16,18,25). And if the Galatians were led by the Spirit, they would bear fruit (Galatians 5.22-23). Let's consider these last verses closer. Why are these qualities described as the "fruit of the Spirit"? It ties back to Jesus' vine analogy in John 15; if we are in Him and He is in us, then it makes sense that the fruit we bear is from Him. We are becoming more like our Father, thus we bear the fruit OF the Spirit.

- » We bear the fruit of love because God IS love (1John 4.8; John 3.16; Romans 5.8).
- » We bear the fruit of joy because joy is the result of union with God (Matthew 25.21,23; see Psalm 68.3).
- » We bear the fruit of peace because He has given us peace (John 14.27) and now we can be peacemakers (Matthew 5.9).

- » We bear the fruit of patience because our Father has been patient with us (Romans 2.4; 2Peter 3.9).
- » We bear the fruit of kindness (active love for others) because God was kind toward us (Ephesians 2.7).
- » We bear the fruit of goodness (generosity) because we have tasted the goodness of God (1Peter 2.3).
- » We bear the fruit of faithfulness because our Father is always faithful (Hebrews 10.23).
- » We bear the fruit of gentleness because God has been gentle with us (Matthew 11.28-30).
- » We bear the fruit of self-control because our Savior is the ultimate example of self-control; He sacrificed His will for the will of the Father (Matthew 26.39).

I can remember numerous gifts my parents gave to me over the years, but I still possess very few of them. However, my parents gave me something much more precious and it's something I hope to always possess: character. God has given His people numerous gifts over the years. Some of those gifts were miraculous (prophecy, healing, tongues, etc.) while others are much more natural (ability to teach, singing voices, financial resources). But those gifts pale in comparison to what God can truly give us: in Him we can bear the fruit of the Spirit, that is we can become more like Him. The marks of a Spirit filled life are the presence of His fruit in our lives.

Do you have His Spirit? If the deeds of the flesh typify your life (immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing) then there's no way we can claim to be led by His Spirit. But if we are bearing His fruit in our lives, we have every assurance that we are in Him, and He is in us (John 15.1-11).

WE ARE GOD'S TEMPLE

Getting Started: in earlier lessons we noted the importance of God having a sanctuary where He could dwell with His people (Exodus 25.8). While in the wilderness Israel built a tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled it (Exodus 40.34); God placed His Spirit among Israel (Isaiah 63.11). Solomon then built a permanent house for the Lord, a temple, and once again the Lord filled the sanctuary with His glory (1Kings 8.10-11). However, we also noted that because of Israel's faithlessness and their constant breaking of the covenant, the Lord's Spirit left the sanctuary (Ezekiel 10.18-19; 11.22-23). A second temple was constructed during the days of Zerubbabel, but it was neither as grand as Solomon's (Ezra 3.12) nor was it filled with the Lord's glory (Ezra 6.15). However, the Lord also revealed to Ezekiel that He was preparing a new, more glorious Temple and His glory would fill it (Ezekiel 43.1-5).

We are that new, glorious Temple! "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:18-22, ESV)

WE, not me.

Often we think of salvation as a very personal matter, and in one sense it is. Each person needs to come to faith in Jesus (John 3.16) and respond to His gospel (Mark 16.16) because he/she will be judged based on his/her own deeds (2Cor. 5.10). However, God's plan wasn't to save me or you, His purpose was to save "a people for his name" (Acts 15.14). And so while it is Scriptural to speak of oneself as God's temple (1Cor. 6.19), the full importance of the temple imagery isn't that I'm God's temple alone, but that ALL who are in Christ comprise one "holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling in the Lord" (Ephesians 2.21-22). And that fact fulfills one of the chief purposes of the Jerusalem temple.

A house for the nations.

