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Previously in the Old Testament and in John

Ezekiel 40-48: the new Temple and the water of life

Ezekiel lays out for us the great themes of the restoration that God would do with regard to Israel.

[a] Chapters 40-46 speaks of the temple of God that will be re-built as a vast enterprise that will reflect the whole people of God, which is later described in the New Testament letters.

[b] In Ezekiel's picture of chapter 47, undergirding that temple of the people of God is a river of water that flows east and then emerges out on the south side of the temple [47.1-2].

[c] This water flowing from beneath the temple of God starts at ankle depth and then becomes a mighty body of water that a man can swim in. It is a river that "cannot be passed through", that is, you never come to the end of this river. Once in it, you cannot find its end, it is an immersion for life [47.3-6a].

[d] Alongside this river are trees with fruit for eating and leaves that are for healing. This healing and sustaining river sustains the whole of the life of the animals and men and women around it [47.6b-12].

This picture of water, depicts the work of the Holy Spirit undergirding to bring life to the people of God, whose depth comes to be experienced gradually and in a way that never can be plumbed. Notice here that the picture is a corporate one of the temple as the whole people of God - it is about a river into which you can find yourself ankle deep or submerged.

John's Gospel and the Revelation, both recall Ezekiel's picture. They use this, as a water image for the Holy Spirit.

John 3: born of 'water and Spirit'

In replying to Nicodemus, the man from the Pharisees who visited him by night, Jesus had made it clear that something had to happen to persons before they could "see" or "enter" the kingdom of God [John 3]. To appropriate any revelation of the kingdom, let alone to come under its influence, a re-birth was necessary.

Jesus went on to speak of this re-birth as being born of water and spirit. It was a single action that he envisaged in 'water and spirit'. Our writer

John, may have had at the back of his mind Ezekiel's language of water for Spirit; or he may be referring to Christian baptism in water and the reception of the Holy Spirit as a single action which causes a person to be born of 'water and spirit'. Here the image in its practical application, is personal and appropriate to each individual.

John 4: the drinking of satisfying, living water

In the discussion with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well [John 4]; Jesus had spoken of a gift of living water which was his to give, if asked for. Here again, the image is not corporate but personal. It is individually appropriated by faith and is applied bodily to the single person, who will find that this water is a "drink" which satisfies, and remains as a well spring of the life of God. As a metaphor for the Spirit of God it could hardly be more clear.

John 7: water drunk becomes a well of living water

The feast of the Tabernacles, begins with its emphasis on 'water', and its final emphasis focusses on 'light'. Jesus, [verse 37-39] on the great day of the feast, says "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" John, our writer, makes clear with an editorial note, "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

Unmistakenly here, for each person who comes to Jesus, a personal response is meant, - "whoever believes in me". At this time in Jesus' service to men and women of the world, the promise of the Holy Spirit is given prior to Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. We understand that this is what John means by Jesus being "glorified".

In 2 Kings 2 we shall see why, in the life of Jesus, this timing of the later giving of the Spirit, which John the writer speaks of, is so necessary. We see why it is that the disciples should have the Spirit of the glorified Jesus; there is something that Jesus has to convey by his Spirit which at the time of this feast of tabernacles, had not yet entered his experience.

1 Corinthians 2: the spirit of a man knows the deep things of the man

I don't know if you have ever thought about the sort of language that we might use to speak of our inner life. But for myself, I have come to see that it is really important to understand these inner processes; and that the understanding comes from God.

1 Corinthians 1

In Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth, he addresses the true unity of the Christian congregation endowed with the gracious gifts of the Spirit. He explains how this true unity is opposed and fractured by parties within the church there [1.9-12].

He doesn't want them to think of their ministers in any sectarian or partisan way. This inevitably fractures the body of Christ - the Christian community [1.13-4.20].

Paul explains that when God called them through his preaching, this calling came to them as people who did not possess any wisdom, power or nobility of themselves. So any confidence and boasting they now make is really on the basis of the Lord and his work for them [1 Corinthians 1.26-31].

1 Corinthians 2

In the 2nd chapter, he asks them to recall how he first came to them. It wasn't with persuasive words of man's wisdom, it was with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He says that this was deliberate, for he didn't want their faith to rest on any wisdom they saw in him. He wanted them to be trusting in the power of God.

