

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

A STUDY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

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PART 15: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus was incarnated into a human body, it was among the only people on earth who were following the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some 2,000 years earlier, He had called Abraham to become the father of a peculiar people, who later became known as the twelve Hebrew tribes.

Jesus painstakingly watched the offspring of Abraham and He instructed Moses to lead them out of Egypt. The Son of God sent other leaders, kings and prophets, to keep the people on the straight and narrow way.

“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.” (Deuteronomy 14:2)

Jesus made a covenant with the Israelites but they were not faithful. Nevertheless, through His love, He kept a remnant which served as the foundation of the second covenant. It is noteworthy that when Jesus was incarnated to start the redemption plan, only the remnant of the Hebrew tribes – by this time known as Jews – worshiped the living God. The other nations were corrupt and served different demon gods.

THE SYNAGOGUE SYSTEM

The synagogue system started around 586 B.C. with the capitulation of the southern kingdom of Judah to King Nebuchadnezzar. Solomon’s temple was destroyed and a large portion of the Jews were taken to Babylon. The Hebrew term for a local congregation of Jews is “bet Knesset” (house of assembly) and in Greek it is “synagogue.”

By the time Jesus was incarnated, the synagogue system was fully developed in Judea and Galilee, and in other nations where large number of Jews lived. Meetings took place on the Jewish sabbath day (Saturday) with a morning and evening service, normally led by a rabbi and a cantor (song leader). It was important for Jewish people to belong to a local synagogue and to be in good standing religious, social, and cultural reasons.

1. The synagogue was the center of religious life aside from the temple in Jerusalem. Rabbis read from the Mosaic law, the prophets, and even the Talmud. Regular attendance showed faithfulness to God.
2. Being part of a synagogue was synonymous with community because people gathered there for worship, but also for education, judgment of disputes, and fellowship. Any expelled man lost his place in society and was treated as an outsider.



3. A person's reputation was tied to the synagogue. To be in good standing meant that a man could participate in worship, festivals, and community decision-making. If a man was guilty of sin, heresy, or offending rabbinical leaders, he would be shunned and cut off from family, neighbors, and business opportunities.

When Jesus healed a blind man, it outraged the Jewish leadership and they questioned his parents, but they feared being "put out of the synagogue" and refused to answer any questions.

"But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?"

His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him." (John 9:18-23)

***Losing their place in Jewish society was a big deal
and they did not want to be shunned!***

REJECTION BY JESUS

The rabbis did not operate in the supernatural realm. They prayed for the sick, but with negative results. It was a rigid system, void of any supernatural intervention by God. Judaism had become a religion, rather the relationship envisioned by God.

Jesus moved in the power of the Holy Spirit when He healed the blind, lame, lepers, deaf, dumb (could not speak), raised the dead, and cast out demons. He multiplied food, walked on water, and controlled the weather.

These miracles were in stark contrast to feeble and powerless efforts of the rabbis. The Jewish leadership could not compete with Jesus; they were spiritual paupers in comparison. This is why they opted to kill the God-man.

It put even more pressure on the rabbinical system when Jesus was resurrected and they continued the senseless violence, murdering the righteous disciples of Jesus.

“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.” (Acts 7:54-60)

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

The day of Pentecost was a disaster for the Jewish leadership and their synagogue system. Up to this point, they only had to contend with Jesus, the apostles, and the seventy others. But now every believer in Christ had become a “little Jesus.” They had no inkling about the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit.

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

Operating in any gift of the Holy Spirit is exciting because it means you are in God's will and He is choosing to use you for something particular. It is wonderful knowing that the path you're on is sanctioned by God and receiving His blessing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

CHURCH OF JESUS

The Holy Spirit performed an abrupt name change and abandoned the synagogue name. He shifted to the Greek word of “eklesia,” which means “a group of people.” In English it is known as “church.”

Jesus selected twelve men for full-time ministry. They are called “apostles,” which means “sent out.” Over time the word became synonymous with “missionary.”

“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” (Matthew 10:1)

Dissention eventually arose within the church at Jerusalem and the apostles created another office called “servants.” The Greek word is “diakonos,” which translates to “deacon” in English.

“And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” (Acts 6:1-3)

The apostle Paul set forth the additional church offices with the introduction of prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” (Ephesians 4:11)

The apostle James introduced the term “elder,” and churches would eventually be ruled by a pastor and assisted by elders and deacons.

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” (James 5:14)

Paul also introduced the office “bishop,” which means “overseer.” There were no early church buildings as believers in cities met in home groups. All the different home groups of Ephesus would have been considered the church of Ephesus.

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.” (1 Timothy 3:1-2)

SUPERIORITY OF THE CHURCH

Some thirty years after the resurrection of Jesus, the church had emerged as a powerful force within the Roman Empire. Scores of cities featured large Christian populations; each presided over by a bishop. Under him were the home groups run by pastors who had elders, deacons, evangelists, prophets and teachers.

The leadership was baptized in the Holy Spirit and the third person of the Godhead sovereignly activated the nine gifts among them. Traversing the different parts of the Roman Empire were apostles like Paul who displayed great spiritual power.