Moses correctly understood that it was God's presence that made Israel distinct from the other nations (see Exodus 33.16). Solomon also understood that fact and constructed the temple as a "house for the name of the Lord, the God of Israel" (1Kings 8.20). While Solomon knew that God could not be contained in the structure of the temple (1Kings 8.27), he also prayed that the Lord's "eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be

there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place." (1Kings 8.29).

Solomon proceeded to enumerate different situations when Israel might turn in prayer to the Temple and seek the Lord's favor: occasions of sin, national defeat, even famine. But Solomon also knew that Jehovah wasn't a mere national god, but truly the God of all creation. Thus, Solomon also prayed that the temple would serve as a focal point for the nations: "Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name." (1 Kings 8:41-43, ESV)

Tragically, Israel had corrupted this function of the Lord's Temple. All four gospel accounts record Jesus clearing the temple of those who sold oxen and sheep as well as the changers of money (John's account records Jesus cleansing the temple early in His ministry, while the synoptics record Him clearing the temple at the end of His ministry). Significantly, the synoptic accounts record Jesus' words as He performed this radical act: "And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."" (Mark 11:17, ESV)

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 56, a passage describing how foreigners who joined themselves to the Lord (vs. 3) would receive His name (vs. 5) and be given joy in His house (vs. 7). Truly, the Lord's house would be "a house of prayer for all peoples." So, why would Jesus quote this passage when clearing the temple of animal sellers and money changers? Because extra-Biblical sources tell us that it was within the "court of the Gentiles" where all of these merchants had set up their stalls and shops. One can only imagine the noise and stench of the animals as well as the bustling of commerce, all while Gentiles were trying to pray to Jehovah. The temple was not serving it's proper function!

Jesus' body, the temple.

As we mentioned before, John records Jesus' clearing the temple early on in His ministry (John 2.13-17). Significantly, the Jews demanded proof from Jesus that He had the authority for His actions. Jesus' reply is well known, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2.19). While the Jews thought Jesus was speaking of the temple complex still under construction, "he was speaking about the temple of his body" (John 2.21). Jesus' physical body was in fact a temple, because it was the means by which God did in fact dwell among men (Matthew 1.21; John 1.14). And Jesus' body, the temple, was meant for the nations: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."" (John 12:32, ESV)

Turning our attention back to Ephesians we see that Paul describes God's

people as both the body of Christ (Ephesians 1.23) and the temple of the Lord (Ephesians 2.21-22). Paul wasn't necessarily using two different illustrations, because to be the body of Christ also makes us the true temple of God! And the fact that we are His body and His temple carries some serious implications:

1. God is truly with us. There is no separating the head from the body, there is no separating the Lord from His temple. We are where the Lord now resides among men (perhaps this is the intention behind Jesus' words in Matthew 18.20).
2. The temple is for the nations. This was the force of Paul's words in Ephesians 2. At one time the Gentiles were "separated from Christ" (vs. 12) but now they not only have access to the Father (vs. 18) but are part of His temple (vss. 21-22). And if we are part of God's temple, we must insure that the nations know that they too can be part of His house because it was always God's purpose to draw all peoples to Himself (Ephesians 3.1-13).
3. Each of us are helping to build the temple. That is the force of Paul's words in Ephesians 4.10-16. Note even how Paul speaks of us "building up the body of Christ" (vs. 12), combining the imagery of body and temple. Remember, God's purpose was not to save you or me, it was to save a people. Thus, each of us is to be engaged in ministry so that each member reaches the "fullness of Christ" (vs. 13). In that way, each of us is helping to build the temple of God!

A TEMPLE BUILT BY GOD

Getting Started: when God first told Moses that Israel was to make Him “a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst” He also demanded that it be constructed “exactly as I show you” (Exodus 25.8-9). To insure that His sanctuary was constructed exactly to His specifications, the Lord “called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, with intelligence, with knowledge, and with all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every skilled craft” (Exodus 35.30-33). God’s dwelling place would be built by one led by the Holy Spirit.

