

STUDY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Reflections on This & That

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BAPTIZED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Joe has several related questions in connection with the "gift of the Holy Spirit". Do people get "the baptism of the Holy Spirit"? What's the difference between "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38 and receiving the Holy Spirit in Acts 8:14-19 and 19:1-7? This issue soon becomes complex because of its richness. There's also a lot of scholarly debate about it. But however the scholars debate the entire matter some things seem clear enough to the rest of us.

The Baptist described Jesus as the one who would "baptize" people in the Spirit (John 1, Matthew 3 and Mark 1). The act of Christ that is described by the phrase "he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit" is Christ's act of giving the Holy Spirit to the new covenant community, which is constituted the body of Christ. That initial act of giving the Spirit to the church on Pentecost is Christ's baptizing the church with the Spirit.

At the time Christ did that there was a visible and miraculous demonstration that he had sent the Spirit to the New Testament church (see Acts 2:33 along with 2:1-22). The miracles were the evidence that Jesus had indeed been exalted and that he was initiating a new people that would be indwelled by Christ's Spirit (the Holy Spirit). Of course the miracles were more than evidence but they certainly functioned that way here. But the miraculous signs (the wind, fire-like signs and peasants that spoke in foreign languages they hadn't learned) were things that accompanied the giving of the Spirit of Christ to the church of Christ. We're not to confuse Christ's giving the Spirit and the miraculous gifts that act as proof that he had done so.

The "gift of the Spirit" which those who repented and were baptized received (Acts 2:28-39 and 5:32) is the gift of the Spirit to the New Covenant community. Each person that became part of that community through repentance and baptism in the name of Christ became a sharer of the Spirit that was given to the church. But—and this is an important but—an individual as an independent and free standing unit did not receive the Spirit as his or her own "personal indweller". The Spirit indwells the body and those who are parts of the body of Christ all equally share in the presence of Christ's Spirit. But not one of them has the Spirit independent of other members of the body of Christ. The Spirit is a single gift given to the family of which every member is a part and therefore a partaker. There is one Holy Spirit (Spirit of Christ) who indwells the one body of Christ. Each Christian is not an independent body of Christ. Each Christian is a part of the one body of Christ and the one Holy Spirit indwells in us as

a single body. The indwelling Christ (who indwells by his Holy Spirit) who was exalted by the Holy Father fulfilled the OT promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell the new people of God.

The Holy Spirit gave miraculous powers to the church as he saw fit (see this developed in 1 Corinthians 12). Not every individual believer received miraculous power but the miraculous powers (and all other gifts) were given to the body so that every member of it would benefit (read 1 Corinthians 12). People in Acts 8 believed on Jesus Christ and were baptized into union with him and that made them part of the body of Christ and partakers of his Holy Spirit. But they had not experienced the miraculous powers the Holy Spirit imparted to various believers. So when the apostles came to Samaria, knowing that these people were part of the NT church they recognized them publicly as such by laying their hands on them and imparting miraculous powers to some of them.

In Acts 19 Paul meets people he believes are Christians. The text doesn't explicitly say he thought them to be Christians but I think a surface reading clearly implies that. Since he thinks they are Christians he would know that they are part of the body of Christ which is indwelled by his Spirit. So when he asked if they had received the Spirit since they believed he wasn't asking them if they were sharers in what all Christians share just by being Christ's. He wouldn't ask them such a question. That would go without saying. If he thought they were Christians he would just as soon ask if they had received forgiveness since they believed as ask them if they had been made partakers of the Spirit.

No, he was asking if they had received a share in the miraculous power that the Spirit distributed within the body of Christ for the building up of the body and the work of the ministry. Their response showed that their faith was defective, therefore their baptism was defective, so he re-baptized them into the name of Christ. This made them part of the body of Christ in which the Spirit dwells so they automatically became partakers of the gift of the Spirit that was common to all who are in Christ. Paul then laid hands on them and they received miraculous power from that indwelling Spirit. The miraculous power was not common to all who were in Christ—see again Acts 8 and the Samaritan situation.

But Acts 8 and 19 say the people received the Spirit; it doesn't say they received the power of the Spirit. This is true but it's clear (to me anyway) that we have a metonymical use of the word Spirit in these texts. The Spirit is mentioned when something he gives is intended. Maybe a comparison of Matthew 7:11 and Luke 11:13 helps here.

Those who in trust and repentance are baptized into Christ become part of his body which is indwelled by his Spirit (the Holy Spirit) so that every Christian shares in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Just by definition a Christian is part of the Spirit-indwelled body of Christ! But not every Christian is given miraculous powers. What is missing in the Samaritan experience is the public witness that these "half-castes" were indeed received by God in Christ. That's where the miraculous powers mediated by apostolic hands came in.

Something similar happened in Acts 10 (though "the similarities are different"). The Samaritans had already been baptized by Philip and were acknowledged by him as part of the new covenant people and the Jerusalem church sent Peter and John to check it out. The uncircumcised Gentiles in Acts 10 were something else. The Jewish believers would have refused the Gentiles the privilege of baptism and entrance into the body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit dwelled. There was no chance that anyone would have laid hands on these people so God directly "laid hands on them" and gave them a share in the power of the eschatological Spirit. Peter then insisted that these Gentiles had the right to be part of the NT church so he baptized them in Christ's name. (It's interesting that he didn't use the presence of the Spirit to prove these people didn't need to be baptized, which is what some modern people do. He

argued the privilege and commanded them to be baptized. See the whole story in Acts 10 and 11.)

This whole discussion has nothing to do with "measures" of the Spirit. It has all to do with Christ giving the new people of God the Holy Spirit to indwell them as God's new elect. He did that on Pentecost day. He "baptized them in the Holy Spirit." All who come to Christ share in that gift that he poured out on the church on its birthday. The Holy Spirit then gave to the church all kinds of gifts (as he continues to do) but there were times when it was of critical importance that he make his presence known by miracles and miraculous gifts.

Christ gave the whole Spirit to the whole body. The Spirit gave gifts to that body as he saw fit (1 Corinthians 12). You might want to connect with [The Spirit Old and New](#). I also have a discussion of "baptized in the Spirit" in a little book of mine on 1 Corinthians.

BLASPHEMY OF THE SPIRIT

I think Matthew 12:22-32 (and parallels) is quite a bit more complicated than a matter of non-repentance though that is part of the picture. I think the crime is a peculiarly Jewish one because they experienced Jesus in his earthly ministry and his ministry in and as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was always at work in the Lord Jesus [see Acts 10:37-38] but at his glorification and exaltation the Holy Spirit becomes Jesus' peculiar representative and witness [see Acts 2:33 and elsewhere]. See what you make of this somewhat repetitive piece.

1. Jesus makes a distinction between sin against him as "the Son of Man" and sin against the Spirit.

2. If it were simply a question of non-repentance then the distinction would not be a valid one.

3. If they remained non-repentant they could not be forgiven when they sin against either.

4. I'm sure we're dealing with two-phases of the redeeming work of God.

5. The two are: the earthly ministry of Jesus and his ministry in the new age (the eternal age) when the Spirit does his work in presenting the exalted and glorified Jesus to them (and to us).

6. For them to reject Jesus during his earthly ministry there was the possibility that they could be forgiven during the age of the Spirit, which was the age to come (Acts 2:23, 33-38 and Hebrews 2:5).

7. Reject Jesus when he comes in and through and as the Holy Spirit and there is no other manifestation of Jesus to come.

8. The era of "the flesh" ended when Jesus died in and to the flesh and the era of the Spirit began when as the exalted Lord Jesus sends and comes in the Holy Spirit to indwell them. Be sure to see 1 Peter 3:18, Romans 1:3 and John 14:16-18, 23. When they sinned in the new age they sinned during the final age in which they can find forgiveness—that is, in the age when the Holy Spirit represents the Savior.

9. In this text [Matthew 12:22-32] "this world" is the era of "the flesh" during which Jesus carries out his redeeming work in "the body of his flesh" (compare Ephesians 2:15) and "the world to come" is when he carries out his redeeming work in and through the Spirit (see texts below).

The passage seems to suggest that blaspheming the Spirit is worse than blaspheming Jesus, since one is forgivable and the other isn't. But if both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are both part of the Godhead why would one sin be regarded worse than the other?

Is it because the Son of Man is merely human and that we can be forgiven for blaspheming a human but not for blaspheming deity? Probably not. Jesus made it clear that

when we dishonor him we dishonor the Father. It isn't hard to find Israel (and other nations) attributing God's righteous work to their gods or Israel's own wisdom. Nor is it difficult to find Israel and the nations saying evil things of God (Assyria did but Jonah says they were forgiven when they repented). Nor is it difficult to find Israel attributing the Spirit's work in the prophets to some vile source. [You'll remember the "golden calf" incident when Israel said, "Here is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt"—Exodus 32:4 when in fact it was the Holy Spirit that led them through the wilderness to Canaan—Isaiah 63:7, 10-11, 14.]

