

- 3) From the point of His conception, Jesus was preeminently the Man of the Spirit, but the Spirit's crucial role in His life and ministry reached its apex in His work of *redemption*. This, too, represents a point of fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures, for Isaiah, in particular, associated Yahweh's Spirit most closely with His messianic *Servant*, and the Servant's primary role was that of redemptive Savior (ref. 52:13-53:12; cf. also Isaiah 42:1-13, 48:16-49:13, 59:1-21).

In the context of its historical fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth, this messianic redemption was accomplished in three distinct phases: Jesus' *atonement death*, *resurrection* and *ascension/enthronement*. Consistent with prophetic promise, each phase is shown in the New Testament to implicate the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

With respect to Jesus' **self-offering** at Calvary, none of the gospel accounts say anything directly about the role of the Spirit. Across the span of the New Testament, only the author of Hebrews addresses it explicitly by his declaration that Jesus offered Himself up to God "*by the eternal Spirit*" (9:13-14). It is important to note that some scholars have regarded the phrase "eternal Spirit" as referring to Jesus' spirit rather than the Holy Spirit. However, a broader consideration of the New Testament text – especially in the light of Old Testament promise – argues for the conclusion that the Hebrews writer was speaking of the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus was the Man of the Spirit in that, as a human being, He possessed the Spirit in a way unique in the prior history of mankind. The Spirit came upon Him as a limitless and permanent endowment at His baptism, and His indwelling presence empowered Christ for His ministry as Yahweh's Servant (cf. again Luke 3:21-4:21 with Isaiah 11:1ff, 42:1ff). But Isaiah had revealed that the focal point of the Servant's work in the Spirit was His vicarious, atoning self-sacrifice (52:13-53:12). The implication is obvious: *If Jesus' work at Calvary was indeed a point of fulfillment of the Scriptures, His self-offering was accomplished in the power of the indwelling Spirit just as Isaiah predicted.*
- This is directly affirmed by Jesus' citing of Isaiah 61:1-2 to introduce His forthcoming messianic work. For in that passage Isaiah described the Servant's role as God's redeemer, evident in his use of the language of liberation and restoration. And while the Spirit's anointing in this passage serves to empower the Servant to *proclaim* the message of liberation (which is the primary sense in which Jesus and Luke were employing it), the proclamation of liberation implies the *fact* of liberation. Jesus could proclaim, by the Spirit, captivity's liberation before it occurred because the Spirit's power insured its future accomplishment.

- The same conclusion follows from the fact that, having come upon Jesus at His baptism, the gospel writers give no suggestion that the Spirit departed from Him either prior to or at the time of His death. Luke, in particular, was emphatic that Jesus' ministry *in every respect* was accomplished in the power of the Spirit, and His work at Calvary was the focal concern and culmination of all that preceded it. Though Luke's passion narrative is silent regarding the Holy Spirit, it is inconceivable that he intended that silence to indicate the Spirit's lack of participation in Christ's self-offering.

As is the case with His cross-work, the Scripture's testimony to the role of the Spirit in Jesus' **resurrection** is limited and indirect. Most often the New Testament attributes Christ's resurrection to the Father ("God") (cf. Acts 2:32, 17:30-31; Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:15; etc.), but before His death Jesus spoke directly of His own role in that work (ref. John 2:19-21, 10:17-18). On the other hand, the Scripture is relatively vague regarding the Spirit's participation in the resurrection.

For his part, Paul spoke of Jesus being designated "the Son of God with power" by His resurrection "*according to the Spirit of holiness.*" As with the Hebrews passage, there is disagreement as to whether he was referring to the Holy Spirit; many maintain that Paul was speaking of the *principle* of holiness in relation to Jesus Himself, while others (probably correctly) regard the phrase "spirit of holiness" as implicating the Spirit only indirectly. That is to say, Paul was using the phrase to refer to the new mode of human existence introduced by Jesus' resurrection – the mode of the "spiritual man" which characterizes the new age of the Spirit.

Whatever his precise meaning, Paul was clearly connecting the Holy Spirit with Jesus' resurrection. If he wasn't indicating that the Spirit was the direct agent of the resurrection, he was much more importantly associating Jesus' "resurrection life" – that is, His consummate, glorified humanity as the Last Adam and "life-giving spirit" – with the presence and power of the Spirit (cf. also 1 Timothy 3:16 and 1 Peter 3:18).

For Paul, the role of the Spirit in Christ's resurrection focuses, not on the fact of the resurrection, but its *outcome* and *significance*. The Spirit's function as God's creative agent does suggest that it was His power that imparted life to Jesus' dead body, but the resurrection isn't concerned with the reanimation of Christ's dead flesh; its concern is the revitalizing of the created order in the Last Adam, beginning with Adam's dead race.

Jesus' resurrection as the Last Adam inaugurated a *new age* with a *new humanity* enjoying a *new mode of existence* in relation to God: **His resurrection certified that the Spirit's work of transforming the creation into sacred space had begun**; the age of the Spirit had arrived.