No context is given for Psalm 118, but two things are clear: 1) the Psalmist turned to the Lord in a time of great distress (vss. 5-7) and 2) the Psalmist loves God’s house: his desire is to enter the gate of the righteous (vss. 19-20) and “from the house of the Lord” he blesses the one who “comes in the name of the Lord” (vs. 26). However, the most significant verse in the Psalm is a prophesy of what would happen when the Lord began to build His true temple: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.” (Psalm 118:22, ESV)

The Cornerstone

The events of 586 BC were devastating in more than one way. Not only was Jerusalem destroyed and its inhabitants deported to Babylon, but the Jews’ last hope was shattered with the destruction of God’s temple (2Chronicles 36.17-20). God had already warned Israel to “not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’” (Jeremiah 7.4) As we’ve already noted, God’s presence had already departed the Jerusalem temple (Ezekiel 10.18-19; 11.22-23), but He also promised that there would be a new and more glorious temple in the future (Ezekiel 43.1-5).

While a second temple was built in Jerusalem, it was neither as grand as Solomon’s (Ezra 3.12) nor was it filled with the Lord’s glory (Ezra 6.15). However, God made a promise to those who were disappointed by this new temple: “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.” (Haggai 2:9, ESV) While the Lord didn’t specify to Haggai exactly what He meant by the “latter glory”, this prophecy given to Malachi would certainly qualify as a greater glory: “the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming” (Malachi 3.1).

The gospels take note of numerous occasions when Jesus visited the Jerusalem temple, from His initial presentation in the temple (Luke 2.22-39) and His

visit at the age of 12 (Luke 2.41ff), through various feast days (John 5; 7) until His final week. Matthew 21 records multiple visits of Jesus to the temple, the first being when He cleared God's house of the animal sellers and money changers (vss. 12-13). Jesus returned to the temple on the next day (vs.23) and revealed to the chief priests and elders that their judgment was coming soon (vss. 33-41). Why? "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'" (vs. 42; see Isaiah 28.16; Acts 4.11).

The Lord had appeared in the temple (Malachi 3.1); the temple had never witnessed such glory before (Haggai 2.9). But the Lord had been rejected, and by rejecting Jesus they had also rejected the cornerstone of the true temple (Psalm 118.22). However, nothing was going to prevent the construction of God's temple, and construction of His temple continues to this day "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2.19).

Building on the foundation.

Paul had the building of God's temple in mind when he told the Corinthians, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, ESV) We may be the temple, but the temple belongs to God and is built by Him. To understand the importance of Paul's words, we need to look at his argument leading into chapter 3.

The first issue that Paul addressed in his correspondence to the Corinthian saints was their quarreling and divisive spirit (1.11-12). But why were they quarreling and dividing when this was not the will of God? It is plain that they had been following human wisdom, gravitating toward various teachers who had a different spin on the simplicity of the gospel. Thus, Paul has had much to say about wisdom in these opening chapters:

1. The wisdom of God seems like foolishness to the world (1.18-25).
2. They were not the wise of this world, which was why they had accepted the "foolish" message of the cross. Thus, their only boasting should be in the Lord (1.26-31).
3. Paul did not come with elegant speech and human wisdom, rather he presented the gospel to them. Their faith rested on the gospel, and not on human wisdom (2.1-5).
4. Those who were mature would listen to Paul and other inspired teachers, because they had the mind of God revealed to them by God's Spirit (2.6-13).

Chapter 2 concluded with Paul contrasting the "natural man" and those who are "spiritual". The natural man does not accept the things revealed by God's Spirit, because they seem foolish to him. However, those who are spiritual know and accept the things revealed by God's Spirit; they listen to Paul and other inspired teachers because, "we have the mind of Christ."

Chapter 3 opened with Paul rebuking the Corinthians for following the flesh rather than the Spirit (vss. 1-3) and urging them to think correctly about teachers

because “neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (vs. 7). And growth, specifically of God’s building (vs. 9) is Paul’s focus in Vss. 10-17.

