

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 54 - THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT]

Last time we talked about Jesus breathing on His disciples, in effect commissioning them as His apostles or envoys to represent Him in taking the Gospel to the world.

- ◆ After His resurrection and prior to His ascension Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem but wait for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Finally that day arrived.
- ◆ ***Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.***
- ◆ As explained last time, this was a dramatic change in God's dealing with humanity.
- ◆ He had dwelt with Israel in a corporate sense in the past, but now God is dealing personally with individuals as prophesied in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-29).
- ◆ The reason He is able to do this, is as a result of Jesus' saving work.
- ◆ As we have learned, It was through the "blood of Jesus" that we have been "justified" and "reconciled" to God (Romans 5:9-10).

But God's work of redemption is not completed until humanity stands glorified in His presence.

- ◆ Jesus, through His atoning sacrifice, has overcome sin, the devil and death on our behalf. The world is no longer under the domain of the devil, but Jesus Christ.
- ◆ But as yet, we do not see "***all things put under His feet***" (Hebrews 2:8).
- ◆ To go back to ***Leviticus 26:12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.*** The first part of this verse has been accomplished in that God has been faithful in delivering us from evil.
- ◆ Jesus Christ has paid the death penalty for our sin so God's righteous judgment against sin has been satisfied.
- ◆ In addition, Jesus has responded faithfully to God the Father in being a worthy and faithful son on behalf of mankind.
- ◆ From God's point of view, there is now no impediment on His part in preventing a full restitution of sonship.
- ◆ Christ has died for every human being. He has credited His righteousness to every human being, so there is no longer enmity between God and humanity, but only divine love (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15,19-21; Ephesians 2:5).
- ◆ Through Jesus' incarnation and atonement, the gift of salvation has been graciously prepared, gift-wrapped and is now ready to be offered to a mainly ignorant humanity.

The emphasis now switches to preparing a holy people.

- ◆ This is where the work of the Holy Spirit comes in.
- ◆ The purpose of the Spirit is to reveal to blind and broken humanity knowledge of this precious gift and to bring them to the point of accepting this gift.
- ◆ Again, we see our faithful God taking the initiative in restoring the relationship with mankind and preparing a holy people to share in the life and love of the Godhead.
- ◆ This, in effect, is the second phase of redemption.
- ◆ The first phase occurred when we were redeemed from the guilt of sin through the "blood of Christ."
- ◆ Now through the "Spirit of Christ" we are redeemed to share in the life of God.
- ◆ Earlier we spoke of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of love that intimately binds the persons of the Godhead together.
- ◆ Now through the granting of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that circle of love or mutual indwelling is expanded to include humans.
- ◆ Through the Spirit they would be gathered up, embraced and included in the life and love of the Godhead.
- ◆ This is how the promise of the new life, of being "born again" as part of the new creation is actualised in us.
- ◆ The tongues of fire that settled on the disciples were the external manifestation of this new reality, that mere humans were included and participating in the very life and love of the Godhead.

It is our inclusion in this gift of the Holy Spirit that is to transform us into God's holy people.

- ◆ Notice the transformation the Spirit will accomplish in the lives of individual humans.
- ◆ ***Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...***

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 54 - THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT]

- ◆ We learn earlier that Jesus is the predestined one who represents all humanity.
- ◆ What we see revealed in this verse is God's ultimate goal - to take condemned diseased sinners and through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to mould and shape them into the very image of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ **V.29 "...that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters."**
- ◆ Just as the Son has been accepted by the Father, so now we see additional brothers and sisters given the same reception as Jesus Christ
- ◆ Paul goes on to explain the process of how this is to be accomplished.
- ◆ **V.30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.**
- ◆ Through this whole process, we see God taking the initiative, providing the means whereby we can obtain salvation, and He will not rest until redemption is completed with our glorification as His adopted children.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to awaken humanity to the new reality of who they are in Jesus Christ.

- ◆ What we see in Jesus for the first time is what a true "human being" is supposed to look like.
- ◆ This is what we were created to be, God's holy people in the image of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ There is now a new identity available to mankind to the diseased and false image humans erect of themselves.
- ◆ The Holy Spirit is to awaken us to our new identity in Christ, of who we were meant to be.
- ◆ Unlike the spirit of selfishness that has permeated humanity's history, the Spirit draws us out of our self-centred existence and draws us into the loving, outgoing relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- ◆ This is why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of "fellowship."
- ◆ **2 Corinthians 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**
- ◆ The Spirit is to lead us to the point where we, like the prodigal son, finally come to ourselves, accept the fact we have gone astray, and accept the gift of salvation graciously offered to us.

