

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (5)

The baptism with the Spirit

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The Holy Spirit”, the fifth message, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

When we are born again, we are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ baptizes us with the Holy Spirit so that we will know God's power for spiritual development and service. This is available to all Christians who want to honour the Lord Jesus in their lives and be a good witness for Him.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

[End of summary]

We all know that what we believe with regard to who God is and what He has done, and with regard to our lives is a very serious matter. It has consequences and implications not just for our time – our short time – on this earth but also for all eternity.

We believe in this but in reality, what does it actually mean to us?

In our daily lives, how does this affect us? How do we live our lives with this belief? Does our life correspond with this belief that we have?

If we believe that God is almighty, He has created all things; if we believe that we as moral beings have a choice but we have gone astray and there is serious consequence because of our sins and God's judgment; and if we believe that God in His grace and mercy has made provision for us to be forgiven through the cross, what should all this mean to us? If we believe that the cross is such a very serious matter, that God Himself suffered so greatly because of His love for us, what does this mean to us?

As we think of our own lives, as we observe the lives of Christians around us, as we read the Scriptures, does it not come through to us that so often, our lives do not correspond with what we understand ought to be?

For many Christians, God is not very real, the Lord Jesus Christ is not very relevant to their lives day by day. The things that they do each day do not bear a significant relationship with what is important to God: We still carry on doing the things we would like to do, we still do the things that many people in the world would do without such a belief.

Why is that so?

On the other hand, we see that there are some Christians to whom God is real. They are very excited, they are very eager. They want to serve God; they want to contribute to other people's lives. And in their eagerness, many people can be affected and influenced, at times quite positively. However for some of these people, we may also notice that that reality of God may fade after some time; it may no longer be so real to them and they may go back to a way of life very similar to those who do not believe.

There are others whom we can see they know God, they experience God; there is a reality in their lives and yet, in terms of their character, it may not correspond with the character of God.

Why is that so? Why are they, in spite of the knowledge of God, the reality of God in their lives, still quite self-centred?

Then there are others where God is real to them, they love God deeply, they are concerned for the well-being of others and they are consistent. They continue that way for many, many years in their lives and for some, throughout their lives. People like Daniel, Paul: when they came to know the Lord, it meant so much to them, it affected everything that they did. God was real and consistently real, and it transformed their character. Their values, the way they lived, the way they related with people arose from their relationship with God.

So why is it that there is so much variation in the lives of Christians?

I see that very often, this is associated with the manner of working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our understanding of what it means to live by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the reality in our daily lives.

So this is an issue that is of great significance and it is helpful if we can seek the Lord to understand more accurately what it means. A wrong understanding in this area can lead to very serious consequences, both for ourselves as well as the people that we seek to influence.

So let us have a look at the Scriptures to seek to appreciate what the Lord wants to tell us about this subject of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24: 45-49

- 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,
47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
48 "You are witnesses of these things.
49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

The Lord Jesus was speaking to His disciples: disciples who had known Him, who had seen God at work, who were conscious of the reality of the spiritual realm. And the Lord Jesus said, "You are witnesses of these things." They had knowledge of God; they had knowledge of the Lord Jesus. They witnessed what He did, how He lived His life.

And the Lord Jesus said: "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." They were witnesses. They had seen, they knew, and yet they were not ready to go forth, to be witnesses. The Lord Jesus said: "...stay... until you are clothed with power from on high."

They needed the power from God, the life and the reality from God. They were not to bear witness just based on their natural awareness of things, based on their natural power and ability, but they were to become witnesses on the basis of God's empowering in their lives: They were to be clothed with power from on high.

So what the Lord Jesus was referring to was something of great significance because He had risen from the dead, He was going to ascend to heaven and He told His disciples: "Wait in Jerusalem, **until you are clothed with power from on high.**"

What was He referring to?

Acts 1: 4-8

- 4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "**Which,**" *He said,* "**you heard of from Me;**
- 5 **for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**"
- 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"
- 7 He said to them, "**It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;**
- 8 **but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**"

Acts 1: 4-8 helps us understand what the Lord Jesus was referring to in **Luke 24: 45-49**.