Maybe it's not a question of "worse" and maybe it's not a question of humanity or divinity. My judgment is that it has to do with the nature of God's revelation of himself and his purposes. I don't think the big issue is in the word "blaspheme". I don't think attributing Christ's miracles to a satanic source is the peculiar way to blaspheme the Spirit.

Once more, here's what I think we're dealing with. There are two phases of God's redeeming work in Jesus. The first phase is what Jesus did during his "earthly ministry" in the body of his flesh and the second phase is what is accomplished in his present post-resurrection and glorified state when he presents himself to the world in and through the Holy Spirit.

To redeem the world and bring it life God came in and as Jesus Christ, who was born of a woman and under the Torah. Like the rest of his people (and humanity) he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3, John 1:14 and Galatians 4:4) though, of course, he lived in positive, sinless holiness to the Holy Father. But that was the initial phase of God's self-unveiling in Jesus Christ--in flesh, in Jewish flesh. In the purpose of God and to bring the world to glory he must die to the flesh so in his fleshly body he died to reconcile the world and bring immortality (note Ephesians 2:15). "The flesh" (with all its Adamic and peculiarly Jewish connections) must be lived through and overcome. Christ said to the Jews "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:62-63). He is put to death in flesh and made alive in spirit (see 1 Peter 3:18 and compare 2 Corinthians 13:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:44-49). Christ is the Redeemer unveiled as part of the old Adamic structure (see Luke 3:37), he dies to it and rises as the new and last Adam.

Now the still human (but no longer "fleshly" in the old Adamic sense, subject to death and the like) the exalted and glorified Jesus Christ reveals himself to them in and through the Holy Spirit. See passages like John 14:18-27, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 and Ephesians 2:22. And take a really close look at Acts 3:19-21 (maybe I can say something about this text later).

There are two phases of the self-revelation of the Redeemer. One in "the flesh" (an earthy ministry as a child of Adam like the rest of us) and it took place in "this age" (the age prior to the Messianic age). To reject, vilify and crucify him during his time in the flesh could be forgiven (see Acts 2:23, 37-38) because he would come again in and through and as the Holy Spirit. But to reject and vilify (crucify him again) when he finally presents himself in and through the Spirit is to reject the final self-revelation of Jesus available to them and to judge themselves "unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46 with Acts 2:33). To reject the exalted and immortal Jesus is to reject the new creation of which he is the Author and that is to sin against the new order, the new world but more to the point, it is to sin against the Holy Spirit who came to bring the exalted Jesus to the hearts of men (see Acts 3:19-22, John 14:15-18,23 and 16:13-15). To reject the glorified and risen Christ is to reject the full, final and exhaustive revelation of the Holy Spirit in and through whom Christ himself appeals to the world— that is unforgivable. It's unforgivable because there is no other self-revelation of God. A merely earthly, subject to death Jesus Christ, is not enough to redeem the world. He must also be raised in glory (see Romans 4:25 and John 6:62-63 and 16:7-8).

But what if people repent? Why, then, they are forgiven! But they cannot repent while rejecting the only revelation of Jesus there is. We need to remember that if they persisted throughout until death to blaspheme the Son of Man there would have been no forgiveness.

“Except you believe that I am he you will die in your sins,” he said in one place. No, he isn’t saying that if they reject the Spirit that they would become incapable of repentance under any circumstances. He’s saying (if I understand him correctly), “You can reject me now in this phase of my self-revelation and find forgiveness when I later reveal myself in and through the Holy Spirit as the exalted and glorified Lord. But you can’t reject my self-revelation in and through the Spirit and find forgiveness later because there is no other form or phase of revelation. You shut the door against yourselves.”

Summarizing then:

1. If they rejected [until they died] Jesus during his earthly ministry—his ministry in the flesh—they would not have been forgiven.

2. If they reject him [until they died] during his ministry in the Spirit in his present exalted and glorified state—they would not be forgiven.

3. If they rejected him during his earthly ministry and then received him during his ministry in the Spirit (as they did in Acts 2) they could be forgiven.

4. If they rejected him during his final ministry through the Holy Spirit they could not be forgiven.

Note the similarities (though there are differences) to all this in Hebrews 10:26-29.

HOLY SPIRIT, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Psalm 139:7 "Where could I go from thy Spirit, where could I flee from thy face?"

1. The Holy Spirit has always been around, working to create, bless and redeem. His presence and work is not unique to the New Covenant church or scriptures. He indwelt, guided and blessed the Old Covenant church also.

2. Who brooded over the formless earth like a hen over her chickens, bringing order and harmony out of the chaotic and uninhabitable and continues to make the earth fruitful? The Holy Spirit! [1] Who strove with rebellious humans for years to turn them back to God and life? [2] The Holy Spirit did!

3. When Abraham trusted God to make his own over-the-hill body and his wife's dead womb fruitful and bear a child they couldn't have hoped for, who was involved in the whole process right from the start? [3] The Holy Spirit!

4. Biblical writers sometimes think of "the Exodus" as the actual departure of Israel from Egypt but often they see it as the whole movement of God bringing Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness and settling them in the land of promise.

5. Who was there delivering Israel from Egyptian captivity and bringing them through the Red sea? The Holy Spirit! Who was there in the midst of them, providing, as they wandered through the wilderness in need of food and rest? And who put up with their rebellion and murmuring, continuing to guide them though they grieved him with their wickedness? The Holy Spirit! [4]

6. Having freed them from the external conditions of slavery, who was it that dwelled in and worked with them, shaping them with life-transforming truths that redeemed them from internal slavery to all forms of corruption, enabling them to walk with their heads held high? The Holy Spirit! [5] Who built the Tabernacle through those people he chose and gifted? The Holy Spirit. [6] And when God's supreme prophet needed help to spiritually guide the nation of Israel, it was the Spirit of God--the same Spirit that worked with Moses--that began to work in a more marked way with the seventy men chosen as colleagues to Moses, providing national guidance. [7]

7. When Joshua and his peers died, Israel forgot what God had done for them the result was anarchy, civil war, renewed slavery and abuse from other nations. It was the Holy Spirit

who came upon certain deliverers, galvanizing the tribes into unity that resulted in freedom and rest. [8]

8. The Holy Spirit was there when the monarchy arrived, working through Saul until he showed himself an enemy of God's purposes. So the Spirit of God departed from him and came mightily upon David who called the nation to be one people under one God. When he sinned grievously against God, he pleaded that God not take his holy Spirit from him. [9]

9. It was during the period of the monarchy that the prophets made their appearance in earnest. Prophets who, like Micah were filled "with the Spirit of the Lord" [10] and Azariah who proclaimed assurance to Judah and her king. [11] Both Nehemiah and Zechariah speak of the entire period before the exile as a time when God dealt with Israel through the Holy Spirit [12] and Peter speaks of "the Spirit of Christ" being "in" them when they foretold of the coming suffering and glorification of the Master. [13]

10. Prophets saw a coming day of calamity because of Israel's covenant-breaking behavior but they assured Israel that a time was coming when God would signal the renewal of covenant relationship with Israel by lavishly pouring out the Spirit on men, women, girls and boys, male and female servants, virgins and old men. It would be a day of new beginnings, a day marked out by renewed Spirit activity. [14]

11. It's important that we remember that the work of the Spirit of God wasn't confined to acts of dramatic redemption or merely "religious" activities. Psalm 104 combines the extraordinary with the steady, everyday blessing of the entire creation. This includes his providing the gift of "wisdom" which means "thinking like God" and learning to live in and enjoy the world under him. The whole of life is permeated with the activity of the Holy Spirit. [15]

12. Then came the deportation the prophets had foretold and Israel marched into the dark, but even in captivity the Holy Spirit was dwelling, speaking, enabling and promising. Ezekiel was among the captives when the heavens opened and the Spirit of God entered him. [16] Again and again he speaks conviction and consolation which comes to its peak in 37:1-14 where a nation dead in sin and exile is assured that the Spirit of God would raise them from their graves and give them life. [17]

13. When many returned to the land, chastened but not completely cured, they found life hard, their enemies eager, their situation precarious and unimpressive. But Haggai [18] gave them the assurance that the covenant promise God gave to Abraham was still intact so they were not to fear, for not only was God faithful to his past promises, the Spirit of the Lord was "standing" in their midst. Zechariah encouraged Zerubbabel, the governor, to believe that the daunting task of establishing Israel again would be accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord. [19]

14. The literature of the Intertestamental period is littered with references to the Holy Spirit and his work in the lives of believers and elsewhere. [20] Before the birth of John the Baptist and the Lord Christ himself, an angel assured the aged Zechariah that he would have a son who would be filled with the Spirit of God even from the womb. [21] Luke [22] says the angel told Mary that in conceiving the Lord the Holy Spirit would come on her, "and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (an allusion to the Old Covenant Shekinah--the "glory" that stood over the Tabernacle). And there was the aged Simeon who was told by the Spirit that he would live to see the Lord's Messiah and being "in the Spirit" he came into the temple, saw the Christ child and praised God for his faithfulness. [23]

15. If all this is true--that the Holy Spirit was always and everywhere present, what are we to make of John's statement that even in the closing days of Jesus' earthly ministry, "the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified"? [24]

16. The "giving" [25] and "receiving" of the Spirit in this passage hinges on the glorification of Christ and it has specific reference to believers in the Christ. It isn't necessary to set it against all we've just surveyed. John knew very well that the Spirit had always been at

work in the people of God and beyond, and that he had been with them throughout the public ministry of Christ, because he expressly said this. [26] He had never been absent so the "giving" of the Spirit speaks of some specialized sense of his presence.

