

GOD'S CALL

Major themes in the Scriptures

The Holy Spirit (7)

Baptism with the Spirit: focus

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

A short summary of today's message:

In the event of Pentecost described in **Acts chapter 2**, God poured out His Spirit on all mankind and the Lord Jesus baptized His praying disciples with the Holy Spirit. What is the meaning and purpose of this event and what is the emphasis and focus of the baptism with the Holy Spirit?

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

[End of summary]

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is a very important provision of God for our well-being and it is something that can be very exciting; it is something that can bring great joy and liberation, freedom and meaning to our lives.

However, in reality, it may often not bring about such a result. That is because the baptism with the Holy Spirit in itself, as we saw in the last message, does not directly change our moral character and if we respond in the wrong way, we may actually be led astray.

God wants to do us good but unless we respond in the right way, His provision can become a judgment to us.

There is a tendency for those who know about, or who have experienced, the baptism with the Holy Spirit to be excited with the experience and to concentrate on it and become preoccupied with their experience and then move away from what God has intended.

So it is important for us to consider more deeply: What is God's intention in providing the baptism with the Holy Spirit? What does He want us to concentrate on, to focus on?

If we do it the right way then it will bring about great benefit for us personally and also for the outworking in church life and for the needs of the world.

We have seen in **Acts chapter 2** that when the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were gathered together and the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Why did this event take place at that point in time? What is God seeking to do in His provision?

Let us read again **Acts 2: 14-21**.

Acts 2: 14-21

- 14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.
- 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is *only* the third hour of the day;
- 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:
- 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESEY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;
- 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy.
- 19 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.
- 20 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.
- 21 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'

We are told that this event was in fulfilment of prophecy, where God promised that He would pour out His Spirit on all mankind.

If we look at this passage, we may wonder: We are told that IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS that God would bring this about, but do THE LAST DAYS refer to the event of Pentecost?

Why is it we do not see WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE... 'THE SUN being TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD? This was prophesied but what happened on the day of Pentecost did not include these things.

Was this a fulfilment of prophecy? Certainly! We are told that this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel.

So to appreciate the fulfilment of this prophecy, we need to understand the meaning of THE LAST DAYS. What is meant by this term "the last days"?

From what I can see, the term “the last days” as used in the Scriptures basically and primarily is associated directly with the coming of the Lord Jesus into this world and His coming again, and the period of the last days is not just a very short time. It is quite a lengthy period of time, but it has a significance in terms of what God wants to accomplish.

Hebrews 1: 1-2

- 1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,
- 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

So we are told that God has spoken to us in His Son in the last days: in these last days.

While He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, all that was in preparation for the coming of the Lord Jesus: where God would speak to us through His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

So we can see that the last days are directly associated with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last days are also associated with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 24: 29-31

- 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
- 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.
- 31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

The Lord Jesus was prophesying with regard to His coming again and this is still in the period of the last days.

He will come again in the last days and in this occasion, He tells us: **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

This would correspond with **verses 19 and 20**, where there will be WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME'.

So these things will happen before the Lord Jesus comes again: THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD.

There are various other passages which tell us of the final period of our stay on earth. The apostle Paul says in **2 Timothy 3: 1**:

2 Timothy 3: 1

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.

Ezekiel 38: 14-16 tell us of the final days when Israel will be invaded by a nation from the north and God says, "It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog." So Israel will be invaded in the last days before the Lord Jesus Christ will come again.

Isaiah 2: 1-4 also talks about the last days. He tells us: "Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it." And **verse 4**, he says, "And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war."

So in the last days, the Lord Jesus Christ will come and He will reign on the earth. All the nations will be under His rulership.

So when God says He will pour forth of His Spirit in the last days, we can say that it spans this whole period of time: the Lord Jesus coming into this world, His dying on the cross, His resurrection and ascension, and His coming again.

The Lord Jesus Christ having risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, He received from God the promise of the Father and He poured forth the Holy Spirit at the event of Pentecost.

But from this, we can see that before the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, we can expect another event similar to the event of Pentecost but at a greater scale, where God will pour forth of His Spirit in a very mighty way.

Why would that be so?

From what I can appreciate from the revelation of the Scriptures, this is very likely because of the fierce intensity of the spiritual battle that will take place in the last days: Satan knows he has very little time left. There will be deception, there will be tribulation; there will be great suffering and difficulties. The evil one will be powerfully at work.

At such a time, God will also work in a very mighty way: He will pour forth of His Spirit so that those who desire to be faithful to Him, those who are prepared to stand with Him will know His power in a greater measure.

So in the last days, God will bring to a climax what He has been seeking to do all these years.

So if we ponder about this, we can recognize that the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, leading to the cross and resurrection and ascension, is the centre of all history until the end of time.

It is important for us to appreciate this: The Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world, dying on the cross, rising from the dead, ascending to heaven is the centre of all history until the end of time.

