

We have already noted in our studies previous to this that the provision of sacrifice was a gracious gift of God; and that the offering of the sacrifices by the people of Israel was in response to their trust in God's word.

I - THE NEW COVENANT

We have been noticing in our studies so far that the use of type and its fulfillment brings us always to a consideration of the New Covenant. This we have noticed first with the Passover.

I - The Passover festival was the occasion for the celebration; but the meaning of the event is the arrival of the new covenant.

We have seen already with the Passover that it was at that time and on that festival night that Jesus' passion and suffering was located in the context of the people of God. This gave the event of his death poignancy and a setting.

Jesus is among His people at the time they are celebrating Passover; in that sense He is celebrating with them. But He is also on a journey of His own life for them; He is living on their behalf.

So we also saw that Jesus is not the celebrator of a festival Himself, He is the meaning of the festival two ways:

[a] in that He brings the meaning of the old action of the Passover Lamb to a fruition and goal which makes it appear as a shadow of which His life must now be seen as the reality.

And [b], that He makes the event of the Passover festival an occasion to take us further than simply finding meaning in looking back. In the context of the Passover meal He inaugurates the Lord's Supper; He feeds them with Himself. And this has implications for the embryonic Christian community.

He begins to speak of the church as one because they eat of the one bread as they derive their life from His sacrifice. Also, that the new covenant [Jeremiah 31.31-33] has now come into operation. It is a "new covenant in His blood". This image looks back, not to the Passover lamb's blood on the doorposts, but to the sprinkling of the people of Israel with blood as they pledged their obedience to God as their response to the covenant He brought them into himself [Exodus 24]. This will imply, in a way that Jeremiah 31 makes clear is consistent with an inward transformation in the people of God that the way is now opened for the new life that Jesus brings to become expressed in his people under a new voluntary freedom found in response to what He has done for them.

2 - The festivals are about offerings; they tell the story and are an occasion for worship

As we look at the festivals, we are noting that they are provisions of God for the people to celebrate and remember what God had previously done among them. They rehearse the story, and they also provide for the celebration. This second element of the celebration is of a piece with their normal worship of God in the wilderness and in the promised land. They include the people gathering together and there are sacrifices to be brought and worship to be offered in this traditional way.

As we see, the offerings which are given to God are also a His provision for them. To come and offer sacrifices to God is a process of approach given and sanctioned by Him, both as to principle and also as to substance. The principle that God may be approached through sacrifice is a gracious provision of God for a people who find themselves constantly unclean and compromised in front of His holiness. Sacrifice then, is not some pagan mollification of an angry God, but a gracious provision of a holy God to approach with safety when maintaining a broken or marred relationship with Him, or of expressing the fellowship with God when once the relationship is happy and sweet. Either way, sacrifice is His provision for them to have life with Him; both in the wilderness and also in the promised land.

3 - The day of Atonement looks to High Priest with better offerings

We saw in the day of Atonement the cleansing of the tabernacle, in the context of the work of the High Priest on behalf of the people as a Mediator from man to God, and also as a Servant of God mediating from God to man. This takes us past the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus to the Ascension into heaven; into the very heavenly tabernacle, to the position of intimacy and closeness to God on our behalf.

We have seen that this order is important, for the work of the Priest on our behalf, and the powerful Apostolic work of Jesus in mediating between God and us has laid the basis through his

incarnate life, death, resurrection and ascension for there to be for us a grounds for intimacy and access to God based on His work alone and nothing of ourselves.

The day of Pentecost marks the next work of the Son of God for us from heaven.

II - PENTECOST

4 – Pentecost is the Greek term for the Feast of Weeks.

Pentecost, or the day of Pentecost [ἡ ἡμέρα τῆς πεντηκοστῆς] means the fiftieth day. It is the term used among Greek speaking Jews for the Feast of Weeks. It was so named because it fell on the fiftieth day after the ceremony of the barley sheaf during the Passover observances. It marked the beginning of the offering of the first fruits.

Leviticus 23 10-21; Numbers 28.26-31; Deuteronomy 16.9-12

5 - The Feast of Weeks.

Other names for this feast are:

[1] Feast of Harvest [lit. a feast of reaping and binding] Exodus 23.16.

[2] The Day of First fruits Numbers 28.26

Weeks is basically a harvest festival and the title feast of harvest is probably its oldest title. The term “weeks” refers to the whole of the period of the grain harvest beginning with the first cuttings of barley and ending with the completion of the wheat harvest – about 7 weeks in all.