Staying with the theme of revealed wisdom, Paul moves on to write of the wisdom of the Spirit Who reveals to us the glory which is ours.

In the section 2.6-16, his thinking flows along these lines:

[1] Mature Christians do recognise that Paul is speaking wisdom. The source of this wisdom is not from the "rulers of this age" – the spiritual powers that oppose God are now, in the light of the Lord's death and resurrection, passing away [2.6].

[2] What Paul is writing to them concerns the wisdom of God, that had been kept secret before Christ came; it was hidden because it had to do with God's purposes in regard to our glory - how we would eventually be honoured. It was kept secret from the spiritual opposing powers, because, if they had understood the program they would never have crucified the Lord through whom this glory would come to us [2.7-8].

[3] Further, not only were the opposing powers kept in the dark about this coming glory for us, but also no man or woman saw or heard of it either; no human imagined or longed for what God had prepared for those who love him [2.9]. The quotation from Isaiah 64.4 concerns the unique nature of God's hidden plan of salvation. It is a plan that involves a powerful intervention of God [Isaiah 64.1]. Those who love God, understand his salvation as being the true wisdom; which is very different from that of man.

[4] But now, the revelation of this glory has been revealed to us [2.10a].

[5] The revelation he speaks of has come to us through the Spirit of God. And the reason such revelation can come at all is because the Spirit is absolutely qualified to bring it, since He searches out everything, even the deep things of God. So it is revelation from the omniscient Spirit who knows the deep, hidden plan of God as well as the knowledge of his Person [2.10b]. Only God can reveal God! This is true of the Son in respect of the Father, it is also true of the Spirit in respect of both Father and Son.

[6] Paul makes a comparison for us, to help us grasp what he means. He compares the function of the Spirit of God, in respect of God's person and thought, with the function of the spirit of a human being with respect to the whole man. In speaking of this he refers to "the things of the man" [Gk text]. It is a wide reference, including everything relating to the man.

This wider reference, in some translations is often narrowed to the idea of "the thoughts" of the man. Contextually, such a limitation will make sense, since Paul has been discussing the hitherto secret plans and purpose of God for us. And alongside that, he speaks of our inability to conceive within ourselves what God has now revealed.

So the inward thoughts, imaginings, conceptions are certainly in view. The 'things' of God, or man, are the plans of God or of man here. The comparison holds and is powerful for a revelation made about God's inner, secret thoughts for us [2.11].

However, the range of 'the things' of God and of man, from which the comparison is made, ranges much wider than simply 'thoughts'; we know this because the point in question is that the Spirit of God and of man are both being compared for their similarity of operation and scope of their knowledge, of God and of man. It is a matter of each knowing "all" things in their respective place.

[7] So, when he says "no one can know the things of a man except the spirit of the man within him". This asserts that:

[a] the spirit of a human being "knows"; this is language such as you would apply to a person

[b] The knowledge of the spirit of the man is full in respect of his person - everything that pertains to the man. There is nothing left outside the spirit of the man knowing.

[c] the spirit knows from a vantage point within. So these known things are subjective to the person. They are the sure things known out of which he operates his personal living. So we can say that the external actions of a life style, show these inner things of the man.

[8] Paul now asserts the grounds of our knowing; we have received the Spirit who is from God. We have not received the spirit of the 'world' – that is, of the darkened, non-discerning ones. Rather, the all-knowing Spirit of God has entered each of us so that we might understand. That is, the arrival of the Spirit of God will bring us to understand - a function of our mind - the things freely given to us by God [2.12]

[9] When Paul speaks there is an impartation in words not taught by human wisdom, but are taught by the Spirit [2.13]. The way he states it means this:

1. To hear Paul speak to fellow mature Christians, is to be taught by the Spirit.

2. The imparting of this wisdom, or revelation, uses words that the

Spirit teaches Paul.

3. The teaching is an interpretation of spiritual truths mediated by the Spirit. It is portrayed as a combining – a bringing together - of spiritual things by spiritual means.

4. It is only capable of reception, in the Corinthian context, by those who are mature in spiritual matters.

[10] In contrast to the spiritual person, the natural [soulish] man does not consistently receive the things of the Spirit of God. Lacking spiritual discernment, so necessary for the discernment of these things of God's Spirit, the soulish man registers them as foolish, they are to him just non-sense [2.14].