The Jewish leadership with their synagogues spread throughout the Roman Empire and started a united campaign against the Christians. The nine gifts of the Holy Spirit made it so that the unsaved Jews stuck in Judaism could not compete.

In an effort to halt the Christians operating with the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the Jewish leadership used their political connections to stir up the Roman government against them. It became decidedly unhealthy to be a Christian as many were arrested and executed. For the next 300 years, Christians were fed to the lions, beaten, whipped, sawed in half, put to death by sword, burned in the fire, and chained in prisons.

Augustine of Hippo said: *“The earth has been filled with the blood of the martyrs as with seed, and from that seed have sprung the crops of the church. They have asserted Christ’s cause more effectively when dead than when they were alive. They assert it today, they preach him today; their tongues are silent, their deeds echo round the world. They were arrested, bound, imprisoned, brought to trial, tortured, burned at the stake, stoned to death, run through, fed to wild beasts. In all their kinds of death they were jeered at as worthless, but ‘precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints’”*¹

Christians were murdered and the unsaved saw their great faith. The Holy Spirit moved in their lives and the harvest of souls continued. The church kept growing despite the persecution. The new converts were baptized in the Holy Spirit, started to move in the nine gifts, and the spiritual fire kept spreading.

LOSS OF POWER

Emperor Constantine made peace with the Christians in A.D. 325 when he invited bishops to form a state church with him at the head. The majority of the bishops accepted the proposal since the emperor promised an end to persecution.

All churches were forced to surrender their independence and accept a supreme leader in Rome as the head of the church. The heathen title of “pontifex maximus” (the greatest priest) was later exchanged for “papa” (father – “pope” in English) with the fall of the Western Roman Empire, when the bishops of Rome grew in prominence and began to exert religious and political influence. Nevertheless, scores of bishops refused to surrender their autonomy to Rome and a systematic purge began until the resisters were killed.

The new political church leadership in Rome instituted the following:

¹ (Wesselschmidt, Q. F., ed., Psalms 51—150, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 8, InterVarsity Press, 2007, p. 293)

- ❖ They abandoned the teaching that a person must become born again.
- ❖ Water baptism through immersion was replaced with sprinkling of water on babies.
- ❖ Bibles were removed from the people in the churches.
- ❖ Prayers to dead “saints” were introduced.
- ❖ Mary, the mother of Jesus, was elevated as a deity; people were directed to pray to Mary instead of to Jesus.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit was no longer taught; instead, people were told the nine gifts were only for the early church and ceased once the New Testament was written. Given the church was still in its early phase during the first three centuries, this heretical doctrine was ironic because the modern church holds the same view some 1,700 years later. The Devil had done his homework and the once powerful church was effectively neutered; it transformed from a living body into a tomb full of dead bones.

RESTORING THE GIFTS

The following is a short summary how the Holy Spirit restored the sacraments, baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the nine gifts which had been lost over time.

- ❖ The Moravian church, founded in 1457, reintroduced the need to be born again along with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but it did not have the traction to form a worldwide missionary movement until the 1700s.
- ❖ The Holy Spirit moved upon Martin Luther to break away from the Roman Catholic Church around 1517. The church had been largely dead for nearly 1,200 years and Luther was used to restore the teaching that people must be born again to obtain eternal life in heaven. However, Luther kept the practice of infant baptism.
- ❖ John Smyth founded the first English speaking church in 1609 and water baptism by immersion came back in use again.
- ❖ The Azusa Street Revival started in Los Angeles in 1906 and the baptism of the Holy Spirit was reintroduced. Within a short time, people from the other states, Canada, and Europe came to the meetings and received the baptism. The nine gifts were once again in operation on a large scale as Pentecostal churches sprang up on every continent.

The Holy Spirit has restored what had been lost in the fourth century with the rise of the Roman state church. Because there is no longer a unified and centralized state church, the power of the Holy Spirit can no longer be sidelined as He was prior to the reformation. Without the intervention of the Holy Spirit, there would not have been a renewal of the nine gifts.

MY TESTIMONY

The gifts that have been and are operating in my personal life are faith, healing, prophecy, discerning of spirits, and praying in tongues. The Holy Spirit controls the impartation and activates the gifts as needed.

“But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

I have encountered many demon possessed people and cast out demons since 1969. In that time, I have learned that it is necessary to ask for the gifts of faith, discernment, knowledge, and wisdom. It is God's will to cast out the demons, and the Holy Spirit will activate His gifts, so the person seeking help, can be set free.

I can help my body by eating nutritiously and exercising to strengthen my muscles. In like manner, reading the Bible for six hours and praying for five hours is certainly helpful in building up my spirit man, but that won't bring a gift of the Holy Spirit to me.

The only thing I can do is to live a holy life and be available. The Holy Spirit will activate gifts on His timing; I cannot force Him into anything.

A Christian who is baptized in the Holy Spirit does not actually control the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are controlled sovereignly by the third person of the Godhead.

What can you do? Submit to the Holy Spirit. When He bestows a gift on you, be relaxed and let Him do His sovereign work in you. Let Him take the lead and be obedient to His directives.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” (Mark 16:15-18)

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?