

## **The Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son (2)**

### **The People of God: Fatherhood, Sonship and Spirit**

Peter, in 1 Peter 2:9–10, transfers, as we have seen, the statement of Exodus 19:5–6 to this new family composed of Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (cf. Acts 1:8). They are the people of God, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. They have a task: ‘to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’. He reminds them, ‘Once you were no people but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy’.

In the same chapter Peter has reminded them that they are living stones built into a spiritual house. This concept is also used by Paul in Ephesians 2:21–22, although in a slightly different way, when he sees the household of God as children being built as a sanctuary for God. It is to be a dwelling place for God *in the Spirit*. ‘In the Spirit’ must mean the Spirit is helping to build it, and this fits with the entire chapter of Ezekiel 37 where God resurrects dead and lost Israel (Israel without hope) and makes it into a new nation, by the Spirit. The

## THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON (2)

last verses of that chapter accord with the first few verses of Revelation 21.

Paul also sees the church as the Bride of Christ, and gladly subject to him because of his love in redeeming her. In Galatians 4 the Bride, the wife of the Lamb as we see her in Revelation 21, is the Jerusalem which is above. This is the one John sees descending from heaven. Paul calls her ‘the mother of us all’ (AV).

Another and powerful picture of the church is that of the household of God. This is apt for Ephesians, for it is the epistle, of all, which speaks of the many aspects of the Fatherhood of God, and the ministry of the Spirit, especially in respect to love, unity, forgiveness and family-hood. In Ephesians 2:11f., Paul traces the loneliness of the sinful Gentile world, and speaks of their enmity against Israel, and how by the cross that enmity has been destroyed, and the two races (Jew and Gentile) have been made one. This is the new humanity, in fact the new man, Christ himself in whom all are new. Paul says, ‘we both have access [by Christ] in one Spirit to the Father’ (2:18). That is the story—we are no longer strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-members of the family (household) of God. Note, that this is by the Spirit.

### THE SPIRIT AND THE FAMILY

When Paul is talking about the cross he is not speaking of a theory of reconciliation, the principle enunciated in 2 Corinthians 5:19. He has seen it happen as a fact, in his time. Not with ease, of course. The command of Christ was to take the gospel to the world, with the statement that having received power by the coming of the Spirit they would witness to him in Jerusalem and all Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. The problem faced was that the Jews did not see

Samaritans and Gentiles as part of the people of God. In Ephesians 2 and 3 Paul works out what he calls ‘the mystery’, that is, the plan of God that the Gentiles should be fellow members of the people of God, the fellowship of Messiah’s people.

He could say this because it was true, but also because, as the book of Acts describes the happening, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles had become one in the family of God. This did not happen without a struggle and a certain amount of difficulty. Even late in Paul’s ministry some sought to exclude the Gentiles or to make them observers of the Jewish law, including the rite of circumcision.

By this time we may have lost our thread of thought that the Holy Spirit from creation onwards is ceaselessly active in building up and fulfilling the plan of God. That plan we see has to do with the family of God. We saw in Acts 15:8–9 that Peter claimed, concerning the Gentiles, that God made no distinction between them and the Jews—He gave the Holy Spirit to both of them! He cleansed the hearts of the Gentiles by faith, that is, by the renewing and washing work of the Holy Spirit as he applied the gospel. This illustrates Paul’s comment in Ephesians 2:18, ‘both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father’. That is what makes family.

That is why the Spirit is, not for nothing, called the Spirit of unity, of love, and of fellowship. He brings into the family, by the gospel. He works as ‘the Spirit of His Son’ and causes the involuntary, ‘Abba!’ None can truly cry, ‘Abba!’ and not cry, ‘Dear brother!’ or, ‘Dear sister!’ Thus when the Spirit gives the personal sense of sonship, he also gives the personal–corporate sense of brotherhood, and family-hood. This is because we relate to Christ as brother (Heb. 2:11; cf. Rom. 8:29) and God as Father, and because the Spirit of the Father and the Son inhabit us. We must then see that the church is a most important factor in the person and work of the Holy

Spirit. Wonderful as is family-hood, and being children of God and brethren one of another, this corporate being is no end in itself. If there is any 'end' then it is the mission of the church.