17. The glorification of Christ involved his atoning death, his resurrection and his glorious ascension to God's right hand. [27] Peter said "Exalted to the right hand of God he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." [28] This is precisely what Jesus was talking about when he said: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever"-- [29]

18. The significance of the giving and receiving of the Spirit in the John 7 passage is generated because it relates to the return of the exalted Christ who had ended the earthly phase of his ministry and had become life-giving Spirit. [30]

19. In Acts 2, what Peter told his listeners was this: they were witnessing a new beginning, a new and special presence of the Holy Spirit who was now—what he could never have been before—the presence and representative of the glorified Christ who with his Father had taken up residence in the Messianic believers who constituted the new temple.

20. The Spirit could not function in this role earlier, precisely because the Christ in his earthly ministry was operating in the realm of the flesh (that is, under ordinary human limitations) and was not a glorified, ascended and universal Christ. For the Spirit to operate in this new way it was necessary for Christ to return to the Father. [31]

21. In the unfolding purpose of God, the Christ could not stay with them unless he first went away from them (through the process of dying, rising, ascension and glorification) and returned to them in the person of the abiding Spirit. [32] So the difference between what went before God's glorifying Christ and what happened after it, is more about the "new identity" of the Spirit than about degrees of intimacy or the kinds of things the Spirit did. The Spirit had become the presence of the glorified Christ who was no longer to be seen in "fleshly" terms (within mere human or even merely Jewish categories). [33]

22. In the Messianic age the Spirit "of God" while he continues to be the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, he is now identified as the Spirit "of Jesus" or the Spirit "of Christ" or the Spirit "of his Son". [34] Once more, this he could not be prior to the exaltation of the Christ, but now the Spirit comes in his name. [35] So the John 7 passage really says more about Christology than about the Spirit.

23. Additionally, with the arrival of the Christ a new world order has appeared.³⁶ The Christ is no longer a merely earthly figure but a "life giving Spirit" [37] and his people are citizens of heaven, in the world but not of it. [38] This means not only do they not view Christ in merely human terms, they don't view themselves or anyone else after the flesh. [39] Their perspective is now "spiritual," "heavenly," that is, arising from the Spirit. [40]

24. In Acts 2, the wind and fire, the gift of languages not known to the speakers, the prophetic proclamation and the profusion of miracles connected with Pentecost, is a moment of crisis and new beginning, tangible proofs that these were the days of the Spirit of which the prophets had spoken. [41]

25. So it was not the presence and work of the Spirit that was new that was known throughout Israel's history and mankind's experience as part of the created order. What was new was the setting in which the Spirit was now at work, the relationship he now sustained to the glorified Christ and his newly created people. The Spirit is forever doing this kind of work, God breathes into Adam [humanity] the "breath" of life and man becomes a living being, God sends the wind [breath, spirit] into dead Israel in the valley of dry bones and a nation is resurrected. What happens in and through Jesus Christ echoes and brings to fullness all that has gone before and is reflected in the texts alluded to.

26. Close to the end of his earthly ministry, Christ told his people that he would send them another Counselor - one they know—who was already "with" them but would be "in" them. [42] While it's true that he later speaks of their whole new experience in terms of being "with" them [43] it's still true that he makes a distinction between "with" and "in". [44]

27. Jesus was speaking here of the time when the believers would become the new covenanted People and so would become the new temple in which the Christ and his Father would dwell through the Spirit. [45] The Spirit was with and in Israel prior to the covenant at Sinai, but with the Sinai events, Israel became something they had not been before. They became a covenant People or nation unto God who now dwelled in and among them as their (senior) covenant partner.

28. This work of Christ, in sending the Spirit [and coming in and as the Spirit] to anoint and indwell the Church, his Body, is what is meant by the phrase "baptized in the Spirit". The phrase is from the Baptist [46] who wants the baptized penitents to know that their Christ is greater than he is. At the appropriate time, the Christ would give them the Spirit or, in the words of John, "he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

29. Israel of old and many individuals within it had been anointed before the Christ arrived, but with his coming the purposes and results of the anointings were new, that is, peculiarly focused. They would all come under the heading of glorifying Christ and making him Lord of all and Lord in peoples' lives. The reign of God would rise to its final manifestation in relation to humankind.

30. The anointing of Israel of old with the Spirit, is replaced by the new anointing of a new Israel, who, with Gentiles become the new temple in which God dwells through the Spirit. [47] Those who share the faith of Abraham (rather than a place within the Sinaitic covenant), having been baptized into Christ become Abraham's heirs. [48]

31. This move replaces the Mosaic covenant (which created two families--Jew and Gentile) with a "new" covenant which, in the Christ, makes of the two, "one new man, so making peace". [49] Israel is not "dumped" but her covenantal relationship with God is restructured and all people of faith become one with them.

32. By sending the Spirit in Jesus' name and making him available to all who in trusting repentance take on them the name of Christ in baptism, [50] God shows the restructuring work is his. This he does in fulfillment of the words of the prophets, the Baptist and Jesus himself.

33. The Spirit's anointing of Christ's people was all they needed for a complete life with God in the Christ. He provided all things necessary for life and godliness and they needed nothing more! This anointing included gifted men and women who functioned within the Body in various ways. [51]

34. This is what John had in mind when he spoke of the anointing of the Church with the Holy Spirit who guides the church into all truth. [52] No pretended knowledge (via Gnostics or other radicals) is needed to complete them, there are no essentials missing that only the elite have access to. John is not suggesting that each individual has an anointing from the Spirit that makes him/her both infallible and exhaustively taught.

35. It is the New Community that's baptized in the Spirit rather than each independent individual. By virtue of being part of the Community we are indwelled by the Spirit. Salvation and the reception of the Spirit is always personal but they're not available in isolation--only within the covenanted community.

36. Suppose each human has what survives biological death, something we call "spirit" and which is said to dwell in us--we wouldn't dream of saying, "Our spirit dwells only in our brain, our liver or heart" as distinct from, say, our foot or hand. No, our spirit dwells in "us," no particular part of us. Nor would we dream of saying, "Our spirit doesn't dwell in our toes or

ears." In saying the spirit dwells in "us" we mean "us" as a corporate whole and not independently in each organ as though we were a collections of independent pieces.

37. There is no "individual" indwelling of the Spirit. There are no "individual" Christians, independent units. It's all right to speak of individual Christians as long as we know they only exist as various parts of a Body. A finger is not the whole body, it is an "individual" part of the body [53] but is an individual "part of the body". We can only speak of a finger or foot or eye in the context of a corporate body.

38. And the indwelling is not any literal tabernacling of the Holy Spirit in us. The "indwelling" is another way of expressing his willingness to identify with and have Holy Communion with the covenanted Community, the Church. The indwelling is his gracious willingness to be and move among the people as their God in a peculiar covenantal way. "Indwelling" is not to be construed in a spatial sense but in a relational sense. We are said to dwell in God as surely as God is said to dwell in us. [54]

39. Whether the indwelling is "literal" or "figurative" the scriptures teach he indwells us. The good news is he continues to dwell in us and bless us despite our ignorance about the details.

40. Let me summarize:

The Holy Spirit has always been at work, creating, blessing, redeeming, nurturing, guiding, supplying and enlightening.

41. The prophets told of a day when the reign of God would become manifest in the Messiah and that that day would be made clear by the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. That time would be the period of covenant renewal.

42. God's wondrous purposes became fully into view and imminent with the arrival of Jesus of Nazareth in whose life, death, resurrection and glorification the reign of God took on a greater glory than before.

43. The presence and work of the Spirit continued in some ways to be what it had always been, but it now took on a new significance. He became a witness to the glorification of Christ and to the identity of his covenanted people (the Church--made up of all nations). This meant he was working with a new phase of God's purpose and it's that new role that explains much of what is new in the New.

44. The Spirit, who is always the Spirit "of God" is made known as the Spirit "of Christ," "of Jesus" and "of his Son". This was not possible before the glorification of Jesus Christ.

45. The Spirit who had dwelt in the Old Covenant people—and visibly signaled that by the presence of the tabernacle and temple—now dwells in the New Covenant people which is made up of Jews and Gentiles who have received the Messiah.