Moreover, with Jesus' resurrection "in accordance with the spirit of holiness," Yahweh's Spirit had been transformed into the Spirit of Christ.

- This is true first in the sense that, in His resurrected, glorified humanity, Jesus possesses the Spirit in superlative fullness.

"This taking possession of the Holy Spirit by Christ is so absolute an appropriation that the apostle Paul can say of it in 2 Corinthians 3:17 that the Lord (that is, Christ as the exalted Lord) is the Spirit. Naturally Paul does not by that statement mean to obliterate the distinction between the two... But the Holy Spirit has become entirely the property of Christ, and was, so to speak, absorbed into Christ or assimilated by Him. By the resurrection and ascension Christ has become the quickening Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). He is now in possession of the seven Spirits (that is, the Spirit in His fullness), even as He is in possession of the seven stars (Rev. 3:1). (Herman Bavinck, Our Reasonable Faith)

- But for this very reason the Spirit has also become the presence of Christ in the world and especially in His people. **So thoroughly does Jesus possess God's Spirit that the indwelling of the Spirit is the indwelling presence of Jesus Himself** (cf. John 14:16-20 and 16:13-14 with Romans 8:9-10).

At the same time, this transformation must be understood as *economic* and not *ontological*. That is, the Spirit of God has become the Spirit of Christ, not as an alteration of His essential nature, but in terms of His eschatological function in the new age inaugurated by Jesus' resurrection.

"To have the Spirit is to have Christ; to have Christ is to have the Spirit. Not to have the Spirit of Christ is to lack Christ. To have the Spirit of Christ is to be indwelt by Christ. There is clear ontological distinction, but economic or functional equivalence. In this sense, through the resurrection and ascension, Christ 'became life-giving Spirit'." (Sinclair Ferguson, The Holy Spirit)

Though occurring as a separate event, Christ's **ascension** was the consummation of His resurrection. The resurrection wasn't an end in itself, but had its goal and found its ultimate meaning in Jesus' ascension and enthronement in the Father's presence. This is nowhere more evident than in Peter's proclamation at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36). Confronted with misperception and false accusation, he explained what was transpiring in terms of Christ's exaltation and enthronement. What the crowd was witnessing was the fulfillment of God's prophetic promise to send His Spirit (vv. 14-17), and the Spirit had come by virtue of Jesus' enthronement, which itself was the apex of His resurrection from the dead.

Peter showed this by connecting the Pentecost phenomenon with David and God's covenant with him. God had sworn to David to set one of his descendants on his throne, and David expressed his confident hope in this promise when he spoke of God not abandoning him to the grave and its decay. The proof that David wasn't speaking of himself is the fact that he eventually died, was buried and underwent decay (vv. 25-29).

Holding fast to Yahweh's covenant pledge, David's declaration of triumph over the grave looked to the covenant son who would sit upon his throne and rule over his kingdom *forever*. An everlasting reign implied that this royal seed would not fall victim to death and decay, and Peter understood David's prophetic hope to have been realized in Jesus' resurrection. *But David's hope was ultimately directed toward the fulfillment of the covenant promise, not victory over death, and that occurred with Jesus' enthronement.* Thus Peter spoke of the resurrection as a pointer to Jesus' enthronement by which the Davidic Covenant was fulfilled (vv. 30-35).

What Peter's explanation shows – especially when considered in the light of the broader biblical revelation – is that the Spirit's role in Jesus' ascension did not concern His bodily translation into heaven as such, but rather the *outcome* of the ascension, namely Jesus' coronation as the Son of David and its significance in the “fullness of the times.”

Jesus' enthronement at God's right hand must be understood primarily in terms of his identity as the promised Davidic seed. Christ's coronation represented the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, *and the importance of this to the work of the Spirit is that Yahweh had appointed this Son of David to build His house as His everlasting dwelling place and, in that way, establish His kingdom forever* (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

Jesus was enthroned as the Davidic Branch in order to build Yahweh's sanctuary and preside forever over His habitation-kingdom. But He is doing so as Yahweh's anointed **priest-king** (cf. Psalm 2 and 110 with Zechariah 6:9-15 and Hebrews 5:1-6), and fundamental to His priestly mediation is His receipt of the Spirit from His Father in order to bestow Him upon those for whom He intercedes (cf. Luke 3:16; Acts 1:1-9).

The prophets revealed that Branch's royal mandate was to build the Lord's everlasting dwelling, and that He would do so as an enthroned priest. They also declared that Branch's coming would be accompanied by the outpouring of Yahweh's Spirit. But only in fulfillment did the prophetic pieces come together; only then did God show that David's Son, in the exercise of His sovereign authority, would build His sanctuary out of *human* stones, making them His habitation by the power and indwelling presence of the Spirit. And this – constituting the beginning of Branch's building – will culminate with sacred space embracing the whole creation.