### **THE CHURCH—THE FAMILY AND ITS MISSION**

We have seen already that 'sons of the kingdom' must be conquerors. In Genesis 1:28f. and Revelation 21:7, the true children of God overcome, and prove worthy of being inheritors. This is precisely what Christ did, through the Spirit, and so he overcame and inherited (see Rev. 2:26; 3:21; Ps. 2:8; Heb. 1:2). Thus he who is in the ministry of the kingdom is empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the kingdom. We would, however, be making a mistake if we identified the kingdom and the church, totally. We can never say, 'Thy church come' with congruity. Jesus said, 'I will build my church', but the kingdom is already. It comes. It is the power of God. It is the reign of God. It subdues evil. It establishes righteousness. The church is involved in the work of the kingdom and yet it is not the kingdom itself.

Whilst the redeemed are in one sense in the kingdom (Col. 1:13), yet in another sense they are yet to inherit it (Matt. 25:34; Acts 14:22; etc.). The church, as we saw, is called to proclaim the kingdom. This is the thrust of the commission passages at the end of each gospel and in Acts 1:7–8. That is why, when we speak of the Spirit and the church, we are called to look at two aspects of the ministry of the Spirit. They are as follows:

- (a) The Spirit seeks to bring the church to birth, to equip it for its internal life, and to keep it strong and vigorous.

## THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The family matters. The people of God must know their God and Father, and obey their Lord, and follow the Spirit.

- (b) The church is the people of God who must proclaim the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea and all Samaria and to the end of the earth, and so accomplish two things: firstly, the ingathering of the elect; and secondly, the outworking of the defeat of Satan and his forces. Put together, these two things mean the triumph of the kingdom.

We now look to see how the Spirit equips and leads his church.

### THE SPIRIT AND THE GIFTS

If we keep in mind that the internal life of the church is not an end in itself, then we will not think of the gifts of the Spirit in a privatised sense. The gifts are to maintain the wellbeing of the church in order that in its turn the church may exercise a vigorous external ministry of proclamation and defeat of evil.

#### **Baptism in the Spirit**

What did John mean when he said, 'he will baptise you with [in] the Spirit and with fire'? He meant that in regard to the kingdom and the forgiveness of sins Jesus was the one who would give them the gift of the Spirit. Not only did they have records of Spirit-visited men in Israel, but also they knew the prophets, themselves men of the Spirit, had foretold the day when there would be a universal outpouring of the Spirit. Jesus scarcely mentioned this great promise of the Spirit. He encouraged the disciples to believe *the Father* would give the gift

## THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON (2)

(Luke 11:13), and in John 7:37–39 he gave an invitation to drink of himself, which would mean those who drank would have the Spirit flowing from them. In John chapters 14–16, he spoke of the Spirit to his disciples on the last night, but then he spoke more of himself and yet much more of the Father. He said that he would pray to the Father, the Father would send, and he would also send from the Father the Spirit of truth.

We have seen in Acts 1:3–8 that Jesus related the baptism of the Spirit to the coming of the Spirit to the disciples, and *their receiving power to witness to him*. At the end of Luke's gospel the Spirit is 'the promise of my Father' and he must be received before preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins amongst all nations (24:47–49; cf. 11:13; Acts 1:4). In John 20, Jesus breathes on the disciples, much after the manner described in Genesis 2:7, and tells them to receive the Spirit. Many have sought to rationalise this as 'a Johannine Pentecost'. Only ten of the disciples were present, and whilst it may have been, so to speak, an instalment of what was to come later, we do not know, and speculation is fruitless. What we do know is that it was *related to the forgiving and retaining of sins*.

Without doubt, whilst the term 'the baptism in the Holy Spirit' is not found in Scripture, the 120 were baptised in the Spirit at Pentecost, and presumably for the purpose Christ had told them—'to bear witness to me'. Doubtless this was what they did. They told 'the wonderful works of God', but they told them in a dynamic way, and not only then but also in the days, months and years that followed. The gift was not a privatised matter, nor primarily for personal education, but for witness.

What, then, was witness? Pentecost and later events show us what witness was. We need only to use a concordance to see that witness was dynamic ministry of such nature that their enemies (of the Sanhedrin) could say with wonderment, 'They have been with Jesus', meaning, 'They do the sort of things he

did in the sort of way he did them', that is, *it was as though Jesus was present!* We, then, can see two things happening. The word is being preached and acted with power. Jew, Samaritan and Gentile are being brought together in the one family. As they, too, receive the gift of the Spirit they join the witness to (or, of) Jesus.

A good student will take every event where the Spirit comes, falls, fills, is received, comes upon, and so on, and he will understand that this experience of being baptised in the Spirit adds up to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 is a good verse for this. The event at Caesarea is also linked with forgiveness.

