

The Fullness of the Holy Spirit for Life and Work - 11

"Spirit of truth...bear witness of me...glorify Me...receive of mine...declare it to you"

Jn.15.26,16.13-16

Review:

Session 1: On the inside, each of us has become a dwelling place of the Spirit.

Session 2: Distinguishing the functioning difference of body, soul and spirit

Session 3: Led by the Spirit: knowing the character and tone of voice and activity of the Spirit

Session 4: The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Session 5: The 'newness' of the Spirit [as against the 'oldness' of the letter]

Session 6: The Spirit given to the obedient

Session 7: Praying in the Spirit...

Session 8: "Be filled with the Spirit"...speaking, singing, chanting, giving thanks, being subject on to another

Session 9: "my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit" Romans 9.1

Session 10: "the Spirit of truth...bear witness of me...glorify me... receive of mine...declare it to you" Jn 15.26,16.13-16

1. The change of focus to the corporate perspective.

As we saw last session; the whole purpose of the Spirit is to take of Christ's and declare to us. This consideration of "us" plunged us into considering the Groom and his bride. We see that language of intimacy begins with a corporate perspective. We saw how we now find ourselves betrothed, and collectively, we are preparing to be with our Groom as a fulfillment of our betrothal to Him; we are heading for a life with a husband.

This "waiting" is the eschatological perspective of living between the going of our Groom to the time when we see his returning "for us". In this time we are preparing in a way that involves us in:

[1] Already learning how to live off the his life "for us" as already established.

[2] As a waiting bride we need to know our Bridegroom's history

[3] Listening to the Spirit as He instructs how to please the Bridegroom

[4] Learning how to be obedient to the Bridegroom's voice and effective in the Bridegroom's life of serving of others

[5] Learning the cost of being associated with a suffering Bridegroom; how to suffer for his sake. This was integral to entering into his life here and now before the suffering stops when He comes.

2. You have not chosen me ... I have chosen you [Jn.16.16;]

Jesus reminds the infant church, taken from Israel, who is listening to Him that they are to know the choice of the Groom for them, not their choice of Him, is the bedrock of their relationship, as it is the secret of their effectiveness, of their own works. The meaning of what they eventually come to do is found in the choice of him for them, and his appointment that their works should remain, as His do.

This takes us back to the basis of covenant as we are given to understand it in the life of Israel; as long as we recognise here that the fulfilment of this covenant -and so its "newness" is what is being brought to Israel and, as the wall breaks down between Jew and Gentile in his death, to all men and women.

3. I will walk among you and be your God and you shall be my people [Leviticus 26.12].

It is helpful to look at the basis of the covenant initiative of God,

[1] "I will be ..." God pronounced himself the God of his people and humankind. So the covenant does not come about by God making decisions about others; first He makes a decision about Himself. He elects Himself to be a covenant God, to be the companion of men and women. It is in this election - this choice of Himself - that He elects them to be his companion. This means that, amongst other things:

[a] God's covenant partner does not decide to belong to this covenant. All we can do here is to confirm that God has determined us to be His partner.

[b] We are not remain passive in this however, we are be thankful, gratefully observing the covenant made by God and to bear witness to it in our actions. This really is all that we must do. For it is the fact that we do not deserve to enter into covenant with God; this is why it is called a covenant of grace - for it is initiated and maintained only because God in His grace constantly turns towards his partner. That is why it is a covenant between unequal partners, for God is merciful and men and women are in need of his mercy.

[c] In this way the two-sided operation of the covenant is determined by its one-sided foun-

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dation through God Himself.

[d] In this way the covenant does not discover Israel as already existing [Genesis 11-12], but it is the covenant that creates Israel. [This is true for the Bride herself - she comes to have life through the seeking Groom; and that through his death].

4.The "new" covenant of Jeremiah 31.31-34.

The 'newness' of the covenant does mean that we talk here of two covenants, nor is it a replacement of the covenant with Israel by another. There is only one covenant with God. This prophecy will make clear what God had always had in his mind to do through the initial covenant with Israel.

What changes here is not the substance of the covenant - which is in every way affirmed - but the form or its 'economy'; that is, how it will come to be administered in the last days of which Jesus' work is the fulfillment. So it is a new form which is consistent with the changed conditions; for Israel is now capable of a response - in Christ Jesus - which she was not formerly able to do. The new covenant then, if we can speak of a replacement, consists in such a positive replacement as this.

Formerly, from man's side, the covenant was open insofar that men and women attempted to meet the demands of the covenant and could not - so they "broke" it. Now, God will make the covenant from man's side a closed covenant. It will not have to do with their works and efforts as it will consist in them taking refuge - by simply trusting it - in the works of another, the Bridegroom, for them, in their place and in their stead. It will now be kept, not because men and women are better, but because it will be mutually kept as God will turn them to Himself, with a new heart and new spirit.

[a] write his law on their hearts

[b] All will know God - which abolishes the distinction between those who know and those who don't, between the wise man and the fool, between the teacher and the taught, the prophets and the people.

[c] the forgiveness of their sins will eliminate the "broken" covenant and leads to the inward gift which eliminates their guilt. In forgiveness God eliminates the unfaithfulness of Israel.

5. The go'el provision and the record of the book of Ruth - redemption within covenant

The go'el is a kinsman redeemer who both releases us from debt and inability to extract ourselves from it, and also avenges our blood whenever it is taken from us unjustly.

We see this material clearly throughout Ruth as she finds herself taken into the covenant relation through marriage; her unwillingness to depart from her mother-in-law Naomi, and the God of Israel.

She finds herself subject to the terms of the covenant community into which she has entered. Naomi instructs here of how to take her place and know the salvation and provision through the acceptance of her kinsman redeemer Boaz.

6. Reconciliation takes place within the covenant.

How does reconciliation fulfill the covenant between God and man?

1. Christ's reconciliation is God's reaction to sin. But we need to be careful to show that the covenant - and its openness upon man's side - means that there is already the possibility of action in regard to sin from the very first. In this way, God is not simply reacting to sin in a way that sin controls Him. So when God overcomes sin it is a particular accomplishment of God's covenant will. It is in reconciliation that the covenant truly reaches its goal and is not left hanging.

2. So God involves himself with humans despite sin; otherwise God's relationship to humans would be dependant on sin. So God registers his judgment within the covenant. As judgment takes place as a reaction to sin in God's covenant action, his judgment is the fulfillment of God's faithfulness as He rejects Israel's unfaithfulness. In this way, the heart of reconciliation is the overcoming of sin. His judgment and grace are not in tension, but both are in tension with respect to sin.