

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 53 - BREATHING THE HOLY SPIRIT]

Last time we talked about Jesus giving His disciples the promise of the Holy Spirit.

- ◆ For the first time God made the promise mankind could enjoy His personal presence individually through the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ This was a crucial step in God's mission of making man in His image.
- ◆ The Israelites enjoyed God's presence in a corporate sense as He dwelt with them in the tabernacle, and later the temple.
- ◆ But God had much more in mind than a mere corporate presence. He wanted a personal relationship with each of His people.
- ◆ ***Leviticus 26:12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.***
- ◆ Once again we see God taking the initiative. He has been faithful to His people by being their God and making salvation possible for them through the saving work of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Now the emphasis switches to preparing for Himself a holy people.
- ◆ But again, this is the work of our faithful God.

The prophets of old, foretold this time when God's Spirit would be poured out on all flesh.

- ◆ ***Joel 2:28-29 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."***
- ◆ Notice the use of individual terms in this verse, sons and daughters, old men, young men, both men and women.
- ◆ What was new about this promise was making the Holy Spirit available to individuals.
- ◆ Israelites would have associated God working with prophets and priests, but never with the common man.
- ◆ The coming of the Spirit would make it possible for individuals to have an intimate personal relationship with their God.

In an earlier session we spoke about the Holy Spirit being associated with new beginnings.

- ◆ ***Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.***
- ◆ As mentioned before, here at the beginning of the physical creation, the spirit of God moved on the face of the water (Genesis 1:2).
- ◆ Just as God breathed life into man at the original creation, this same action is now duplicated at the beginning of the spiritual creation when Jesus breathes on his disciples.
- ◆ ***John 20:21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."***
- ◆ We see the work of God the Holy Spirit active at the milestones in God's plan of salvation, at the beginning of the physical creation, at the creation of man, at Jesus' birth and baptism, and now at this pivotal point in the birth of the New Testament church.
- ◆ The coming of the Holy Spirit is further proof that this is the beginning of the age of the New Creation.
- ◆ We saw on the eve of His crucifixion Jesus introducing the New Covenant.
- ◆ With His resurrection, we saw the first human pass from mortality to immortality.
- ◆ Now we see God through the Spirit coming to take up residence in individual humans.
- ◆ We should not underestimate what is happening as far as humanity's salvation is concerned with God making the Holy Spirit available to mankind.
- ◆ This is the time of the new age, the age of the New Creation, the kingdom of God.
- ◆ Because of the barrier of sin, God could not pour out His Spirit on all flesh until Jesus had completed His salvation work on behalf of mankind.
- ◆ However what we see happening with the giving of the Spirit is recognition by God that He can now accept humanity because of Jesus' atoning work on our behalf.
- ◆ Not only do we have access to God through the torn temple veil, but now God has access to us through that same torn veil
- ◆ And God approaches us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples to wait for the coming of the Spirit at Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-8).

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- ◆ But just after His resurrection and prior to Pentecost, Jesus performed another very important ceremony with His disciples.
- ◆ ***John 20:19-22*** *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
- ◆ A couple of significant events are happening here.
- ◆ As just mentioned just as God breathed life into His physical creation (Genesis 2:7), now we see Jesus breathing life into God's new spiritual creation.
- ◆ Second, Jesus is passing on His personal commission given to Him by the Father to His disciples. ***"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."***
- ◆ The Father "sent" his only begotten Son (John 3:16) not only as the Word of God, but the one who actively fulfills that Word by becoming the Lamb of God sacrificed on behalf of mankind.
- ◆ Just as Jesus was the unique apostle (envoy) sent as the representative of the Father, now Jesus appoints the disciples (up to this point students) to be his special representatives to represent Him in preparing a holy people for God.
- ◆ Prior to this point, the disciples, on their own were not capable of understanding the full implications of what God through Jesus had accomplished on behalf of mankind.
- ◆ Remember how Jesus had to explain to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus the prophecies concerning the Messiah from the Old Testament (Luke 24:25-27).
- ◆ But we get a special insight into the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' promise to the disciples at the last supper.
- ◆ ***John 14:26*** *But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
- ◆ Up to this point, the disciples' understanding of spiritual things was limited simply by the fact spiritual understanding is only gained through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ ***1 Corinthians 2:10*** *these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*
- ◆ But the Spirit could not be given until this breach between God and humanity had been healed by Christ's saving work.
- ◆ Now in hindsight, after the events of the crucifixion and the resurrection, and the giving of the Spirit to the disciples, much of what Jesus had previously told the disciples began to make sense.
- ◆ The Holy Spirit opened their eyes and gave them this new spiritual insight.
- ◆ The Spirit was to be the conduit to bridge this gulf between fallen human reasoning and divine revelation.
- ◆ ***But just as Jesus promised, He too through the Spirit would be there personally with them as they carried out their apostolic commission on His behalf.***
- ◆ He was not going to leave them "orphans."
- ◆ And what was to be the core message the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and Jesus were to take?
- ◆ ***John 15:26-27*** *"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me."²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.*
- ◆ The Holy Spirit has been said to be self-effacing, diverting attention away from Himself and directing it instead to Jesus Christ.
- ◆ He does this with the intention of drawing people into a relationship with God through our Savior Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The core message the disciples were to take to the world was the gospel message of Jesus Christ and His saving work.
- ◆ What we see revealed here with Jesus breathing on the disciples is the apostolic commission given by the Father to Jesus, who passes it to the Holy Spirit, who in turn carries it out through the apostles.
- ◆ The one directing it all is the now glorified prophet, priest and king, Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father.