46. The Christ is said to "baptize in the Holy Spirit" when he sent the Spirit to the new covenanted people in whom he and his Father dwell through the Holy Spirit.

Two more points before concluding this piece.

47. This new role of the Spirit might help explain the "sin against the Holy Spirit" of which Christ spoke. [55] For the Jews to reject the earthly Christ was sin but it could later be rectified. To reject the exalted Christ, who is now only experienced through the Holy Spirit, is to sin a sin against the Holy Spirit for which there can be no cure. There was/is no other Christ and there is no other way in which Christ as Lord is brought to the world. To despise the Spirit witness is to close the door to possible salvation..

48. I know of no reason to say, with the majority of writers, that the difference between the Old Covenant and the New is that old covenant saints couldn't keep the covenant because they didn't have the Spirit to enable them. The Spirit, then, is supposed to have been sent to enable new covenant saints to keep the new covenant. I think this is a misunderstanding of the nature of both covenants.

49. The notion that the Old Covenant was "Spiritless" is a blunder and the view that ancient saints lagged behind New Covenant saints in faithfulness, that their love for and devotion to God was inferior and shallow is another blunder. Just by itself, the Hebrew writer's "hall of fame" should put that claim permanently to rest.

50. It's true that new truths were revealed and a new phase of God's purposes arrived with the arrival of the New Covenant manifestation of the kingdom (reign) of God. The work and presence of the Spirit took on a special significance but all his enabling of people in Old Covenant times was just as real as any New Covenant enabling. With the arrival of the "fullness of time" that enabling work had a new thrust and development. It was "eschatological" and related to God's new "end time" people and purposes which were centered in "the last Adam," Jesus Christ. [56] All that is true, I think, but it has nothing to do with the depth and genuineness of the faith and devotion of ancient saints created and nurtured by the Spirit. At the ethical level, the glory of their lives was as rich as any in the present. Choose out examples from the New and they can be matched, at least, in the Old.

51. It's not difficult to show formalism, apostasy and immorality in the ancients, but no one in the New Covenant writings condemns these as savagely as prophets in the old. Mere externalism was trashed by the prophets who called on people to have hearts that were circumcised and to give God themselves. Christ himself told us that the whole Old covenant canon could be summed up in the love commands. Paul followed his lead in that. [57]

52. I'm saying that much of the ignorance we attribute to Israelites under the Mosaic covenant is not theirs--it's ours. I'm saying the Spirit made their lives lovely and sacrificial and God-fearing. I'm saying what is "new" about the work of the Spirit in the new covenantal arrangement has nothing to do with these matters.

1. Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:29-30
2. Genesis 6:3-5
3. Genesis 17:17; 18:11; Romans 4:19 & Galatians 4:29
4. Isaiah 63:10-14
5. See Nehemiah 9:20; Leviticus 26:12-13; Exodus 29:43-46
6. See Exodus 35:10-11, 30-31
7. Numbers 11:10-30
8. See Judges 3:10; 6:34 and other places
9. 1 Samuel 16:13-14; Psalm 51:11
10. Micah 3:8
11. 2 Chronicles 15:1-8
12. Nehemiah 9:30; Zechariah 7:12
13. 1 Peter 1:11

14. See Joel 2:28-29; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:19-26; Ezekiel 36:26-28; 37:1-14, 24, 26-27

15. See Psalm 104, especially verse 30

16. Ezekiel 2:2; 3:4

17. See the piece, Wind of the Spirit

18. Haggai 2:5

19. Zechariah 4:6-10

20. See the works of Max Turner, Millar Burrows and others.

21. Luke 1:13-15

22. Luke 2:25-27

23. Luke 1:35

24. John 7:38-39

25. There is no "given" in the Greek text though the translations are no doubt correct in supplying it. See Acts 19:2 for something similar.

26. John 14:17

27. The cross is seen as an aspect of Christ's glorification. See, for example, John 12:27-28 but Philippians 2:5-11 and 1Timothy 3:16 would show more can be involved than the atoning death.

28. Acts 2:33

29. John 14:16, 26

30. John 14:18, 23; 16:7; 1 Corinthians 15:45. Christ retains his humanity, of course--1Timothy 2:5--but it's a glorified humanity. See 1 Corinthians 15:42-50.

31. John 16:5-7; 17:4-5

32. John 14:16, 18, 23, 26; 16:5-7, 16

33. 2 Corinthians 5:16

34. 1 Peter 1:11; Romans 8:9; Acts 16:7; Galatians 4:6

35. John 14:26

36. 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15

37. 1 Corinthians 15:45

38. John 17:14, 16; Philippians 3:30 and Revelation 12:12; 13:6 contrasting "earth dwellers" and "heaven dwellers".

39. 2 Corinthians 5:16

40. This is not to suggest that there was no "spirituality" before the Messianic age, far from it. I'm only saying within the stages of development of God's purposes, the Mosaic age, was categorized as the time "of the flesh" where the Messianic age is "of the Spirit". Prior to the Christian era both Isaac and Ishmael were born in the usual way but it's said that, "the son born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit". See Galatians 4:28-29

41. Acts 2:16-18; Joel 2:28-29; Isaiah 44:3; 1 Peter 1:11

42. John 14:17

43. John 14:23

44. While I believe the distinction is intentional here, the point isn't made just by comparing the prepositions. The Spirit was already "in" them as he was "in" Old Covenant prophets--see 1 Peter 1:11 but I think the passage here speaks of them as the new and indwelt temple soon to be constructed. We don't learn all this simply by comparing the prepositions.

45. Ephesians 2:21-22

46. Mark 1:7-8

47. Ephesians 2:11-20

48. Galatians 3:26-29

49. Ephesians 2:15-16

50. Acts 2:16-39; John 14:26; Galatians 3:9,14

51. 2 Peter 1:3; Ephesians 4:8, 11-16; 1 Corinthians 12

52. 1 John 2:20, 27; John 16:13

53. See 1 Corinthians 12:17; Romans 12:4

54. John 14:20

55. Matthew 12:31-32 and parallels

56. This simply means that the Messianic age is the "final" age, the "end time," the period to which all earlier dispensations led. When scholars speak of the "eschatological" Spirit they don't mean, of course, it's a different Spirit, only that the renewed and special sense of his presence now relates to the dispensation known as "the end time".

57. Matthew 22:34-40; Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14

HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

How do you know you have the Holy Spirit? The wording of the question is legitimate enough because we find Paul and Peter using speech that implies that people "have" it [see Acts 2:38 and 19:2 and places like Galatians 3:14]. But we can use the same language as scripture but not have quite the same stress in our speech. There is always the danger [especially in an acquisitive generation] of our seeing the Spirit as a "possession"—something that's "ours"—like a book or a nice chair or a fine painting [gifts from friends, perhaps].

There is nothing like that in Scripture about God, who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Spirit. We sometimes speak of "my" husband or wife or son but when we speak in this way about "our" families or friends we don't have "possession" in mind. We're thinking more of a "relationship" and certainly there's no suggestion that we "own" anyone.

It's perfectly legitimate to say, "We have friends" but we don't mean that we have friends in the same way that we "have a brain our head". In one case we mean there is an actual functioning organ inside our head and in the other we mean [something like] we are part of a relationship with some others that involves mutual warmth, admiration and devotion.

So far so good and none of the above is controversial.

When someone says, "I have the Holy Spirit" we hope he doesn't mean [and we don't think he does mean] that he "owns" the Holy Spirit. Most likely he means that the Holy Spirit is actually inside his body [and this is most often what people do mean—at least most people I speak to mean that]. That is, there was a time when he was not a follower of the Lord Jesus, he became a follower and at that moment the Holy Spirit, which was outside his body, entered his body and there remains.

There are texts that can be used to support that view of the matter. The more pointed ones are texts like 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 and others, like Acts 2:38; 5:32, can reasonably be used in a less pointed manner to support that view. ["If we receive the Spirit he must 'enter' us, surely."]

I'm aware of the texts but I'm not persuaded that they should be understood to say that the Holy Spirit actually takes up "bodily" residence in each Christian—that is, once he was "outside" and now he is "inside" their bodies. My own view, at present, is that this is temple imagery and that we should not press it beyond that. No more than we should press relational phrases that say we "dwell in God" or that we are "parts one of another".

We are not permitted however to deny that in some true sense we have the Spirit and that he has been given to us. We are not to deny that the Spirit empowers us or comforts us for we are explicitly told these truths. Questions remain however. In what way do we have the Spirit? Who is it that has the Spirit? [Is it each Christian as a free-standing and independent person or is it each of us as mutual sharers of that "indwelling" of the one Spirit who indwells "the body of Christ"?)

You might be interested in reading the brief pieces in this section on the above questions. But I'm more interested in right now in the opening question: "How do we know we have the Holy Spirit?" I think it's a bit like asking, "How do we know prayers are answered?"