He told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "**Which,**" *He said,* "**you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**"

So "baptized with the Holy Spirit" basically has the same meaning as being "clothed with power from on high". The Lord Jesus told His disciples to wait until they were **clothed with power from on high**. He told them: "**...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**"

And then in such a situation of such great importance that the Lord Jesus was communicating to His disciples, notice what they said: So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" They were asking about restoring the kingdom to Israel; the Lord Jesus was telling them something so important in the spiritual realm: the power of God coming upon them to equip them to serve.

So He said to them: "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority... It is not for you to know these things." "...but," He said, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." So here, He explains what the baptism with the Holy Spirit is. He says: "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you".

So the Holy Spirit coming upon them is the same as being baptized with the Holy Spirit in this context. And when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they would then receive power from God, power from on high. And it is in this context then, He said: "...you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The Lord Jesus was telling His disciples: "To be My witnesses, you must know this power, the power of the Holy Spirit having come upon you."

The problem is that many of us want to be witnesses, but we have not yet appreciated the spiritual realm, we have not yet known the Lord Jesus and the power of God in our lives in a personal way, in a significant measure, so that we can transmit something that is real.

In such a situation, it is very easy for us to use our natural wisdom, our natural abilities, our persuasive powers, the arguments of science and psychology to convince people to believe in God and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, our understanding of science, our understanding of human behaviour can at times be helpful in our communication with people. But ultimately, if we are to reach the hearts of people with the gospel, we must reach their hearts through the Holy Spirit speaking to them.

There must be spiritual life and meaning and reality from God – that they can recognize that this is real, this is the path, this is what ought to be.

Otherwise, the response can merely be a mental recognition: “Yes, I agree with this. Yes, I think so, and so I follow.” And the way that things happen: becoming a Christian can very often be quite similar to joining a society, having a membership in a particular club.

Is there that spiritual transformation? Is there a spiritual reality and life and meaning that comes through when we bear witness? First: Is it real in our lives? If it is not, then how are we to transmit that to others?

So the Lord Jesus was referring to the need for them to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Who then could baptize them with the Holy Spirit?

John 1: 28-34

- 28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.
29 The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'
31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."
32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.
33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'
34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

This is the testimony of John the Baptist and he told the people who the Lord Jesus was.

He said: "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me..."

That is, John the Baptist did not quite recognize the Lord Jesus but he was told (and in this context we could say it was God who sent him to baptize and God indicated to him): 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

The "Son of God" refers to the Lord Jesus, and the One upon whom the Spirit descended and remained upon was the Lord Jesus. And He is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit, or the word can also be translated as "with" – baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Most other translations translate it as "the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit", but the word can be translated as "in" or "with", and both are appropriate.

Notice that he was told: 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' So it is possible for the Holy Spirit to descend upon a person and yet not remain. But for the Lord Jesus, this was the characteristic of His life.

As the perfect Man, He was baptized with the Holy Spirit and that remained on Him throughout His ministry. As He began His public ministry, God manifested His authority and power in the context in which the Holy Spirit descended as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. The Lord Jesus as the perfect Man shows to us how we must serve. If we are to serve God, if we are to minister to others, we must know what this means. And He is the One who will baptize us with the Holy Spirit to enable us to do His work.

So then, what is the purpose of the baptism with the Holy Spirit? What would we experience?

Baptism basically places us in the environment of the medium with which we are baptized.

When we are baptized with water, we are baptized in water, that is, we are placed in the environment of water. We are baptized in the water, we are baptized with water. The water is the medium and we are in the medium of the water.

When the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, the body of Christ is the medium; we are placed in the environment of the body of Christ, the church. When the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ, we now dwell in the environment of the body of Christ.

When the Lord Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, we are placed in the environment or atmosphere of the Holy Spirit.

When He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, we enter into the presence of God; we experience the nearness of God. The life, the power, the reality of the spiritual realm, of what is in the heart of God, what is important to God comes to us in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples to wait till they were **clothed with power from on high**. It is described as if it was clothing: they were clothed. The Holy Spirit would come upon them and clothe them in the environment of His life and power. This tells us in such a situation, we will experience power that is from the Holy Spirit in the spiritual realm.