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- ◆ **John 16:12-15** *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*
- ◆ This title, Spirit of truth, used of the Holy Spirit is revealing in a couple of ways.
- ◆ As mentioned earlier, it brought spiritual understanding to the disciples of what Jesus had accomplished on behalf of mankind through His life, death and resurrection.
- ◆ However, this Spirit of truth also plays a key role in correcting humanity's distorted image of God.
- ◆ Because of the fall, our concept of God has become distorted and we have pushed our Creator away.
- ◆ This occurred when Adam and Eve rejected God's instructions and decided for themselves to be their own gods and decided for themselves what was "good" and what was "evil."
- ◆ But you can't reject the source of "truth" and not pay a price.
- ◆ By cutting themselves off from the source of truth, humanity consigned themselves to a life of falsehood.
- ◆ The two go hand in hand.
- ◆ Mankind went off deciding for himself what is "truth" with the ensuing problems we see recorded in our sordid history.
- ◆ However with the coming of the Spirit of truth, this deficiency in our fallen nature is healed as part of the new creation.
- ◆ The coming of the Spirit of truth enlightens us to three important truths.
- ◆ It reveals the truth about a loving God who has gone to extreme measures to redeem us; it brings understanding of Christ's saving work on our behalf; and it leads Christ's disciples to distinguish truth from falsehood.
- ◆ We will cover many more benefits with the coming of the Spirit in more detail later.
- ◆ **V.13-15** *He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*
- ◆ Just as Jesus gives deference to the Father, so the Spirit gives deference to Jesus Christ.
- ◆ But what we see here now is the Word and the Spirit of truth working together to reveal the truth of God.
- ◆ And who was it that said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life"**? (John 14:6).
- ◆ The Spirit of truth gives us the spiritual insight that allows us to understand and accept the Word (Jesus) in a personal or subjective way.
- ◆ This is the means by which God has chosen to reveal Himself and make Himself available now to individuals.
- What we see here in John 20 when Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit onto His disciples, He was appointing them as His special envoys under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to carry on the redeeming work of the Father.**
- ◆ He was in effect establishing the foundation of the new order, the age of the Spirit.
- ◆ And like any building, its foundation had to be rock solid in order for it to endure.
- ◆ This building has been established on the most enduring foundation possible, Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **Ephesians 2:19-22** *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*
- ◆ But notice Jesus is not the only part of the foundation. Also included are the prophets of old, plus the twelve disciples trained and now inspired by Jesus Christ Himself and the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ As the disciples were to be His human witnesses of His saving work, to be His instruments in establishing the church and to record for all time the inspired writings of the New Testament, it was crucial they received the spiritual support and the authority they needed.
- ◆ It was the giving of the Holy Spirit that transformed the disciples from students to apostles.
- ◆ It is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as He inspired their words and miraculous deeds that they gained legitimacy as Christ's appointed envoys.
- ◆ By breathing on His disciples, Jesus was commissioning them as His appointed envoys, i.e., His apostles, to carry on the work He had begun.
- ◆ Jesus was establishing the apostolic tradition on which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church was to be built.

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- ◆ *V.21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*