[11] The spiritual man discerns all things, - this is because the Spirit he has received knows all things – and yet, as to his own person he is not readable, knowable or discerned by anyone else [2.15].

[12] The quotation in verse 16 is from Isaiah 40.13 and it expects the answer, "No-one". It is also introduced by a 'for', which implies that it is an explanation of 2.12-16 and so carries the argument forward; in this case all the way to 1 Corinthians 3.1-4.

The Hebrew Masoretic text reads, "Who has measured the spirit of the Lord? Or what man shows him his counsel?" while the Septuagint Greek text reads, "Who has known the mind of the Lord, and Who has become his advisor so as to instruct Him?" The parallel between 'spirit' and 'mind' instructs us about Paul's message here. In a powerful twist, while the quotation expects the answer 'no-one', Paul goes on to assert, but "we are continually having the mind of Christ". It refers to the mindset which Christ has; it refers to the deep wisdom of a salvation brought about by the crucified Messiah [1.18-25]. It was previously hidden but is now revealed by the Holy Spirit.

The move from 'Lord' to 'Christ' really states that the true wisdom is caught up in the cross of Christ.

2 Kings 2: the receiving of a man's spirit conveys that man's knowledge of his God

[a]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. At this time in the Old Testament revelation, the Spirit of God is seen to "come" and "go". David can even ask that God not take his Spirit from him.

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.

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

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. Similar circumstances attended the death of John the Baptist, the Elijah who was to come.

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.

[c] The 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 as Elijah continued in his important task of contending for the Lord [1 Kings 19.21].

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].

[d] 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 was 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 endeavoured 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 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.

[e] 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 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.

[f] Beginning of Elisha's mature work.

What we shall see from the text is that the "son" [Elisha] saw the glorification of his "father" [Elijah] - and in seeing that, he received the spirit of Elijah, and so became a mature son, a man like his father. This is reflected in that he now will do 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 will find expression in the earthly life of Elisha. At the same time for Elisha, there was to be a sharing in the heavenly life of the glorified Elijah such that he would do "his works" amidst the earthly scene where he was.

[g] 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 to give, but only in the power of God. So he made the fulfilment 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 fulfil his request. So, Elijah's promise was that if Elisha saw him go [which means to see his glory], then

he will have what he asked - if not, then not .

[h] 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, which is a clear statement that God regarded him as a godly man who walked with God upon the earth. At the Transfiguration on the mountain, no wonder that the presence of Elijah with Jesus, confirmed to the apostles the greatness of their own Master. How even more remarkable for them that Elijah was discounted by the voice from heaven which directed them, in such august company, to attend only to Jesus, "this is my Son, hear Him!"

As Elijah went up in the whirlwind to heaven, 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. To the servant left behind, the way his master went was 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".

[i] 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. The Spirit 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 [verse 15]. 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 Corinthe-

ans 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, in turn, 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."

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

Acts 1-2

The Ascension of Jesus was a going up into heaven. It is 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"?

[a] 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 [Acts 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].

[b] They receive the Spirit of the Man Jesus, Who is God. This is to receive the Spirit of God.

1 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 which accompanies the spiritual man. What he has come to "have" is the mind of Christ [1 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.

Luke 11.9-13: - the Spirit the ultimate gift of God Himself

This passage records Jesus' teaching encouraging us to pray. The teaching invites us to consider a parallel - and turns on the words "how much more".

He speaks of the confidence of asking boldly - such boldness that would ask of a friend, even though you know that you are inconveniencing them in the middle of the night [Luke 11.5-8]. Then he develops this theme of asking, to be given; seeking, that you might find; and knocking in a sure confidence that the door will be opened to you.

He speaks a parable of fathers and sons. He makes it clear that even people such as us, who are evil, nevertheless know to give good and appropriate gifts to our children. Fathers do not give serpents to sons who ask for fish; nor scorpions to those asking for eggs.

If that is so for us who are evil, how much more is it true of God the heavenly Father that He will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him.

What is remarkable here, is that the gift of the Spirit of God is the gift of God Himself - and that it may be asked for. This teaching in Luke is explicitly stated by Jesus in John's Gospel to the woman at Jacob's well [John 4].