We all know that so much of what we do each day is basically by our own natural power and not by the power of the Holy Spirit. We live our lives very much on the basis of what other people do, what people expect of us, what we can naturally think about, what we can naturally do. And this applies also in the spiritual things that we seek to do. Because of that, we do not truly transmit the message of God effectively, whether by our words or by the life that we live. Our lives may not be very different from those who do not believe.

In the natural realm, at the natural plane, we do not have life in ourselves: So, whatever we do without the power of God will not have life. How then can we help people to receive life from God?

Yes, God can still work in spite of us. God can still do it in spite of our failures. But God's intention is to work through us, that we experience and know the life and power of God such that when we speak, the life of God can flow freely through us, the Holy Spirit will have the freedom to communicate, to speak to others like a sword that pierces the heart.

The Lord Jesus also told His disciples: "You shall be My witnesses". This tells us that this experience of the Holy Spirit can equip us to be witnesses for the Lord. It tells us that spiritual service needs spiritual power from the Holy Spirit. We need to know the Lord personally so that when we speak of Him, there is spiritual reality that comes forth from our heart.

John 14: 15-17

- 15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
- 16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;
- 17 *that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*

The Lord Jesus was telling His disciples He would be going away. He would be approaching the event of the cross; He would die for the sins of the world. He would then be resurrected, He would ascend to heaven and He would no longer be on earth with the disciples in the way that He was. But He said: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." First, He told them: "If you truly love Me, you will keep My commandments. You will obey Me, you will do the things that I have instructed you to do." In that context: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever".

If we are His disciples, we want to do His will, we want to obey then the Lord Jesus will grant to us **another Helper**.

Why did He say "**another Helper**"? The Lord Jesus was a Helper. This would be **another Helper**.

Very often, when we think of "helper", we think of people like domestic servants and maids, but here the meaning is totally different. The word "**Helper**" here can be also translated as "counsellor" or "comforter" or "advocate". It is someone who is near to us or beside us, who helps us in our need, whether it be counselling us, helping us in our time of difficulties, or speaking on our behalf, taking care of us.

The Lord Jesus, when He was on earth, was a Helper. He was a Comforter. He helped many people in their need: those who were physically sick, those who were oppressed by the evil one, those who were lost. He spoke to them, He healed them, He taught them, He helped them.

But now, He was going away. He says: "God **will give you another Helper** – another Counsellor, Comforter, or Advocate." And He will dwell in us and He will bring to us God's revelation. He is the Spirit of truth. He will help us understand God's ways, how we are to live in accordance with God's purposes.

We often do not depend on God until we are in a helpless situation. So we think it is only when we are helpless then we need a Helper.

In the spiritual realm, we are always helpless. We are created beings, we have no life in ourselves – we are helpless. But we do not realize that. We think that we are quite capable, there are many things we can do: we do not really need the Helper.

But that is not true. We always need the Helper.

The Holy Spirit is our Guide, He is our Teacher, He is our Helper, He is our Comforter in every situation of life. And unless we learn to look to Him, depend on Him, in all situations that we go through, we will live a life that may seem to be right but is not.

In that kind of situation, God will not be so real to us in our daily situations of life. So we need to learn to depend on our divine Helper in every situation, so that what we do will have spiritual life and meaning in all contexts.

John 14: 26

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you..."

The Holy Spirit, He will teach you all things. He is our Teacher. He is not our subordinate, our helper in that sense of being our subordinate, but He is our Teacher. He will teach you all things.

Not many Christians recognize this deeply enough. We learn in many ways on our own or from other people, without a sufficient consciousness of our need to learn from the Holy Spirit, that He must be our Teacher; we must humble ourselves before Him. It is true that the Holy Spirit can teach us through people, through various situations of life, but we must ultimately look to Him as our Teacher.

And He will bring to the remembrance of the disciples of the Lord Jesus all that He had said to them. So this tells us that the Holy Spirit would continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus while He was on earth: Though the disciples would not see Him physically, they would continue to know the Lord Jesus speaking to them, teaching them. The Lord Jesus would continue to help them, to minister to them, to teach them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

John 16: 12-15

- 12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.
13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.
14 "He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.
15 "All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose *it* to you.