We all have wonderful stories about much needed help arriving just in time, in response to prayer. The trouble with using these as proof of answered prayers is that non-believers have stories just as wonderful and some religious people for whom we have absolutely no respect they have stories even more wonderful. You must understand that I'm not denying that God answers prayer; I'm simply saying that to prove such a truth is another matter.

If, however, we saw or experienced an undoubted miracle [which is a self-evidencing act that someone with supernatural power has acted] in immediate response to prayer it would be a stubborn man or woman who would deny the implication. [But even that is possible, so the Bible tells us.] See John 11:11-44 as a single illustration of what I mean by miraculous "proof". Apart from the obviously miraculous, if a reasonable person needed proof that God's answers prayers we'd have a hard time supplying it. [It doesn't help for deeply religious people to sneer at peoples' doubts and act as though anyone with half a brain should know better. Impatience in these matters doesn't become those who profess the Lord Jesus and much less does sneering.]

Moving on. How does one know that they have the Holy Spirit? Can we prove such a truth? Do Christians do things that are indisputable proof that they have the Holy Spirit?

There are those who say the miraculous gift of speaking languages unknown to oneself is an indispensable mark of one having the Holy Spirit. That has an appeal to it but it isn't as simple as it appears and it certainly is not [as I recently heard someone say] "unarguably true". [It's a nice thing to be agreeable but if something isn't true it isn't true!] Some in that group would say you don't have the Holy Spirit unless you speak in tongues. That clearly won't work for numerous reasons but one of them is that Paul said not every Christian was so gifted [1 Corinthians 12:18, 27-30].

Additionally, it simply isn't true that the NT gives "receiving the gift of languages" as a pattern when people are converted. In Acts 2 the apostles are not newly converted when they receive the gift of tongues so they shouldn't be used as part of a pattern of "converts". Acts 2:38-41 says nothing about "the gift of languages" for these new converts, nor do Acts 5:32; 8:15-17; 8:26-40; 16:25-34 and 18:8-11.

There are others difficulties too facing this claim [and I confess I haven't them all worked out yet though they are there]. Jesus envisions some workers of miracles as unknown to him—that is, as no part of his faithful servants so viewing tongues or other miracles as "indisputable" marks of having the Holy Spirit is problematic [Matthew 7:22-23]. Then there's that [in some ways] puzzling 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 which seems to say one can be completely equipped with miraculous power and yet loveless. Should we view the loveless as those who have the Holy Spirit when among the fruit of the Spirit is love [Galatians 5:22]? Then there was that rascal, Caiaphas who prophesied and yet crucified the Lord Jesus [John 11:49-51].

Then there's always the matter of our proving that we have the miraculous ability to speak foreign languages. All we hear today is talk about prayer languages that no one recognizes. The claim is made but since people recorded the sounds and demonstrated they weren't human languages "the gift of tongues" became private prayer languages or the tongues of angels. Poof goes the proof.

So how do we know we have the Holy Spirit? I recently heard someone say we're not simply to take the word of God's word for it because the Bible won't settle for that. His entire aim in the message was to find indisputable proof that we have the Holy Spirit—he was looking for a sign. He settled on Galatians 5:22-23 as giving unarguable proof that we have the Holy Spirit—that is, if we are loving, patient, good, kind, joyful and meek people, this is the unarguable proof that we have the Holy Spirit.

Realizing that even in this awfully wicked world there are millions of people who live lives as virtuous as many Christians he felt the need to say something about non-Christians. He

explicitly denied that non-Christians can be virtuous because they are “in the flesh” [that is, outside of the Lord Jesus and therefore incapable of being good and kind and long-suffering]—a very Reformed view—total depravity sort of thing. These millions he dismissed in a sentence. [This the Calvinist John Piper does with vigor except that he argues his case at some length.]

But does the preacher who dismissed these non-Christians as incapable of virtue treat the Wal-Mart check-out lady as if she is totally depraved and incapable of patience or kindness? Does he speak that way of a non-Christian teacher who might teach his children? You can be sure that he thanks hosts of non-Christians for their kindness and gentleness and patience and such. It’s only in the pulpit we say such things because we must—they go along with the direction of our sermon and we must be consistent, you see.

Paul assures us in Galatians 5 that if we live in shameless immorality, claiming it is what the Spirit has given us the freedom in the Lord Jesus to do, we are blind. He insists that the Spirit would not produce such a lifestyle. The fruit he produces is [not exhaustively] laid out in 5:22-23. But it isn’t Paul’s point to say that the existence of virtues is the unarguable proof that the Holy Spirit indwells us [or that, as a consequence, we are part of the “body of Christ”].

Does the Holy Spirit produce the “virtues” named in Galatians 5:22-23? Of course he does and he will lead us to do no evil! Are these “virtues” unarguable proof that we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us? No, they’re not because God works in the lives of non-Christians as surely as in Christians [Cornelius is a classic proof of that]. Bless me, we don't even have unarguable proof that God exists why would we think we had indisputable proof that he is dwelling in us? [It’s at this point we need to consider just what is distinctively Christian about a Christian.]

If you have indeed in trusting repentance been baptized into the Lord Jesus, take God’s word for it that you are part of his Body in which he dwells by his Holy Spirit. Let others look for unarguable signs and proof and simply enjoy the gift of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit who does work in us [among other things] to bring into being in us Christ-imagining righteousness and moral beauty.

If you would care to engage me on this, please do.

[To be continued, God enabling]

HOW DOES THE SPIRIT INDWELL?

A reader wonders in what way the Spirit indwells Christians. The scriptures explicitly say that the Spirit of God indwells Christians. Paul says we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6) and he insists that if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in us we can be sure we will be resurrected (Romans 8). Ephesians 2 tells us that God indwells us via the Spirit. That should settle the truth of the Spirit’s indwelling but it leaves other questions to be worked out.

In saying the Spirit is “in” us I don’t think we’re supposed to think he takes up (as it were) “bodily residence” in us. People live “in” houses. In saying this we mean that they take up room within the confines of the walls, as opposed to being outside. Is this how we’re supposed to think of the Spirit’s indwelling? Is the Spirit inside our bodies in the same way our heart and liver and brain are? That is, is he spatially located there? I don’t think so. I think the idea of his indwelling us is a relational notion rather than a spatial one. Christians are said to dwell in God and in Christ but I’m fairly sure that such texts aren’t talking about a spatial indwelling.

So what do phrases like “the Spirit dwells in you” mean? It’s clear that such phrases offer a network of truths and that no one proposal covers it all. His dwelling in the Tabernacle and the temple was no spatial reality—it was God making his fellowship and communion with Israel known. However we explain God’s presence in those sanctuaries we’d do well to remember that even the temple-builder Solomon acknowledged that God didn’t dwell in such

buildings (1 Kings 8). Heaven couldn't hold him, he confessed, so how could a puny little building. No, the Tabernacle and temple were houses God was prepared to "live in" to confirm his identification with Israel but not "bodily" or personally in a spatial sense in the way, someone like priests or Anna, for example, would do—see Luke 2:36,37). God would live among them, assuring them of his commitment, claiming the centre of their life and worship and being their guide to Canaan and their sustainer in Canaan. These and other truths would be the sort of thing that God's "indwelling" would mean. If Israel gladly acknowledged that indwelling, it would shape them and draw them close to God and one another; thus there would be much wonderful "fruit" borne from it.

I would suppose the same is true of the NT temple (the church). I don't think any member of the blessed Godhead takes up spatial residence in the bodies of Christians. I think we're supposed to believe that God has entered into a peculiar relationship with Christians and that some of the proofs that that is true are the existence of our faith in Christ, the hunger for holiness, the glad hope for the future, the strength and comfort under present trouble, the assurance of sins forgiven and many other such realities.

Christ's prays in John 17:21, "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." 1 John 2:5 says that if we're obedient to God we can be sure we are "in him". He goes on to say that anyone that says he or she lives "in him" must walk as Christ walked. 1 John 2:24 says that if the truth his readers have embraced remains in them that they will remain "in the Son and in the Father." There's nothing spatial about any of these uses of "in". Often we hear that those who became saved were "baptized into Christ" (or his death, compare Romans 6:3-6, Galatians 3:27 and elsewhere). This isn't the transfer of a body or a person into a new spatial location. It has all to do with a new relationship, a new devotion and commitment, a new centre of consciousness and trust. It isn't as amazing that we would be glad to be part of that, it's amazing that God would want to be part of such a transaction.

We often say to someone very dear to us (things like), "I can't tell you how wonderful it is to have you in my life. You will be forever in my heart." None of this is spatial—it's all profoundly relational. I judge that we should think in this direction when we think of the truth that the Spirit is "in" us and that the Father and the Son dwell "in" us through the Spirit (see John 14:23 and Ephesians 2:22).