It recognized God as the source of rain and also of fertility [Jeremiah 5.24].

6 - First fruits.

The feast was also known as the Day of First Fruits [Numbers 28.26 and Exodus 23.16, 34.22; Lev 23.17]. In this respect it really marked the beginning of the season to bring voluntary offerings of first fruits, a season which ended in the feast of Booths.

7 – The Day of the Sheaf – the beginning.

The actual day was set as the fiftieth day by Leviticus 23.16 as “from the morrow after the Sabbath; counting this day as the first, we find that Weeks fell on the fiftieth day. So Weeks always falls on a Sunday [as our Calendar would call it].

If Passover night was Nisan 15, then the day of the Sheaf, fell on the following day, Nisan 16. The Jews celebrated Weeks on the basis of this computation.

The Sheaf was a fistful of stalks produced when, in ceremonial fashion, the sickle was first put to the standing grain. It was brought to the Altar and it paid tribute to God as the owner of the land and the source of its products; and until its offering it was unlawful to begin reaping or to use the new harvest as food [Lev.23.14]

The offering of a lamb on the altar also accompanied it. The ceremony of the Sheaf was integrally part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

III – SALVATION “FROM” AND SALVATION “TO”

8 - Joshua 5.10-12 - The end of the manna as the food of the wilderness

The reading in Joshua 5.10-12 makes clear that the provision for the people in the wilderness was finished when the land began to produce. What this means is that as “salvation from” is the focus of the Passover and the manna in the wilderness and the drinking from the rock.

So the entry to the promised land is entry into the promise. It is the arrival at the goal; it marks the entry into “salvation to” which God had promised.

In the provisions of the festivals, some celebrate the matters of “salvation from”. They are a looking back to the time when they were in bondage and in need of deliverance. Passover does this in particular. It celebrates the event of the deliverance and the leaving of the old life to come to a relationship of exclusive focus on the One Who delivered them. They are saved to life with Him – as the tabernacle and the law and its regulations show.

Pentecost was a festival that was only possible in the land. It was not celebrated in the wilderness – where the provision of manna was a provision for a time of discipline of 38 years when the people erred on the border of the promised land. The bread of the wilderness was the provision for that journey; the harvest of the promised land was another thing – of which the first fruits celebrated the arrival and expectation of the full harvest.

9 – The first fruits are representative of the whole crop

The Feast of Pentecost, which followed the seasons, [so was a Solar feast like Passover, and Tabernacles] lasted a single day. It marked the first sign of the new harvest; it was a down payment and so was representative of the whole crop which was yet to come.

IV - OLD TESTAMENT ANTICIPATIONS OF THE SPIRIT

10 - What Elijah's ascension meant for Elisha

10.1 The Spirit of God upon a man

Recorded in the Old Testament are examples of men upon whom the Spirit of God came. The sign that the Spirit had come was that they did the works of God; especially prophesying, as in the case of Saul. In each of these cases it is clear that what is coming upon a human is God's Spirit. David distinguishes between God renewing his own spirit [the spirit of the man Psalm 51.10] and God being present with him by God's Spirit which comes and goes [Psalm 51.11].

With all these examples men are the agents of God and the Spirit of God supernaturally endows them with abilities - it is the work of God done by the power of God through the man. And it is clear, if the Spirit departs, so do the works. The man is a channel, although he can be changed [1 Samuel 10.16] by being the anointed man of God for a task.

10.2 What happened for Elisha at the going up of Elijah? [2 Kings 2].

So much for the Spirit of God coming upon a man. But can a man receive the spirit of another man? This question opens an important possibility.

The life of Elijah the Tishbite is recorded in 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2. His prophetic ministry was exercised at a time when the king of Israel Ahab, provoked the Lord by erecting an altar to Baal in Samaria and making Asherah as well [1 Kings 16.32-33]. His wife, Jezebel, entertained at the king's table 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah [1 Kings 18.19]. They were protected by her patronage. This conjunction of the rule of a weak king with a wicked wife brought much trouble to Israel and Elijah. We have already seen that similar circumstances attended the death of John the Baptist, the Elijah who was to come [# See DS2-11.6].