But again, Jesus has already prepared the way for the Spirit to perform this work.

- ◆ With His incarnation and atoning work, Jesus has invaded, overcome and thrown out the evil strongman leaving the house clean and ready for the Holy Spirit to occupy (Luke 11:24-26).
 - ◆ The ground has been prepared for the Holy Spirit to now draw humanity into the divine relationship.
 - ◆ What we see is Jesus as the good shepherd working now through the Holy Spirit going out to gather His lost sheep (Luke 15).
 - ◆ For it is only "through Christ" and "in Christ" that salvation is completed.
 - ◆ Salvation for all humanity has been completed in the person of Christ, but it is not automatic until the One who is, in Himself *the gift*, is accepted individually.
 - ◆ We cannot separate the work and person of Christ; they are one and the same.
 - ◆ In order for this to happen, individuals need to be made aware of the gift so they have the opportunity to respond.
 - ◆ It is inconceivable after God has gone to such extraordinary lengths to make this gift available that this opportunity to accept the gift is not offered to every individual human.
 - ◆ To not do so would be to invalidate all that Jesus Christ has achieved on humanity's behalf to this point and the Father would not allow this to happen.
 - ◆ If Jesus, in love, has personally died for each individual lost sheep, it is only fair and natural all will be given the opportunity to respond to that love.
 - ◆ After all, Jesus is the one who told the parable of the good shepherd leaving the ninety-nine and going after the lost sheep.
 - ◆ Jesus will make sure of that as He has bought each of them with a terrible price (1 Corinthians 6:20), and will pursue them to the gates of hell if necessary (Romans 8:38-39).
 - ◆ God loves all His children and wants all to come to the point of accepting the gift of participating in the life He has prepared for them.
 - ◆ How He does this is one of those mysteries we wrestle with, but for now we will leave this question hanging.
- Suffice here to say, as salvation is only possible "through Christ" and "in Christ" each individual will be given the opportunity of a personal encounter with the living Jesus Christ.***

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 54 - THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT]

- ◆ And contrary to popular belief, there is no need to fear this encounter as they are meeting with the Lord of grace who delivers the good news that God has already accepted them based on His saving work.
 - ◆ All they need to do is accept the gift offered to them.
 - ◆ “Saving faith” is that simple.
 - ◆ It is the simple act of accepting the saving work Jesus has already performed on their behalf.
 - ◆ There is no need for anyone to work themselves up into a lather trying to produce their own faith, or to demonstrate how good they are.
 - ◆ No. All that is needed is to simply trust and accept the faith already displayed on our behalf by Jesus Christ as demonstrated by the repentant thief crucified with Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:29-43).
 - ◆ Just as Jesus has already been baptised for us, lived for us, died for us, rose from the dead for us, ascended to the Father’s right hand for us, so it is by His faith that we live.
 - ◆ ***Galatians 2:20 (KJV) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.***
 - ◆ So when humanity is confronted with this wonderful truth, there is a high probability of success.
 - ◆ Even the zealot Pharisee Saul who went around “***breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples,***” who later became the apostle Paul, capitulated when He encountered His risen Savior on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-7).
 - ◆ No one is ever consigned to hell without their own Damascus Road personal encounter with Jesus Christ.
 - ◆ It may not be as dramatic as Saul’s depending on how stubborn we are, but nevertheless it will happen.
- But the very fact that Christ has died for all humanity also implicates all in God’s saving work.***
- ◆ There is no escaping the fact that God through Christ has extended His love to all.
 - ◆ For anyone to now rebuff that love, inconceivable as it may seem, leaves them under the judgment from which, as far as God is concerned, they have already been released.
 - ◆ It is only those who reject the gift offered to them personally by Jesus Christ that needs to fear the Judgment.
 - ◆ And if they do refuse, it is a judgment they have brought on themselves, in that they have rejected the decision God has already made for them.
- With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we see the emphasis being shifted to incorporating humanity into the new reality created by the atoning work of Jesus Christ.***
- ◆ God is creating a holy people for Himself and the primary function of the Holy Spirit is to go and find the lost sheep and to persuade them to accept the precious gift Jesus is offering them.