So in what way does the Spirit dwell in us? I don't think we should be thinking in literal terms of embodiment but in relational terms of dynamic and mutual reception, welcome, life-imparting and (in our case) of glad obedience. We "live in the Spirit" and we "walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). The reality expressed in terms of the Spirit's "indwelling" is—as you would well know—so rich and multi-faceted that we simply keep uncovering more and more about it.

I'd like to return to the topic at another time and say something about the Spirit indwelling the individual and the church, the body of Christ.

INDWELLING, WITH OR IN?

Not recently I heard a preacher say explicitly from the pulpit that when one becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit moves inside the Christian's physical body and takes spatial residence there. That is, the HS is actually spatially located inside the Christian's body. I don't happen to believe that and I wrote him saying so and offering some reasons. His response, boiled down, was that there are texts that say the HS indwells believers and one that says He dwells in their bodies [1 Corinthians 6:19—I won't comment here on that section that is filled with difficult phrases].

My questions, of course, did not deny what the texts say—they were about how we should understand them—as a literal spatial residence or as relational metaphor that would speak of identification, temple metaphor, assurance of source of power and intimacy with God, and so forth. He insisted on the words of the text and said it was above his pay grade to explain such things. [Reminds me of the story of Luther's pounding the table in his discussion with Zwingli and writing on it, "this IS my body". It's of no avail to pound and say, "I AM the door". One doesn't have to follow Zwingli to dispute Luther's kind of proof.]

In any case, I let the matter drop. But then recently I heard the same preacher list his view of indwelling as the way we acknowledge the HS's presence in our lives. It's where he had it listed that seriously got my attention. It was the first on a list of how we can sin against the HS. [For example, we were told that we grieve, quench, resist the HS and when we won't acknowledge His presence and then he briefly argued the "He's inside your physical body" notion.] That raises the stakes so I'm returning to the matter here. I am one of millions who firmly believe what the biblical witness says—the HS "indwells" Christians. That's never the question—the NT says it's so!

After a tendentious preamble about people he knew when he was young who just about believed the Bible is the HS we got about 5 minutes of his making his case. His making his case was 1 Corinthians 6:19 quoted [after a few sentences about an idolatrous setting, which was promptly forgotten] and the difference between "with" and "in" in John 14:17.

Just so I make myself clear. The HS is a "person"—he speaks of himself like that in Acts 13:2. He is what we for convenience sake sometimes call "the third Person in the Godhead". Anyone who thinks the HS is the Bible is barely worth talking with. The HS does many things [comforts, encourages, enlightens, strengthens, guides, reveals, intercedes and on and on] but the HS is not the things He does—He is the one who does these things! Beethoven is not the music he wrote, Shakespeare is not the plays he wrote and the HS is not the wondrous things He brings to pass. He is God, for pity's sake!

So what was the preamble about? We often do what the swindler Professor Harold Hill did in *The Music Man*. Link the trouble in River City with the pool hall and when you get people alarmed announce the cure: the people should have a school band. Professor Hill was only following a long line of speech experts—that's the way to get people to lean your way.

In the case I'm addressing: we've heard this from a long line of speakers: "The trouble in the Church is that we have forgot the HS and that's why we're apathetic, powerless and in every other way casual and unsuccessful and it's why we don't evangelize." That's part of why you have a tide of popular books called things like, *The Forgotten God* [meaning the HS]. In this kind of a setting we don't have titles like *The Forgotten Jesus* or *The Forgotten Father*. We talk plenty about the Father & Son so we can't complain about that. [Though I think there's a case to be made for saying too little about God as distinct from (not as opposed to) the man Jesus.]

So, here's the story "We're feeble and struggling because we don't talk or think enough about the HS.

The cure is to think and talk more about the HS. We need to know the HS indwells us!"

I confess to you I know a LOT of Christians and among those I don't know a single one who DOESN'T believe that the HS indwells them.

I do remember sitting in a class listening to one hard case [a preacher, wouldn't you know] who believed the HS didn't influence Christians in any other way but through the biblical witness. He was wrong—I thought that then and I think it now but even he didn't believe the HS was the Bible.

But none of that has anything to do with the HS moving from outside the Christian's physical body to inside the Christian's physical body! That entire issue is bogus.

Even if it is true that we're not thinking enough or not talking enough about the HS, that has nothing to do with the Spirit actually and literally and spatially dwelling inside the believer's body. That notion is irrelevant and injurious. The claim is being made that we're powerless and under-achievers if we don't believe the HS is actually inside our physical bodies. That is refusing to acknowledge the Spirit's presence in our lives.

I'm one of millions who every day either literally on our knees or with our hearts on their knees ask God [that's Father, Son & Holy Spirit as the one true] for forgiveness and empowerment and transformation into the likeness of God who has come to us in and as Jesus Christ.

It would be a form of sin if we were to deny the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives but it is no crime against Father, Son or Holy Spirit to deny some interpretation of His presence because under religious pressure we want to preach a mystical spatial indwelling of the Spirit.

I don't insist it is wrong to pray to the Holy Spirit! Once more, I don't say it is wrong to pray to the Holy Spirit. The Bible is saturated with speech about the Spirit of God and the wonders He performs but nowhere in the entire Bible does anyone ever pray to the Holy Spirit as distinctively the Holy Spirit.

Is that significant? In what way?

In the NT Paul [Jesus also] asks "the Father" to send or give or strengthen by or in the HS. The Spirit is always presented as the one who does the bidding of the Father and Jesus even as Jesus is.

"But when he the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth for he will not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine and show it unto you." [The word gar (for) is in the text.]

Is that text significant? How is the Spirit in this His post-Pentecostal work characterized in this text?

This isn't the place for a discussion of Christology or Pneumatology or the "economic" Trinity but that doesn't mean we aren't to recognize how the Holy Scriptures speak about how the persons of the Trinity function in the unfolding of the creation/redemption work of God.

It wasn't the Father who became incarnate. It wasn't the Holy Spirit that became incarnate. The "Word" didn't send the Father nor did the Holy Spirit send the Father. Neither the Father nor the Spirit died on the cross. We honor the Holy Spirit by honoring what He reveals about Himself in the biblical witness. Jesus we know, Paul we know but who are these who hand down their interpretations and say we sin if we don't believe them? An aspect of the beauty & glory of the HS is that He chooses to take "the back seat" and takes Jesus and his things and makes him and them His message.

With some it isn't enough that we all fervently believe that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of creation, revelation and Christ-honoring blessing we must believe that He is physically/spatially inside our bodies or we're refusing to acknowledge His presence in our lives!

1 Peter 1:11 says the Holy Spirit [the Spirit of Christ] was IN the prophets and enabled them to preach the gospel ahead of time! The speaker I'm having this lover's quarrel with insisted that the word "in" is confined to something that happened after Pentecost. [See below on John 14.17.]

We were told that the Spirit was "with" the apostles and their preaching colleagues when they went out to preach [Matthew 10 illustrates]. Nothing was said about the function of the word "with" in such a setting. The speaker seemed to think that he and everyone else knew how it functioned so it's just passed by.

In John 14:17 Jesus said the HS “lives with you” [NIV]. The speaker gave no thought to the word “with” [par] here other than to say it was different than the word “in” which of course he took to mean “inside your body”.

The argument offered was this. The word “with” means “not inside” and the word “in” means “inside”. That is, when the HS was “with” them he was spatially “outside” their bodies but when Pentecost came the HS moved spatially “inside” them.

You have to remember that the man was offering us talk about a spatial location or you won't get the argument. Before Pentecost, he claims, the Spirit was spatially outside their bodies but at Pentecost the Spirit spatially moved inside their bodies. We were assured that if we didn't believe that that we are not recognizing the Spirit's presence in our lives and this was one of the points he listed as ways in which we sin against the Spirit. [And what was it that happened when the HS spatially located himself inside the bodies of Christians? We weren't told. Something must have happened if the empowerment only comes if the HS is inside our physical bodies. What? Some kind of Gnostic type touching of spirits? The HS comes into mystical contact with our human spirit? Not a word was offered on any of that. More that is above his pay-grade I suppose. The one thing the speaker "knew" was that to get the power of the Spirit and to acknowledge his presence he has to be located inside of our fleshly bodies and the other was: if you deny that you are sinning against the HS.]

But the treatment of the texts used is careless even if we read it as he reads it [and he told us to pay special attention to the words “with” and “in”]. Because he already had his mind made up he reads the text like this: “he lives WITH you but he will be IN you.”

Ignoring for the moment his claim about how the words themselves function, must we read it his way? Why must we read it as stressing the two words in question? Why can't we read it as an assurance that the future will not be different than the present? Why can't we read it this way? “He lives with you and shall be in you in the future.” They are worried about Jesus absenting himself and he is assuring them that they need not worry—what's ahead isn't something they need to worry about! I think that is what he is saying.