Building imagery takes center stage in this passage. But this isn’t just any building, it’s God’s building, His temple (vs. 16)! Paul’s role was in laying the foundation, and of course the only foundation that could be laid is Jesus Christ (vss. 10-11; cf. 1:23; 2:2). Now, others were building on that foundation, and they must be careful how they build! Some see this passage as applying to the type of converts being added to the building. However, it seems more likely that Paul is referring to the teachings and not the converts.

- » The contrast in chapters 1&2 has been between the wisdom of the world (foolishness) and the foolishness of the cross (true wisdom cf. 1:21-25; 2:6-9, 12-13).
- » Paul laid the one true foundation: Jesus Christ, i.e the message of the crucifixion (1:23).
- » Now others must build (i.e. teach) what would truly build up the church.

If I am correct, it would seem that the best way to read the passage would be:

- » Those who built with gold, silver & precious stones were the ones who continued teaching the true gospel of Christ. These materials (gospel teaching) belong in God’s Temple. These materials (gospel teaching) would last when the testing fire came and the teacher(s) would be rewarded.
- » Those who built with wood, hay and straw were relying more on the wisdom of the world in their teaching. Must be careful here to emphasize that their teachings were not destructive to the church, i.e. not false, but by trying to bring worldly wisdom into the gospel they were not building anything that would last. Such materials (teaching) really don’t belong in a temple. Such work would perish, but the teachers would escape (but perhaps barely).
- » However, there were some whose teaching was destructive to the building (God’s temple). Any who advocated the divisive doctrines mentioned in vs. 4 would fall into this category. The destructive nature of their work would be repaid in that they would be destroyed themselves!

The point: who we listen to is so very important. We should always evaluate teachers by what Jesus, Paul, Peter, James, etc. had to say, for they revealed the mind of God to us. Note again Paul’s words in 1Corinthians 3.10: “According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.” The similarities with Bezalel (Exodus 35.30-33) are apparent, as both men were equipped by God to build His sanctuary. And now we must take care with how we build on God’s temple.

A HOLY TEMPLE

Getting Started: if God's presence is in a place, that place is holy. Jacob understood that, for after his dream of the ladder stretching between heaven and earth (Genesis 28.12-15) he awoke and declared, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28.17). The book of Exodus records two visits of the Lord to Mount Sinai. The first was when the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and when Moses approached to investigate he was warned, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3.5). The second was when Israel arrived at the mountain following the exodus and the people were warned against going up on the mountain or even touching it, lest they be put to death (Exodus 19.12). Wherever the Lord is, that place is holy and must be treated as such!

That fact was to carry over to the place where God would dwell among the people. Thus, He commanded Moses to make Him a "sanctuary," literally a "sacred place". (Note: the word for sanctuary, *miqdāš*, comes from the word for holy, *qōdeš*). And if God was to dwell among the people, then His sanctuary must be treated as holy and not be profaned, i.e. treated as common (see Leviticus 19.30; 20.1-3; 22.31-33). Alas, Israel repeatedly profaned the sanctuary (Ezekiel 8) and as a result the Lord left His temple... and His people (Ezekiel 10.18-19; 11.22-23).

God's true temple would not be profaned.

As we have already noted in this study, the Lord promised that there would be a new, glorious temple where He would once again dwell among His people. This temple was shown to Ezekiel in a vision (Ezekiel 40-48), but pay particular attention to what the Lord said in Ezekiel 43.6-12:

1. How had Israel defiled God's holy name?
2. What would be required for the Lord to "dwell in their midst forever"?
3. Why was Ezekiel instructed to describe the temple? What do you think the Lord was trying to accomplish?
4. What is the law of the temple?

We have already considered how the second temple built in the days of Zerubbabel was not the temple of Ezekiel's vision. Furthermore, not only had Israel continued to profane the temple (see Matthew 21.12-13), they also rejected the Lord's true temple (Matthew 21.42). No wonder Jesus decreed that "there will not be

left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down" (Matthew 24.2). That temple was the Lord's sanctuary; we are (Ephesians 2.19-22)! And if we are truly a "holy temple in the Lord", we must treat His temple as holy.

