

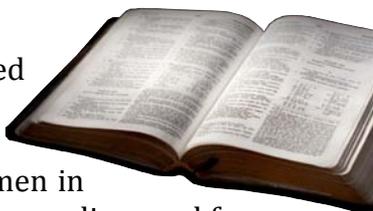


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simstech@gmail.com

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHEN we have confessed our sins and given our hearts to Jesus, how do we grow into mature men and women in Christ? How can we obtain victory in our lives and freedom from sin? “Abide in me,” said Jesus (John 15:4); for “whosoever abideth in him sinneth not” (1 John 3:6). But how do we abide in Him, and how does He abide in us?



Does the person Christ Jesus come down from heaven to us, and physically take up residence in our bodies? Does He ‘possess’ us in the way that demons did in the New Testament times, speaking through our mouths and taking us where we don’t want to go? Certainly not!

CHRIST AT HIS ASCENSION

Shortly before His ascension, Christ said “all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). He is not lack-

“. . . lo, I am with you always, . . .”

ing any power. This includes the power to be with us wherever we are. Though Christ still bears His humanity, He says, “. . . lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 28:20; 18:20).

He is just as much divine now as He ever was. He can still be with each of us, wherever we are. He is our Comforter. He promised, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:18).

How is Jesus with His children all over the earth while at the same time he is at the right hand of the Father? He is with us by His spirit:

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. . . . Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I as-

end up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. — Psalm 139:2, 7-8

With modern technology I can be seen and heard by others a continent or more away, and both see and hear people all over the earth, all from one specific location. My voice, image, and my thoughts can be transmitted to many places at once, while I am physically in one place. In a limited sense, my spirit is present with others many miles from my physical location. How much more then can God and Christ hear, see, communicate, and even act anywhere, and yet still have a physical form, a body in the temple in heaven?

Jesus illustrates how He is present with us in spirit in John 15, by His illustration of the vine; thus showing His disciples the importance of abiding, saying, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you . . .” (John 15:7). Words convey thoughts. Christ abides in us and we in Him, at least in part, by our listening to His voice through His written or spoken Word, taking it into our minds, and meditating upon it. It’s all about the mind!

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. — Philippians 2:5

The mind is the intangible part of the body – you can’t touch it, see it, or handle it. What is it that dwells in the mind? Is it not the thoughts? And words are the expression of the thoughts; for, “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). The following Scriptures speak of this same experience of having the mind of Christ, or having Christ abide in us:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. — Colossians 3:16

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature. — 2 Peter 1:4

So we see that it is by God’s promises (His thoughts or words) that we become partakers of the divine nature. It is thus that He dwells in us.

CHRIST ABIDES IN US IN SPIRIT

While Christ cannot be physically present with us all at the same time, yet He can and is with us in Spirit or mind. Consider the following verses:

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . — Ephesians 3:16-17

THE COMFORTER

Jesus speaks of the coming Comforter in John 14:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. — John 14:16-23

Jesus speaks of this Comforter in the third person, but, in describing who this Comforter was, He said, “you know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” Jesus was that “Comforter” in a personal, physical way, while He was with them, “. . . for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39).

He was to continue to be their Comforter, but now instead of their being able to see Him with their eyes, and hear Him with their ears, they would see Him in their minds, and hear Him in

their thoughts. He confirms this in the very next verse (18), saying, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you,” and again, in verse 20, “I in you,” and yet again in verse 23, “my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

The Greek word used for Comforter in John 14 is *parakletos*, the same word used in 1 John 2:1, where it was translated “Advocate,” and clearly refers to Christ.

Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally; therefore it was altogether for their advantage that He leave them, go to His father, and send His Spirit to be His successor on earth. Thus, no one could then have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Savior would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.

HOW DOES GOD POUR HIS SPIRIT UPON US?

Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. — Proverbs 1:23

In the Scriptures we often find a style of writing known as parallelism, which is used to restate a thought in a different way. The above passage is an example of this. It uses “words” as a synonym or parallel for “spirit.” This again harmonizes with the fact that words are the expression of the mind. It is by making known (or giving us understanding of) His thoughts that we become partakers of His Spirit – as we mediate on them, fill our minds with them, and they become our thoughts.

This conversion of our thinking is not immediate. Our heart is naturally evil and at variance to God, and desperately wicked. In fact, our thoughts are so naturally different to Jehovah’s that He tells us:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. — Isaiah 55:7, 8

We need a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit. This God has promised us, but we have a part to play in this – that of co-operation. When Jesus was explaining this truth to a crowd at Capernaum, they were offended, and many of His disciples left Him. Let us examine this message of Christ's in John 6:53-54, 56 that brought such opposition:

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood? We know he was not speaking of a literal cannibalistic meal. He was speaking figuratively of His abiding in us and we in Him, which we have seen is through His word.

Jesus goes on to clarify this fact by saying,

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. —Verse 63

Once again (now in John 6) Christ shows us that it is by reading and listening to His word, that we receive His Spirit, are spiritually nourished, and receive that life which will never end.