The Holy Spirit will guide us into all the truth. The Lord Jesus had a limited time on earth, a very short while and during that time, He taught His disciples many things. And some of this is recorded in the Scriptures for us, His future disciples. The Lord Jesus told His disciples: "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now."

So the Lord Jesus had much more to tell them and to teach them, but they were not ready for it. So what was the solution? He said: "But when... the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...So what I want to tell you which you cannot receive now, the Holy Spirit will teach you on My behalf. He will bring to your attention, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."

The Holy Spirit will take from the Lord Jesus what He wants to communicate and He will transmit it to the disciples of the Lord. That is because the Holy Spirit has this mission to glorify the Lord Jesus: "He will glorify Me". His purpose in coming is to glorify the Lord Jesus. He helps us to know who the Lord Jesus is so that we can properly be His disciples, follow Him, recognize He is the head of the body, the church, that He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords; that we are to obey Him.

So the Holy Spirit does not work independently, just by Himself, so that we can experience many spiritual experiences just between us and the Holy Spirit. When we emphasize in this way, then we can end up with serious problems.

The Holy Spirit comes to glorify Christ and therefore, whatever we experience of the Holy Spirit must be consistent with the character of Christ, the mission of Christ, what is revealed to us in the Scriptures – who He is, what He has done, what He wants to communicate, what He wants to accomplish.

The Holy Spirit does not come just to give us many spiritual experiences that can be very exciting. Beware: because the evil spirits can give us spiritual experiences that may seem to be like that of the Holy Spirit.

We must concentrate on the perfect Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, our perfect example, to live our lives like His; and the Holy Spirit will teach us, He will guide us in this direction.

The Holy Spirit brings God's revelation to us. The spiritual truths and realities that God wants to show us from the Scriptures will be taught to us by the Holy Spirit.

Why is it many Christians read the Bible and they find it is very dull, it does not seem real to them? Some of them are just stories, some of them are just principles that we read. They are not alive.

In many instances, that is because they are not looking to God to bring the revelation to them. The Holy Spirit has not opened their eyes to behold the glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in the Scriptures, the spiritual realm and the meaning and direction.

It is the Holy Spirit who inspired the writing of the Scriptures. It is the Holy Spirit who will interpret the Scriptures to us to help us understand God's intention.

And when we learn to follow Him, the Scriptures will come alive to us: We will see God at work, we will behold the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; we will love Him and walk with Him – if we are prepared for the cost of discipleship.

The Holy Spirit will glorify the Lord Jesus and He will help us to know the Lord Jesus more personally. He will be meaningfully present in our lives only when we truly want to glorify the Lord Jesus.

If we want the power of the Holy Spirit for the wrong reasons, then we place ourselves in danger: The evil spirits can come instead and deceive us and draw us away from God.

But if we want to glorify the Lord Jesus, we want to follow Him and honour Him and we ask God, then God will grant to us the Holy Spirit to help us to know the Lord Jesus personally and to be able to glorify Him.

Galatians 3: 1-3

- 1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed *as* crucified?
- 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
- 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

The apostle Paul was very conscious of the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives: in the lives of Christians and in ministering in the word of God. He told the Corinthian Christians that when he came to them, he did not come with wisdom of words, but he came in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He knew that he could not minister by his own wisdom even though intellectually, he was quite capable. He depended on the Holy Spirit. And so in his preaching to others, he would constantly urge them to live by the power of God.

And so when he preached to the Galatians, he would have emphasized to them the importance of the power of the Holy Spirit. And so they responded: they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. And he said: "Having begun by the Spirit..." They experienced the power of the Holy Spirit; they began in the right direction to depend on the Holy Spirit. But he was very concerned that they were not continuing in the Holy Spirit: "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

We must learn to remain in this state of living in the environment or atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. This is something critical. If we want to develop well, if we want to contribute something worthwhile in the kingdom of God, this must be the characteristic of our lives: We dwell in the environment of the Holy Spirit, in a spirit of submission to Him; constantly praying, seeking the guidance of God, trusting Him, obeying Him.