But look. In 14:16 Jesus speaks about the future [when he personally is absent] and assures them that he will ask the Father and he will send the HS to be “with” you forever. This was to be the Pentecost onward experience, an experience the apostolic group and the entire Church of our Lord was to experience until the Story climaxes. Jesus uses “with” [meth] to speak of the age-long indwelling of the Spirit as his [Jesus' representative] in them.

He doesn't seem to know what our speaker knows that “with” means “outside”—Jesus should have used “in”. Let me make this clearer.

Jesus uses “with” to include “indwelling”! And our speaker says “with” doesn't include indwelling; in fact, “with” means non-indwelling. I prefer Jesus' view.

Then in 14:23 Jesus [again with Pentecost in view] speaks of himself and the Father coming to “make our home with the believer.”

Our speaker [telling us to note carefully the words “with” and “in”] says “with” means spatially outside and “in” means spatially inside.

But you must note what is being said underneath all these words in the context of the speaker's message. To accept the truth of God and get the power of the HS you must believe the HS is spatially inside your body. It's from in there that he does his work and empowers us. It isn't enough to say He is “with” us—we must believe He spatially resides “inside” us. The speaker knows that something new happened at Pentecost but he doesn't know what it is that is new; he only thing he knows is that before Christ the HS was “with” people but now he is “in” people.

Back to the word “with”. When our speaker insisted that prior to Pentecost the HS was “with” he doesn't attempt to say what “with” means—he's only sure that it means “not inside”.

Yes, but what does it mean that the HS was “with” them and not inside them when they went out on a preaching mission [say, Matthew 10]. That the HS was walking along beside them? How does the word “with” function in such a statement. Even if we were to say “alongside” the question would remain—what does that mean? The truth is it has nothing to do with spatial position or anything like it.

When Jesus said [at Pentecost] the HS will be with the Church he wasn’t talking about some mystical “outside of them” experience. When he said [of prior Pentecost experience—John 14:17] that the HS lived with them he wasn’t talking about some spatial positioning of the Spirit “outside” their fleshly bodies. He tells them that, even as he says the Spirit “lives with” them [the present indicative here of *menei* would speak of the continuing nature of the experience]. The HS lives “with” them has absolutely nothing to do about his spatial position outside of their bodies.

Jesus prior to the ascension says, “Look, I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20 Is that significant? In what way?

Even accepting that a change will occur at Pentecost [that is clearly the truth] it has nothing to do with a change of spatial location. The speaker has no awareness that there could be any other sense in Jesus’ words than the one he puts in them. He has Jesus saying, “The Spirit continues to live with you, outside you of course, but come Pentecost he will shift spatial position and move inside your bodies.”

This, this is what Jesus was saying? This is the profound change? Bless me.

Words like these—a host of such words—have nothing to do with spatial or physical realities. Daily life and the biblical witness is saturated with speech that is not to be construed carelessly and in empirical terms—they are not spatial realities; they have to do with intimacy, relations, function and so much more.

Paul says the Thessalonians were in his heart! He told the Corinthians that they were in Titus’ heart. Christians are said to be in the Spirit. Christ is said to abide in us and we are said to abide in him. We are said to be baptized into Christ and into his death and we’re said to dwell in God. The Spirit is said to dwell in Christians and Christians are said to live in the Spirit. We’re told that Jesus dwells in our hearts and Jesus said he will be with us.

Depending on context these prepositions speak of beautiful and rich and varied and actual experiences that include function, intimacy and so much more. People lift us up or get us down or carry us through or in life they walk beside us; they let us in and find their way into our hearts or emotionally they turn away from us or turn toward us or we are always in their hearts and they often weep over the loss of loved ones.

Sometimes we talk nonsense; I’ve done plenty of that myself over the years. [That’s true and not just a generalized confession so I can go on and make a point! I now look back on some things I’ve said and wonder how I could ever have thought them to be true; and I suppose I’ll continue to do that.] I hate it but there it is.

Sometimes we talk nonsense because we’re lazy, sometimes due to simple ignorance, sometimes it’s due to thinking we’ve arrived and while we know we’re not infallible we aren’t aware of just how ignorant and fallible we are. We’re not just wanna-be scholars we perceive ourselves to be scholars. We invite nobody who might be our equal to test our views so we always come out on top and then we come to believe we are skilled debaters or sages and pride takes hold. The very proud are unteachable—they make generalized confessions of their limits but they don’t take correction well, don’t even take it well when they are disagreed with. Their personhood gets all tangled up with what they know or think they know. They never come and ask, “Help me understand this.” They dabble with other people’s writing, pick up some new insights and some phrases and repeat them without having digested them. The

inexperienced don't notice and so they rarely answer back but if they were to, we the proud dabblers can always out-talk them.

Sigh.

I think this specific issue is hardly worth talking about and I think I wouldn't have bothered with it again but then I heard the stakes were raised.

It's so dangerous to add one more sin to the already long lists of sins of which people can be guilty. Too, it's dangerous to make one specific form of sin to be peculiar, the "king of sins," so to speak. It's tragic because it makes those who struggle with that specific form of sin into....lepers, so to speak. It's especially tragic if we do that based on a single text in the entire Bible. No wonder James says the tongue can set an entire world on fire. Where does it end, eh?

In the meantime be sure you remember this: It isn't the "indwelling" that empowers us. That's the figure of speech. The empowering one is the Holy Spirit Himself!

I sent a copy of this to the preacher I'm speaking of. Did he come to discuss it? But he did speak of it to those that agree with him and owe him.

I might, God allowing, take this up again at some point.

PRAY IN THE SPIRIT

What does it mean to "pray in the Spirit"? Christians are called to do various things "in" the Spirit. The Greek preposition *en* usually means either "in" or "by" and it's only by looking closely at the context we can determine which rendering is best. But our grasp of the context doesn't always help us sufficiently so serious students of scripture remind us that a given text could equally be translated "in the Spirit" or "by the Spirit". While the meaning of these two prepositions can overlap they can and sometimes do send us in two distinct directions. Then, again, there are times when there is no preposition, just a simple dative case (as in *pneumati*) but the question remains whether we should render it "in" or "by".

Occasionally there is a dispute whether the Greek word *pneuma* in such a context is the human spirit or the Holy Spirit but most of the time there's agreement that the Holy Spirit is in view. Certainly it appears to be the Holy Spirit that Paul has in mind in Ephesians 6:18. Paul speaks of people "beginning" their life with God in Christ in/by the Spirit (Galatians 3:3) "walking" (living, says NIV) in/by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and "living" in/by the Spirit in 5:25. Christians, Jews and Gentiles in context, access the Father in/by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:18) are made into God's dwelling place in/by the Spirit (2:22). The Colossians "love" in/by the Spirit (1:8) and so forth.

When Paul says we live or love or walk (behave or conduct ourselves) in/by the Spirit what does he mean? Would it be the same if he said we live or love or walk in/by the Father? Would it be the same if he said we live or love or walk in/by the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, yes and no. We're certainly told that it's in/by Christ that we live and have access to God; but while the same work is accomplished by the triune God working in concert it's clear that there are specific roles maintained by the Father, Son and Spirit (the "economic" Trinity as it's sometimes called).

Yes, but what does it mean to do something "in/by" the Spirit? For us the word "by" is clear enough. We'd immediately think of the Spirit enabling or empowering us so that if Paul says, "we live by the Spirit" we can easily understand him to mean that the Spirit empowers us; that it's because of what the Spirit does that we are able to live. We could just as easily understand him to mean we live by (the teaching, guidance or in accordance with) the Spirit. We might think of God's statement to Israel that humans live "by every word that comes from God". If Paul says we live "in" the Spirit we find that a little harder to grasp but the dative of sphere is common enough to us. There are people who live "in" fear and there are those who

live "in" faith. This locates them in a particular realm or setting. Obviously they aren't physically located "in" faith or fear the way people sleep "in" a room; faith or fear is the boundary within which they live. So it is with those who live or walk or pray "in (the) Spirit". The Spirit, so to speak, is the realm in which they move, the atmosphere in which they breathe, the parameter within which they think or shape their prayers or behavior.

So what does it mean to "pray in the Spirit"? It means to allow the Spirit to be the shaper of our prayers, the guide and teacher on the things for which we should pray and the purifier of our motives in praying such prayers. It means we won't pray for something that is contrary to what the Holy Spirit aims for or nurtures.

But what does that mean? Does he mean we are to say nothing until the Spirit puts the specific words and subjects into our minds; as if he literally whispered into our minds something like, "Here's what you are to pray for, here is how you will word the prayer and here is the motive from which you should pray it"?