All who lived before the event should look forward to it, and all who live after the event should look backward to it, and base their lives on that.

That is why the Old Testament: we can see a looking forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The people were looking forward to the Messiah that will come, but many of them had a very limited understanding of what the Messiah would do.

The Lord Jesus Christ would come to help us appreciate what is at the heart of what God is seeking to do in the universe that He has created.

So there are many aspects in the Old Testament that look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After the Lord Jesus Christ came, died on the cross, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, many years have passed. What is our approach and our response?

We must look back to the event of the incarnation, look at the life of the Lord Jesus, how He lived, how He died, how He rose from the dead, what He taught, what did He come to do. We have to look back at that event and from there, we base our lives. We must live our lives on that basis. If we do not do that, then we will enter into grave danger.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is one of the provisions that God has made to help us appreciate this.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is meant to help us appreciate who the Lord Jesus is, how He lived, how He died, why He came into this world, and for us to experience and to know the life of the Lord Jesus in our own personal lives, so that we can work together with God in what He wants to accomplish.

So the baptism with the Holy Spirit helps us to appreciate this reality of the Lord Jesus Christ as the centre of history, and to fulfil our part in God's purposes.

So if we concentrate on our experience rather than God's intention, we will be easily led astray. Many people are very excited with what they have experienced. They compare their experiences, they consider how much have they accomplished, what have they seen, what have they done. People are very much preoccupied with these things.

But when we look at the Scriptural revelation with regard to the working of the Holy Spirit, we see that basically, the Holy Spirit works in the background. Yes, at times He is more prominent – here and there, but basically, He works in the background: He is there to reveal to us who God is; He is there to teach us, help us – for what purpose? – to lead us to Christ, to help us to appreciate, to behold the Lord Jesus Christ, to understand who He is, and to know how we can become like Him.

God's purpose for us is in Christ and we must concentrate on that. That is our focus.

If we look at other parts of the Scriptures, it comes through again and again. For example, in **2 Corinthians 5: 17-21**, the apostle Paul tells us about what it means to become a Christian. And in **verse 19** he says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation."

So the mission of reconciliation of sinful man to God rests on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus Christ: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.”

The Holy Spirit helps us to appreciate this, helps us to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and to know how to be reconciled to God. And when we are born of the Spirit, we are reconciled to God, we become His children.

Verse 21 tells us: He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. So the mission of reconciliation is entrusted to the Lord Jesus Christ. He brings about that reconciliation of the world to God, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

But if we stop there and concentrate just on reconciliation from the angle of sinful men being forgiven and being brought to be reconciled to God: that is not enough.

That is not God’s ultimate intention. God does not want us just to be forgiven and to be reconciled to Him because our sins are washed away.

God wants us to become like Christ. He wants the fullness of Christ to be developed in us. That is why we see **Ephesians 4: 11-13** putting it in this way:

Ephesians 4: 11-13

- 11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,
- 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;
- 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

So God has given people to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers – with a view to equipping all the saints in the body of Christ in order that they may contribute in the work of service together, to build up the body of Christ.

And the goal is that we all attain to the unity of the faith: the oneness in God; and of the knowledge of the Son of God: the Lord Jesus Christ; to a mature man: a perfect man, a complete man; to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. This is God's intention: that we all develop in that direction to become like the Lord Jesus in His fullness.

So if we look at the Old Testament, we will see that the Holy Spirit came upon some people whom God had called for a specific purpose. And this experience is somewhat similar to the baptism with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, but it was not a common experience. God decided who should experience this for specific purposes.

So for example, we see how the Spirit of God came upon Samson so that he could deliver the nation of Israel. In **the book of Judges chapter 14, verses 5 and 6**, we read:

Judges 14: 5-6

- 5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion *came* roaring toward him.
- 6 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

We know that this power that Samson had was not his own natural physical power: The power came from God when the Holy Spirit came upon him mightily.

So the Holy Spirit came upon various people in the Old Testament for different purposes.

Sometimes, it is primarily in the physical realm, like in this case: physical power. In other instances, it can be to give them wisdom to fulfil certain purposes.

We see Gideon was also empowered by the Holy Spirit so that he could be a judge to deliver the people of Israel.

The Old Testament looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus in many ways.

We can see that in the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law, various of those ceremonies were a portrayal of what the Lord Jesus Christ would do and in particular, His death on the cross.

But the Old Testament also looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ through the lives of various people who delivered the nation of Israel: for example, Joseph and Moses. They were deliverers of the nation of Israel and they were meant to portray what the Lord Jesus would do as the Saviour of the world. He would deliver the world from sin. It is a looking forward to the One who would be the Saviour of the world.

The Old Testament also looked forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit coming upon people in the Old Testament: It looked forward to the One who would experience the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him and the One who would grant the power of the Holy Spirit to His disciples.

The Holy Spirit coming upon the people in the Old Testament manifested different aspects.