A holy temple.

In his correspondence to the saints in Corinth, Paul frequently used the imagery of the temple. These saints lived in a culture with numerous temples devoted to various gods and they would have been very familiar with the ideas of the ideas of things being sacred/holy or profane/common. However, they had failed to appreciate that since they were God's temple, they must keep themselves holy. Let's conclude our study by noting what Paul says about treating God's temple as sacred and holy.

In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul is considering how our physical bodies are temples of God. Everything we have studied up to this point confirms this truth, for not only have we received the promise of His Spirit (Ezekiel 36.25-27; Acts 2.38; Titus 3.5) but we are each a living stone in His temple (1 Peter 2.4-5; Ephesians 2.19-22). Unfortunately, it would seem that the Corinthians had perverted some teachings of Paul and/or others to conclude that they were free to do whatever they wish (1 Cor. 6.12). God may have lifted regulations on food, but that was certainly not the case with sexual immorality!

1. What reasons does Paul give for why the body is not meant for sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6.13-15)?
2. What relationship does Paul use to illustrate how we are joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6.16-17)?
3. How is sexual immorality different from other sins (1 Cor. 6.18)? What do you think Paul means?

Paul did not mince words: flee immorality! No toying around, no half measures. Get away! First, the nature of sexual immorality is to sin against one's body. Given what Paul had already said, it would seem that he is referencing the union we have with the Lord. Since we are "one spirit" with Him, our bodies belong to Him. Many sins affect the body, but fornication takes the body away from the Lord and joins it to another! Second, our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit (note, this would be another way of expressing our becoming "one spirit" with Him, vs. 17). God's Spirit can only dwell in a holy place, thus we need to keep His dwelling place pure and holy. We must flee sexual immorality. Third, since we are His temple, we do not belong to ourselves, but to Him. And the price He paid for us was great (see 1 Peter 1.18-19).

The passage began with a negative, "flee immorality," but ends with a tremendous positive: "so glorify God in your body." One cannot engage in sexual immorality and glorify God at the same time. Only when we appreciate our union

with Him and use our bodies for His purposes can we glorify Him.

Paul returned to the temple imagery in 2Corinthians 6.14-7.1. The apostle's concern in this passage was that some in Corinth were no longer his teaching and thus were in danger of receiving "the grace of God in vain" (2Cor. 6.1) and were in need of being "reconciled to God" (2Cor. 5.20). Paul used the temple imagery to urge the saints to properly consider who was influencing them and the effects of that influence.

1. What are the implied consequences of being "unequally yoked with unbelievers" (2Cor. 6.14-16)?
2. What promise is associated with being God's temple (2Cor. 6.16)?
3. What conduct should God's promise promote (2Cor. 6.17-7.1)?

Takeaways:

- » **Morality matters.** It would be a serious error if all we ever taught or preached was warning against sexual immorality, homosexuality, drinking, gossiping, etc. and ignored principles of loving others, serving, patience, gentleness, etc. But teaching about moral issues and warning against sinful behavior is absolutely necessary because of the fact that we are God's temple.
- » **What you do with your body matters.** This isn't about tattoos and piercings, although I won't deny that this principle should be considered in those decisions. The simple fact is that what we do with our bodies, how we use them in God's service, and how we take care of them, matter because our bodies are God's temple. It may be your body, but it's God's temple!
- » **God continuing to dwell with you depends on... you.** The Lord once dwelt among Israel, but when they violated His covenant and profaned His temple, He departed. Having God's Spirit should bring great assurance (Eph. 1.13-14), but don't confuse that assurance with an excuse to live how you want. "Once Saved, Always Saved" is the furthest thing from the truth, because we cannot be saved without God's Presence, and we only have His presence when we continue following His covenant.