I'm sure that's not what Paul has in mind. He seems to think the Christians have more personal input into the matter than that. He isn't asking the Holy Spirit to do the praying he calls on the Christians to do the praying. Yes, but if the Spirit shapes and enables us to pray what do we have to do with it? Look, we need to work with scripture and life and stop thinking as if lives were like already played chess games and that we're mindless pawns or a limp rag flopping in the wind. This section in Ephesians is a call to war! Certainly it is God that enables, protects and sustains us but we are up to our necks in the battle, we are supposed to exert ourselves, we are to engage the enemy. Paul says "pray!" He tells them to pray not in terms of "the flesh" (in selfishness, self-reliance or with personal agendas) but in terms of the Spirit. We are to think of who and what he is, who and what he stands for, what his agenda and ultimate purposes are and within those parameters—pray!

He calls them to pray for him and he calls them to pray all the time for all the saints. And how, by the grace of the Spirit, are we to get to know the Spirit? Well, whatever else we are to do we must in community with the saints wield the Spirit's sword, wear the gospel on our feet and carry the shield of faith and pay attention to the armor he speaks of. Experience of the Spirit as we know him in and through Jesus Christ (for he is the Spirit of Christ!) will purify our conceptions of him and more and more we'll pray "in the Spirit". This section is martial and prayer is part of the equipment of our warfare!

THE PERSONAL INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT

The ancient classical creeds spoke of the Communion of Saints. It's true that this doctrine wasn't affirmed in the earliest creeds; this might mean a lot or nothing much. It'd be an awful mistake to think that Christians that lived before the creeds didn't believe truths that didn't appear in the creeds or that the creeds determined what was truth. In the final analysis the question is: Does the biblical witness support an affirmation?

In any case I'm persuaded (along with a host of others) that the Communion of Saints is best understood to mean that all who are embraced in the redeeming work of God in and through Christ even now share the blessings of grace available to them and that they do it together, as one grand all-encompassing Community. This is true whether they live here or there, whether they are the living or the dead.

The real enemy of monotheism is not an abstract doctrine of multiple gods. It's the denial that all humans are the one God's creation and are loved by him. We deny that by our cruel practice and our divisive arrogance and snobbery—whether religious, social or racial—that's what divides God (or Christ—see 1 Corinthians 1:13 and context with Romans 3:29-30). The main enemy of the unity of the entire redeemed Body in Christ is not an abstract doctrine

that division is defensible. The subtlest and the most dangerous enemy is a rampant individualism that devours the West and destroys community—religious or otherwise. We're so anxious to see that we are individually catered to that we read almost everything in the NT from that perspective and we need to put the brake on it.

The Spirit indwells each Christian but there is no such thing as an independent and free-standing unit called a Christian. To think we are Christians independent of all other members of the Body of Christ is foolishness. We are many parts or members but we are that only because we are part of the Body, the Church. Without that connection to the Head and to one another, we aren't part of the Body at all! Fingers and eyes and feet don't exist independently. They cannot!

The Spirit of God indwells the temple, the Body of Christ and as a consequence he indwells each member. He does not indwell each individual member independent of others, he indwells each member because he indwells all others. The human spirit (however we define it) does not dwell independently in a toe or an ear or an arm; it dwells in the entire "us". The Spirit does not dwell (to continue the metaphor) in an eye or a mouth or an ear as independent parts of the Body. He indwells the Body, as a totality, a one-community reality. Therefore and in this way he relates to each one of us personally. I don't have the Spirit of God indwelling me independent of all my brothers and sisters in Christ. You don't have the Spirit indwelling you independent of me. He is in us all or he is in none of us. Since he is in the entire Body therefore he is in and relates to each one of us without exception.

We misread the NT, I think, when we read the personal and use it—even unintentionally—to support this ugly individualism that destroys the world. The answer to the totalitarian or fascist spirit is not rampant individualism, which, at its worst, is little more than prudent and controlled anarchy. This, I think, is truth and is of critical importance to Christians. We do not live without each other because we cannot and because we cannot live without each other we live in a mutual sharing in the Holy Spirit which is the Spirit of Christ. The gift of the Spirit is to the Body of Christ and those that are members of that one Body share in that one Spirit as one Body and not as if they were all bodies, independent of each other.

This is the Communion of Saints.

THE TRINITY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Larry notes that John 1:1 and 14 indicate that Jesus, the Son, is God but asks, "Where do we find biblical witness to the Spirit's being God?" This is not a new question for church history reminds us that there was a time when believers felt it necessary to formally announce the Godhood of the Spirit. Like most questions that relate to "the Trinity" we need to be careful how we state our views (especially if you believe it as I do and think it's critically important truth in the development of the Christian message).

I mean, the Bible isn't an exercise in systematic or even dogmatic theology. The writers certainly want us to know and believe the truth but they don't sit down to write a formal creed for us. This means we shouldn't expect to be able to go to the Bible and find a specific text to answer every specific question. We're supposed to do careful exegetical work (with the help of all the tools and disciplines and trusted scholars required) and draw our conclusions in light of that. And then from there live our lives in light of the big rich truths.

This lack of system in the Bible explains why we don't have, for example, a developed doctrine of the resurrection, or Satan or the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. And it's why we don't have all the answers to interesting and important questions laid out for us in an exhaustive blueprint. (I have several pieces in this vein in my little book called *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is*.) It also helps to explain why the Bible doesn't always make something so clear

that it can't be disputed. Much of the Bible is proclamation and the report of proclamation (like the book of Acts, for example). So much of the time the writer simply speaks the truth without exhaustively spelling it out so that no one can argue against it.

But having said all that I'm one of millions who, in light of the New Testament and historical theology, think that the Holy Spirit is a "person" distinct from the Father and the Son. There is one God who in the fullness of times revealed himself as Father, Son and Spirit. In Acts 13:2 the Holy Spirit said to the gathered prophets and teachers, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." This is personal speech and it's hard not to see that the Holy Spirit is a distinct center of self-consciousness (a "person") and when you lie to him you lie to God (Acts 5:3-4). But he is not the Father and he is distinct from the Son (see John 14:16-26). And since it is in the person of the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14) that the Father and the Son make themselves present in the believers (John 14:17-18, 23-26; Ephesians 2:18-22) he can hardly be less than God himself.

Though there are many other lines we could take that's the direction I would go in setting out my reasons for believing that the Spirit is part of the Godhead.

WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WON'T DO

John 16:13-14 has this to say. "When he the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."

For many years there was little written about the Holy Spirit and that's a loss that believers could scarcely afford but the Holy Spirit himself was partly responsible for that because he did such a glorious job in glorifying Jesus Christ. In this text Jesus without apology insists that the Holy Spirit would not speak from himself; that is, he acts as one that delivers truth that is given to him. And as it turns out, the things he speaks about are the things of Christ, to whom the Spirit brings glory. If we take God's unfolding drama seriously—that is, in the way that God has unfolded it, it will not be surprising that the Spirit doesn't speak about himself or from himself. God's creation purpose comes to its climax in Jesus Christ as the Lord of the new creation.

Every now and then we find people who will talk of no one else but the Holy Spirit and part of the reason for that is that for so long no one talked about him. These people are (perhaps) over-compensating for what is in some ways a shameful silence during which the Spirit has been completely ignored. And when people have been starved (so to speak) of something rich it is hardly surprising if they should gorge themselves when the opportunity arises.

[Of course there are those that think they're talking about the Holy Spirit when they're really talking about themselves—about their experience of the Holy Spirit, what they've felt, what happened to them. At a much more sinister level there are those that convince us that they know they're talking about themselves. Even while they use the words "the Holy Spirit said to me one morning while I was shaving..." (Yes, I did hear a prominent preacher say that in just the tone I've implied.) I think we're supposed to come away with the impression that these speakers are on very intimate terms with a member of the Godhead.]

It's important to bear in mind that this passage is particularly about the Holy Spirit and not about Jesus or the Father, so it becomes almost a job description. The passage has nothing to say about his person-hood and nature (though there are implications here), but about how he will go about his business, which, in this text, is to develop the meaning and promote the purposes of Jesus Christ.

Those who would urge us to "go back to the simple teachings of Jesus" should pay attention to this text. The apostolic witness and the development of the truth about Jesus Christ should not be ignored—especially in light of such a passage. Jesus does not think that what the Spirit will do in them was a step backward. To ignore the Gospels would be tragic in every way that something can be tragic but to dismiss the NT epistles would be no less catastrophic. The Gospels are more than "simple" historical records of slices of Jesus' life but the epistles teach us the meaning of much that we read in the Gospels.

These verses should give warning to preachers/teachers that ceaselessly talk to believers about the believers. The central responsibility of the church is to proclaim the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Its business is not to look ceaselessly at its own image. The business of its leaders and ministers of the Word is to take of Christ's and give it to the church for the world, to the glory of God.

Ministers of the word are to feed the church of God with the word of the Spirit of God in keeping with God's eternal purposes. It's not in looking within that we'll find courage and strength and joy and purpose and outreach. If we gain these and more we'll gain them in being astonished by his grace and power and faithfulness and joy-filled holiness.

What have we preachers/teachers to do with presenting ourselves or leading the people of God to gaze endlessly at themselves (in praise or criticism)?