Elijah proclaimed to Ahab that there would be no rain except at his word for three years - a sure sign of God's discipline upon Israel. At the end of three years, on Mt Carmel, Elijah challenged Israel to decide between serving the Lord or other gods. This challenge resulted in God's fire coming at Elijah's request and the slaughter of the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon.

Jezebel was enraged and under her threat, Elijah fled into the wilderness. He was fearing that he was about to die and feeling as if he was holding the fort alone. There, in the desert, it was told him, as well as anointing Hazael to be king over his country Aram, he was to anoint Jehu as king over Israel and Elisha as prophet in his place [1 Kings 19.16]; the latter he did by throwing his mantle [cloak] over Elisha as he was ploughing. It was said to Elijah that all of these three men would be instruments of death and vengeance of God over His enemies, by which He meant those denying Him as God and worshipping other gods.

10.3 Call to serve the master preceded the receiving of his spirit.

After Elijah threw his cloak over Elisha, Elisha became his disciple, following and serving him [1 Kings 19.21] as Elijah continued in his important task.

Notice that it was not given to Elisha to understand all the meaning of what his master was doing; but in that he served Elijah, acting as a son with a father, he obeyed him and carried out his bidding. In this way, as a disciple of the man, Elisha was caught up into a great work. He was called to follow, yet he did not understand where his master fitted into the contemporary history of Israel's encounter with God.

There is a parallel here with the disciples of Jesus at a time of Israel's visitation by God. Israel was under discipline, racked by demons and their land was occupied by a foreign power, whom they were serving unwillingly. As Elijah, in obedience to God, threw his mantle over Elisha, so Jesus, in response to His Father, called his disciples to follow him, which they did. They served Him and obeyed Him. They did not understand that they would be later caught up into His task. Even when He explained His task and death, they did not understand that either. However, they had a promise from Jesus that they would not simply be slaves, but would be friends, who would know what the programme of the Father was [John 15.15-17]. Jesus sent them out on a mission - and they found that the power of God attended them. Like the men of the old covenant, they knew what it was to have the Spirit of God "with them"; but they also had a promise of Jesus that He would be "in them" [John 14.17]. By "in them" Jesus meant they would be receiving His spirit [John 16.13-15], that is the spirit of Jesus [Acts 16.7].

10.4 The departure of Elijah foreshadowed

After the defeat and the death of Ahab and Jezebel Ahaziah reigned in his stead, and he also, trusting in other gods, died of sickness, under the rebuke of Elijah.

The time came for Elijah to depart. 2 Kings 2 records that Elisha knew that the departure of his master was immanent. This fact is confirmed by the sons of the prophets at Bethel and Jericho. These sons of the prophets were schools founded by Elijah and it seems clear that, knowing he is about to go [2 Kings 2.11], Elijah would wish to visit and encourage them in the task. The departure is at a significant place Gilgal, which celebrates the entry into the promised land under Joshua; the entry to the land of rest from their struggles. Elijah seemed to want to go alone. Accordingly, he endeavored to get Elisha to wait for him first at Bethel, and then at Jericho - Elisha would have none of that. It is clear that Elisha intended to be present at his master's immanent going.

Elijah struck the waters of Jordan with his mantle and they parted. This was clearly an entry for him into rest and to be received into heaven as a faithful servant who has the favour and pleasure of God upon him. Elijah asked what Elisha would want him to do for him. [2 Kings 2.9] before he went.

10.5 The request of Elisha: a double portion of the spirit of Elijah

Elisha came to know Elijah as one he served. He knew his moods, his actions and the power of God at work in his life and person. And as it was for Elisha in his prior experience of Elijah, so the disciples of Jesus knew the man "according to the flesh" before they knew him "after the spirit" [2 Corinthians 5.16].

Elisha asked for a double portion [ASV - Heb. carbon copy?] of Elijah's spirit to be given him. Notice that Elisha is asking for the spirit of the man Elijah, he is not asking for the spirit of God. In asking for a "double portion" [Deuteronomy 21.17] of his spirit, Elisha shows that he considers himself as a first born spiritual son of Elijah, and he is asking for his inheritance from a man he regards as "father".

Elisha's understanding of Elijah is that, as a prophet, what he does is his whole life. He wants Elijah's spirit; his attachment is to the man he serves and his focus has not changed since he was called to him. He regards him personally as "father" because he obeys him as a son - this is the relationship which they have.