Pay special attention to the fact that God's word contains a power and life that ours does not. When God speaks, things happen. There is creative power in His word. Likewise, when we partake of His word, and it thus becomes a part of us, then it is that it changes us. Christ's words taken into the heart have a power to recreate us, and stamp on us the impress of the divine.

TWO ASPECTS OF MAN

The two aspects of man we call the body (the tangible) and the mind (the intangible), or the flesh and the spirit:

They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips. — Psalm 106: 32, 33

The children of Israel did not hurt Moses' physical body by their murmuring, but his spirit. It nevertheless goes without saying that it was Moses himself which they provoked, not another than Moses.

There is a similarity between God and man, for we know that man was made in the image of God (Genesis 5:1). And in writing to the Corinthians, Paul likens God's Spirit to our spirit:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. — I Corinthians 2:11

Two parallel Bible verses also witness to this connection. By the prophet Isaiah the question is asked:

Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? — Isaiah 40:13

In quoting this Old Testament passage from its Greek translation (the Septuagint), Paul wrote:

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? — Romans 11:34

Notice that in quoting this verse, the Septuagint gives the word "mind" in the place of "Spirit". So when inspiration speaks of God's Spirit or the Holy Spirit, it is speaking, at least in part, of His mind, not another being. Just as when it speaks of Moses' spirit, it refers to his mind, not another person.

THE REAL BATTLE

The battle for our eternal life lies in our minds. We are not only admonished to put the Word of God into our minds, but

we are also warned to guard what goes in. We are to painstakingly protect our minds:

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. — Proverbs 4:23

How is it that God communicates with us? It is through our minds. But how will we ever hear that “still small voice” if our minds are always occupied? The experience expressed in the following verse needs to be ours:

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. — 2 Corinthians 10:5

We need to train ourselves to think on heavenly things. Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to have quiet time with God immediately after watching television, or to meditate on Scripture after reading the news? There is a battle over our minds, and we must diligently guard the entrance to our mind, so that only the good will have a place there.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. — Philippians 4:7-8

If we desire to partake of God’s Spirit, then we have our part to play. We must choose to listen to that “still small voice,” and not crowd it out with other thoughts. We must choose to be in communication with God. We must choose to read His word, and go where it is being studied and preached. Rather than merely reading it for proofs to support our own ideas, or treating it as history, or as ordinary words on paper, we must recognize it as God’s communication to us personally. We must choose to familiarize ourselves with it by meditation and memorization, and we must choose to trust His promises and obey His commands.

What agencies does God use to communicate His Spirit (His thoughts, feelings, and word) with men?

THE AGENCY OF ANGELS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

We are told that the Word of God was given by Inspiration:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. — 2 Timothy 3:16

This process of inspiration is described by Peter, when he said,

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. — 2 Peter 1:21

This inspiration/communication from God, this impartation of the Holy Ghost comes through certain channels, and John, under inspiration, reveals this line of communication:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. — Revelation 1:1



God the Father gave the revelation to Jesus, His Son, who then sent it by His angel to John, and John in turn delivered it to the churches. When the writers of Scripture were “moved by the Holy Ghost” or “inspired of God,” it was God who was speaking through Christ and/or angels to men. This communication of God’s thoughts or word, proceeds from God to Christ, then to angels, and finally to men. Peter calls this process, being “moved by the Holy Ghost”. An example of this moving of the Holy Ghost, or this line of communication is found in the

following passage, where Christ commands His angel to speak to Daniel, who then wrote it for us:

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. — Daniel 8:15-16

We need to become familiar with the ministry of angels, for they are God's ordained means of communication with man after his fall:

And he (Jacob) dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. — Genesis 28:12

This same chain of communication is represented thus:

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. — John 1:51

Christ is the ladder, the mediator which spans heaven and earth, and the angels are the messengers which travel by virtue of His intercession. Angels are thus ministering spirits – God's messengers; for the word angel itself denotes a messenger.

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? — Hebrews 1:13,14

In Zechariah 4, angels are figuratively represented as olive trees, through whom the golden oil is poured, representing the means through which the Holy Spirit in God's word, is communicated to men.

THE AGENCY OF MEN & THE HOLY SPIRIT

When Christ sent His disciples out to preach the gospel, He gave them the promise that God would speak through them:



But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. — Matthew 10:19-20

To each of us is given a measure of God's Spirit, that we might be a blessing to others:

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. — I Corinthians 12:7

Each believer is heaven's appointed channel for the revelation of God to men. Angels wait to communicate through you heaven's light to souls perishing in sin. And what if you refuse to be that channel? Then to that degree is the world robbed of the promised influence of the Holy Spirit!

It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit. There is nothing that Christ desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and character. And there is nothing that the world needs so much as human examples of the Saviour's love.

Dear reader, look upon Jesus. Take time to fill your soul with His word, and commune with Him as you walk life's pathways. By looking to Him, He will draw near to you, and ravish your heart with the joy and peace that alone can come with the abiding presence of Christ in the soul. As your thoughts are exchanged for His, you too will be changed, and will reflect the beauty of His character.

Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. — I John 4:13