Why did the apostle Paul say "...pray without ceasing..."? There are many meaningful aspects to that, but one major aspect of it is: It is only by praying without ceasing that we will learn to constantly depend on the Holy Spirit, to be conscious of our need of Him, that He will work in our lives and we will not speak on our own, in our own natural wisdom.

The apostle Paul told them: "...did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? How did you experience the power of the Holy Spirit? Was it by your keeping the works of the Law, by your abilities in the natural realm? No, it was by hearing with faith: It was in response to God's call, it was in recognition of your need; and you called upon the Lord in faith. In a spirit of repentance, you trusted the Lord and you called upon Him to empower you and so, you began by the Spirit. Now, you want to be perfected by the flesh. It is not possible."

And that is where many, many Christians go astray.

There are many Christians who have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit. There were times in their lives, especially in the earlier stages when they were eager to serve God and respond to Him, they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, but they did not remain in that environment.

In time to come, they felt that they had learned something, they were able now on their own, they were knowledgeable, they could speak and do many things. And they became led astray, thinking that they could be perfected in the flesh: by our own abilities, by our own strength, by our own wisdom, seeking to become more and more spiritual. That is not possible.

The Holy Spirit came upon the Lord Jesus and remained on Him. That must also be the characteristic of our lives.

If we want to know the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, this must be long term. It must continue and we must remain in that state: remain in the Holy Spirit, in an environment, in the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit. So, if we depart from the life of faith and instead depend on our own natural abilities, the Holy Spirit will no longer be actively at work in our hearts.

Galatians 5: 16

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

“...walk by the Spirit...” refers to each step that we take. We may experience the power of the Holy Spirit at some time but unless we learn to walk by the Spirit each step we take, each moment we live, each situation that we go through, we will basically be carrying out the desire of the flesh: We will be living by natural inclinations; we will do the things that we prefer – what we are inclined towards, what we like, what we think we can accomplish. And that will be a life in the flesh.

The Corinthians were rebuked by the apostle Paul because although they experienced the gifts of the Holy Spirit, although they experienced the power of God in their lives, they were walking like mere men: They were carnal; they were like babes in Christ. They were not living in an environment of the Holy Spirit and in submission to Him.

So if we are to benefit from the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we must learn to be prayerful, humbly seeking guidance from Him. We must pay attention, to listen to what He has to say to us; we must trust in His enabling, and we must be obedient to Him in all things that we do. Are we prepared to obey Him? Or will we go our own way?

As we ponder over what we have seen so far with regard to what the Holy Spirit does, we may notice that all these aspects that the Holy Spirit will do are similar to what the Lord Jesus was doing when He was on earth with His disciples.

As we have seen, the Holy Spirit came to continue the work that the Lord Jesus was doing and to continue to speak to the disciples what the Lord Jesus would have wanted to tell them. So the baptism with the Holy Spirit brings about a situation where it is as if the Lord Jesus is present with us just as He was with the disciples when He walked those few years on earth.

Many people have often thought: How wonderful it would be if I were to live in the time of the Lord Jesus walking on earth with His disciples, seeing Him perform the miracles, hearing what He has to say. If I were to live in such a situation, I would be a very strong Christian. I would surely love God with all my heart; I will do the things that He wants me to do. It will be such a wonderful life and experience.

But then as we read the Scriptures, we know that the disciples who were so close to the Lord Jesus, they continued in many ways quite different from what the Lord Jesus wanted them to be. They called Him "Lord, Lord" but in many things, they did not do what He said. They were still arguing with one another who was the greatest.

But it is true that the presence of the Lord Jesus helped them significantly. He called them to follow Him and they did. And as they spent time with Him, they learnt, they appreciated the reality of God, the spiritual realm, moral goodness and meaning in life. And they followed Him and they were transformed.

But then, we also see there were so many other people who heard the Lord Jesus preach, who saw Him healing, who saw Him perform miracles, but they were not truly following Him. They were seeking for the wrong things: They wanted to make Him king, they wanted more of what He could do in the supernatural realm. And the Lord Jesus told them not to seek for these things, but to seek for that which will not perish, to seek for that which has eternal value.