### **The Gifts of the Spirit**

Hebrews 2:3–4 speaks of 'great salvation' and says, 'It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will'. Here 'gifts of the Holy Spirit' could mean portions or affusions of the Spirit given from time to time. We are told that people like Stephen, Peter and Paul, although they had already received the Spirit, were at certain points 'filled with the Spirit', as though they were given a special affusion for a special situation. On the other hand, it could mean gifts which belong to the Spirit. Here it is noticeable that the Lord distributes according to his own will.

In Ephesians 4:7–11, the gifts given are, in fact, the gifts of Christ. Some of these are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28 where it seems the gifts are given through the Spirit rather than directly from the Spirit. If they are the gifts of the Lord, the Son, then this may well be the 'fullness' of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 1:23, and even of which John speaks in John

## THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON (2)

1:14–16. Certainly it is Christ who fills all things (Eph. 4:10), and it seems this filling relates to the giving, and then the use of the gifts. The life we receive is Christ's life (Rom. 6:23), that charisma ('gift') out of which the church operates.

Notice it is the Spirit who distributes, and the Spirit is the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). Christ is head of the church, but the Spirit rules and controls as being present to the church—Christ's body. Christ indwells by the Spirit and by faith, but the Spirit indwells as the present power by whom we are able to witness to Christ. We see that there are gifts by the Spirit, 'varieties of workings' and 'varieties of services'. In 1 Corinthians 12:7ff., each gift seems to be a manifestation of the Spirit. In line with the twin action of the Spirit and Christ, they also may be called 'manifestations of Christ', but in any case they are under the direct control of the Spirit. This twin action of Christ and the Spirit is seen in 12:12–13, 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.' In John 7:37–39, we drink of Christ; here, of the Spirit. To drink of Christ makes us one. To drink of 'oneness Spirit' makes us one. The gifts, then, are out of this oneness of Christ and the oneness of the Spirit, and so we are one.

If we see the gifts all flowing from Christ, through the Spirit, then their action is the witness to or of Christ. We have seen in former studies that the Spirit is determined to bring through the plan of the Father and the Son, and this he does by the church. Hence the anointing or gift of (or baptism in) the Spirit is essential for the unity of the body, the life of the family, the use of the gifts and power, and out of all this (and through it) comes the powerful witness of Christ. We have to say it somehow. We have to say that since, through the Spirit,



Christ inhabits the members of his body, each personally, and all corporately, then *the witness of Christ is the life, action, power and utilised gifts of his people*. This is Christ working.

In regard to this we need to do a close study of the term ‘testimony’, that is, witness (in Greek the same words) in the book of the Revelation. There they have or hold the testimony of Jesus. For this they are persecuted, exiled, pursued by Satan, martyred and the like. What Satan cannot stand is seeing Christ in action in the midst, even though he is reigning at the right hand of God. In fact this is how Christ reigns, or the result and fruit of his reigning. This is the true witness of Jesus.

### **The Spirit and the Witness**

We must keep seeing that the Spirit, though the Spirit of love, is never weak. It is dangerous to grieve him, or quench him, or to do despite to him (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19; Heb. 10:29). In the Acts, the Spirit is pressing for action—action in power. Judgement comes upon Ananias and Sapphira. He quickly heals the breach threatening between the widows. He ensures Peter goes to Caesarea. He sanctifies the hearts of the Gentiles. He guides Peter to Caesarea, Philip to Gaza, Paul and Barnabas to central Asia, and even forbids Paul and Silas going to certain points. He who has shaped history up to the Jesus-events, and has been with the Son in all his work, and the events of the death, resurrection and ascension, and who has now been sent by that Son (and the Father) to fulfil the mission, does not brook anything which would stand in the way of fulfilment. Hence his gift of power, of gifts, of love and fellowship, the ability to proclaim and the use of prayer, all of these are elements he wills to have in action. Hence we see the enormous importance of the church, not only as the family together, but also as the people of God proclaiming the gospel,

## THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON (2)

witnessing to Christ, and ministering in the service of the kingdom.

If at the end of the book of the Revelation we find him, with the Bride, saying ‘Come!’ to the Lord of the church, so in chapters 2 and 3 we hear him speaking to the churches, again in that twin action with Christ who walks amongst the candlesticks. We scarcely, then, see any room for academic speculation, but only determined obedience to what the Spirit is saying to the churches—now. When we hear and obey, then this will constitute the testimony of Jesus, and this, as we have seen, is the spirit of prophecy. It is the Spirit of prophecy who is leading us to witness to Jesus, or ‘hold the testimony of Jesus’.