The other prophets see Elisha's obedience as that of a servant who has a master. In this respect, should Elijah go, they are thinking of a servant who will be without a master. Because they see death as the only way Elijah will go - they therefore see the relationship as coming to an end. Elisha, however, is thinking about an inheritance of a son who has a shared life, the down payment of which is a share in the spirit of his master.

10.6 Beginning of Elisha's mature work.

What we shall see is that the "son" [Elisha] will see the glorification of his "father" [Elijah] - and in seeing that, he receives the spirit of Elijah, and so becomes a mature son, like his father. This is reflected in that he now does the work of his "father" - with all his power and authority. Notice that what is asked here is not a substitution of Elisha's spirit by that of Elijah's. He is asking to receive a portion, as an inheritance, of Elijah's spirit. What is foreshadowed here is a union of two spirits, such that neither is subsumed into the other [which would make for a third kind of hybrid] but a union where the submission of Elisha's spirit to the other will make for the authority and power of Elijah to be expressed in the life of Elisha. In this way, for Elijah, his continuing, heavenly life is to find expression in the earthly life of Elisha. At the same time for Elisha, there is to be a sharing in the heavenly life of the glorified Elijah such that he will do "his works" amidst the earthly scene where he is.

10.7 A work of God's alone

For Elijah, Elisha's request was a "hard thing". Because the granting of Elisha's request was not in Elijah's authority, but only in the power of God. So he made the fulfillment of the request depend on a condition which was not in his control, but in God's.

The parallel with Jesus is that the promise of the Spirit is the Father's promise. The Spirit is asked of the Father, Who sends the Spirit in the name of the Son [John 14.26] and sent by the Son [John 15.26] from the Father.

Elijah left the matter in the hands of God. What God will do will show Elisha whether or not the Lord would fulfill his request. So, Elijah's promise was that if he saw him go [which means to see his glory], then he will have it - if not, then not [See Note 5.1 - Seeing His glory].

10.8 Confirming of faith and understanding of task

Elijah's glorification, like Enoch's before him [Genesis 5.24], is that he did not see death but was taken straight into heaven, a clear statement that God regarded him as a godly man who walked with God upon the earth. No wonder Elijah was such a confirmation with Jesus for the apostles, to know that such a man was standing with the Master? Then, how remarkable for them that it was turned around by the voice from heaven "this is my Son, hear Him!"

As Elijah went up, separated from Elisha by the chariots of God it would have dawned on Elisha:

[1] that he was seeing him go and so his faith would rise that his request would be granted, and, at the same time,

[2] he would have had an understanding of the task granted to him in the way that heaven had sent for his master. The chariots and horsemen of Israel, upon which Israel had based her might and the security of her kingdom are a strong statement of what a powerful defence Elijah had been throughout his ministry to the kingdom of Israel. The way his master went was, to the servant left behind, a statement of his master's work. This knowledge of what Elijah does, as revealed from God, would inform Elisha's own work and make him sure of his authority which he had "in the spirit and power of Elijah".

10.9 The reception of the man's spirit was also the reception of God's power.

As we saw before, Elisha did not ask for the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament record, no man asked for that. It came announced or unannounced, as a sovereign work of God. But what he did

ask for was the spirit of the man. But by his actions afterwards he shows that he understood that if he had received the spirit of the man, then he would have the access to the God of Elijah. "Where is the God of Elijah?" states an expectation. The drying up of the waters demonstrates that expectation to be correct and honoured from heaven.

The perception Elisha worked with is this: that "the things [thoughts ASV] of a man are known by the spirit of the man [1 Corinthians 2.11] which is in him". It must have been obvious to Elisha, from what he saw of Elijah's life, that he was a man who knew God. Elisha had already demonstrated his willingness to obey God because he served the prophet who served God. Elisha's former obedience to God was expressed in the service he did for Elijah. So far as God was concerned God already knew his heart.

In asking for the spirit of the man, Elisha knew that he would come also to know the God of his master like his master had known Him. In receiving of his master's spirit, Elisha had tapped into the knowledge of God as He was known to Elijah while on earth, and now in heaven.

Elijah knew God

[1] as One Who rebuked His people, and especially His king - who ought to govern in His name.

[2] as One jealous for His Name and Who detested the Baals and false gods which Jezebel patronised.

[3] as One Who, in calling the people to decide between God and the gods, knew that He did marvellous acts for the deliverance of His people.