The Lord Jesus told His disciples before He departed from them, before He went to heaven, He said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age". The Lord Jesus did not merely say: "I will come again. One day, I will meet you again." But He said: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age".

That is to say in the spiritual realm, He never left them. He was always with them. "I am with you always". So although He would depart from them physically, in the spiritual realm if they had spiritual eyes to see, if their hearts were with Him, they would behold Him.

The Holy Spirit is not the Lord Jesus Christ but He helps us to know the Lord personally and behold Him. The Holy Spirit is not Christ Himself but is another Helper, and He communicates the Lord Jesus Christ to us and He brings to our consciousness what the Lord Jesus wants us to know and to do, and He empowers us to do it.

The apostle Paul tells us that the very primary aspect of God's purpose for mankind, what He wants to bring about is this wonderful principle and reality: Christ in you, the hope of glory. Christ in you, the hope of glory. And how does this come about? Through the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, bringing the reality of Christ to us, so that we can live in the consciousness of His presence each day, in the things that we do.

However, there is a very important principle that we must take note.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is very important. It is something that God gives to us out of His grace. It is something wonderful, necessary, helpful, in terms of what God wants to accomplish.

But we must recognize that the physical presence of the Lord Jesus did not mean that all who knew Him and saw Him and heard Him were transformed in their character to be like Him, unless they acted upon what He said.

The Lord Jesus gave the picture of the house built on sand and the house built on the rock.

Those who heard Him and did not act upon His words would be like the man who built his house on the sand. And when the rain and the storm came, that house would collapse.

But those who heard Him and acted on what He said, they would be like the man, the wise man, who built his house on the rock. Even though the storm came, the rain came, the house would stand.

So too, experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit does not necessarily bring about a transformation of our moral character unless we respond well and are deeply committed to the Lord, and we partake of the divine nature and the fruit of the Spirit is formed in us.

It is in that context that the character of the Lord Jesus will be formed in us. This is something very important for us to recognize.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is very important because it brings to us in our experience, in our personal knowledge and life, the presence of God, the presence of the Lord Jesus in all His glory. We can behold Him, we can relate with Him, we can listen to Him, we can call upon Him, we can depend on Him.

But this in itself does not make us morally good; it does not transform our character.

Transformation of our character requires our commitment, our preparedness to live as He lived: to follow Him, to obey Him, to give up the self-life, to give up the world, to give up all things so that our heart completely belongs to God.

Without that, whatever we may experience will not ultimately do us good.

The Holy Spirit came upon many people in the Old Testament, empowered them to do many things, but that in itself did not mean that they would become morally good.

Balaam experienced God speaking through him, the Holy Spirit enabling him, but his heart was not right.

It is when our heart is right, when we want to do the will of God, that our experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit will help us to appreciate God more deeply, to respond more deeply to Him, to love Him more – that the character of Christ may be formed in us.

So if we want to fulfil God's call in our lives, we need to know God personally in our lives.

And we must learn to be empowered by the Holy Spirit in all that we do and grow well in Him.

If we do not do that, our lives can be lived very much in the natural plane, even though we may use spiritual words and refer to the Scriptures.

The Holy Spirit brings life to us. The Holy Spirit communicates what is truly good in the spiritual realm to us.

The evil spirits are also at work in the spiritual realm and they can appear like angels of light.

So unless our hearts are right, unless we truly want to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be in danger of being deceived, being led astray.

And if we are so afraid of being led astray, we may then refrain from seeking the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the end we will live our lives like non-believers.

So whatever it is, we must face the issue properly.

The only way by which we can become spiritual and live for God is to come to God, to know His power, at the same time to recognize the dangers involved and to take care that we do not go astray in that context.

As we experience the Holy Spirit working in us, we can then properly contribute in what God wants to accomplish.

Let us come before the Lord and ask Him to help us understand what this means in terms of His intentions and purposes and specifically, with regard to ourselves: What would it mean to us? How should we respond to Him?

Let us ask Him to help us so that we will make the right choice, that our hearts will be set in the right direction, and that we will truly benefit from all that God wants to give us through the Holy Spirit.