Elisha's act of parting the waters of the river echo something which he had seen his master do earlier [2 Kings 2.14] and the sons of the prophets drew the same conclusion [2 Kings 2.15] saying, "The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha."

11 - What did the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost mean for the disciples of Jesus?

We mentioned in DS4-7 how the Ascension of Jesus was a going up into heaven. Our theme there was what this going up meant for Jesus as part of the Exaltation of the Son of Man in the resurrection and ascension. This study which follows asks what it means for the disciples themselves. When something is worked "for them" in the exaltation of Jesus, what is it that is worked "in them".

4.1a The similarities of the account and the events of Jesus own going to the father can be listed:

[a] Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's powerful spirit and Jesus promises his disciples that they will do even greater works because He will go to the father [John 14.2].

[b] Elisha sees his master transferred into heavenly glory. The disciples also see Jesus in his risen glory ascending [Acts 7.56; 9.3-6]

[c] The theophany experienced by Elisha involves wind and fire; so to does the giving of the Spirit at the day of Pentecost.

[d] The disciples go in search of Elijah but do not find him [2 Kings 2.16-18]. The disciples also search for Jesus but only find an empty tomb [John 20.1-10] He has gone where they cannot come.

[e] As the spirit of Elijah falls on the Elisha as the master is glorified, the Spirit that was upon Jesus is given to his disciples as He himself enters into glory [Luke 23.49, Acts 1-2, John 7.39, 16.7].

[f] Finally, Elijah is taken up on the other side of Jordan. According to Luke, Jesus' ascension takes place near Bethany, on the other side of the Kidron [Luke 23.50].

11.1 Luke connects the Ascension of Jesus and the Day of Pentecost.

We see in 2 Kings 2 two actions of God. The taking of Elijah into heaven and the giving of his spirit to the servant of the taken one. This is very clearly what Luke has in mind in the way that he writes his record of the Ascension and also of the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost. Luke wants us to see the two actions as connected in the same way.

The order in the Acts is:

[1] the clear offer by Jesus of the promise of the Father [1.4-5] of the Spirit

[2] Jesus is taken up and they see Him go [1.9-11] on Mt of Olives

[3] They wait in the upper room in obedience to Jesus' command [4] The day of Pentecost comes

[5] Peter interprets it as the pouring forth of God's Spirit on all mankind, in fulfilment of Joel 2.28-32

[6] Peter, as an apostle, preaches the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus, with the confidence and boldness which is similar to the attitude of Elisha after he returns from seeing Elijah taken up and knowing that he has received of his spirit.

According to John, Jesus re-appears in the room and the disciples have revelation [personal knowledge] of their sins forgiven. [John 20 15-21].

11.2 They receive the Spirit of the Man Jesus, Who is God.

I Corinthians 2 indicates that Paul was careful, at the first instance of his preaching in Corinth, to not preach in persuasive words of wisdom, but in weakness [2.3]. Nevertheless, while Paul is operating in weakness, the preaching is in the power of God.

He then speaks of a hidden wisdom, which the mature understand, but which is not available to the world and its rulers [2.6]. He makes clear that this hidden wisdom [in a mystery] has been revealed by God through the Spirit. In saying this he draws on a piece of obvious wisdom - the spirit of a man, which is in him, is that which knows the things of the man. So, if you could come to receive the spirit of a man you would know the man. Knowledge of a person is conveyed by receiving his spirit.

The same is also true of the Person of God. It is the Spirit of God who knows the deep things of God. So, any union which is spirit-to-spirit, makes the deep things of the one accessible to the other.

Paul's main thrust is that we know the deep things of God because we have received the Spirit of God. This means that we shall come to know the things [thoughts] of Christ Who has been graciously given to us by God. That is, the reception of the spirit of God is the reception of the revelation of the things of God. And the preaching is in spiritual words, which are taught by the Spirit.

However, he makes clear that there is a discernment that accompanies the spiritual man. What he has come to "have" is the mind of Christ [I Cor 2.16]. What the apostles received when they received the Spirit was the knowledge of God which was in the experience of the glorified Son of God, the man Christ Jesus.

12 – Some other main Old Testament Passages:

Isaiah 4.4; 11.2; 30.1; 34.16; 42.1; 44.3; 48.16; 59.19-21; 61.1; 63.11-14

Ezekiel 2.2, 14; 8.3; 11.24; 36.25-27; 37.1.

Joel 2.28ff Zechariah 4.6; 12.10.