In the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit coming upon Him will show to us the fullness of what ought to be and what can be if we learn to submit to God and walk in His ways. And so in **Acts 10: 38**, we read:

Acts 10: 38

"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

So we are told God anointed the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power, and He lived by that power.

The way He went about doing good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil was because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit coming upon the Lord Jesus, empowering Him to do all these things that He did.

God was with Him: The perfect Man showing to us how we should live our lives, in total dependence on God in everything that we do.

We see in the record of the Scriptures the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Lord Jesus from the time He came into this world until He offered Himself on the cross.

His birth:

Luke 1: 35

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ coming into this world came about through the Holy Spirit coming upon Mary, a human being, and this resulted in the Lord Jesus Christ being born.

The Holy Spirit was very actively involved in the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 1: 22-23

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

From what I can see in the context, the meaning of "IMMANUEL" – "GOD WITH US" – is to tell us the Lord Jesus Christ is God: He came to dwell among us. The Word became flesh. He lived His life on earth as a man but He is God who came into this world, become flesh.

So this is an aspect that is very important for us to appreciate: Why did God become man?

There are so many different issues involved, but there are some central aspects that are important for us to see and to appreciate.

God wants us to live our lives like the Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Man. So He shows to us how man should live. So in order to do that, God came into this world, became a man.

But He was still God. When we look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the radiance, the glory of the moral perfection of God: The holiness of God, the glory of God comes through in His being. But at the same time, as He lived on earth, we see Him being hungry and thirsty and tired and going through the difficulties of this world, being tempted by the devil.

In the midst of all this, He lived a life that is truly meaningful, that we can see that we should follow and be like Him.

So the Scriptures tell us how the Lord Jesus as the perfect Man lived by the power of the Holy Spirit at all times. But the Scriptures also tell us how the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world from heaven.

We have read this passage from time to time and it is good for us at this point of time to read it again in **Philippians 2: 5-8**.

Philippians 2: 5-8

- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Luke 1: 35 tells us what happened on earth: the incarnation; **Philippians 2: 5-8** tells us what happened in heaven before the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world; and when we read the two passages together, we appreciate the Lord Jesus Christ as God intends for us to appreciate: He is God and He is Man.

The moral perfection of God is shown in **Philippians 2: 5-8**. The Lord Jesus Christ shows to us what kind of attitude we should have: a spirit of self-giving. He humbled Himself, He gave Himself for the well-being of the world. He need not have come into this world but He did so because of His love. He wants to help us and so He humbled Himself. He gave up His glory in heaven.

We are told that He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant. In this world, covetousness, greed, self-seeking is very prominent. We want the things in this world; we want the glory of this world. But the Lord Jesus Christ shows us the opposite: self-giving, humility; and we can see the preparedness to go to such length in order to accomplish what is good.

Many people are very impressed by the things that people do and yes, we may think of courage in many different forms of outward expressions.

But in the life of the Lord Jesus, we see true courage at the highest level. He knew what He was going through in coming into this world, how great a suffering it would be and how He would be rejected by men, and He would suffer the wrath of God. It would be a very terrible experience but the Lord Jesus never flinched from it, He never turned away from it. He was steadfast until the end.

And so we see the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven; He emptied Himself: He did not exercise His omnipotent power on His own. Although He created the world, He came into this world as a child and He lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And so we see at the time of His water baptism, the record says in **Luke 3: 21-22:**

Luke 3: 21-22

- 21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,
- 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

We are told specifically the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and we are told also that the Holy Spirit remained on Him.

So at His water baptism, as He embarked upon, as He began His public ministry, He would have to be tempted by the evil one. He would have to go through the test; and to prepare Him, at the water baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him.

Luke 4: 1

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness...

He was full of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit filled Him, the perfect Man. He returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.

The Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the evil one.

After the event of the temptations, we are told in **Luke 4: 16-19** how the Lord Jesus began His preaching.

Luke 4: 16-19

- 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.
- 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,
- 18 "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
- 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

The Holy Spirit came upon the Lord Jesus as He preached the gospel to the poor, as He proclaimed release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, and as He set free those who were oppressed.

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME..." So God anointed the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit: In all His ministry, in all that He did, He lived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 5: 17

One day He was teaching; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing.

So the power of the Lord, the power of the Holy Spirit, was *present*, constantly present in the life of the Lord Jesus. He performed His miracles, His healing, as the perfect Man representing God, helping the people, mankind, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then we look at the final event on earth, **Hebrews 9: 13-14**.

Hebrews 9: 13-14

- 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,
- 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The Lord Jesus Christ, the perfect Man, offered Himself without blemish to God... through the eternal Spirit: So in the event of the cross, He offered up His life as a living sacrifice and also to suffer until death through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

So we see that the Lord Jesus Christ shows to us how we must live by the power of the Holy Spirit throughout our lives, in everything that we do.

He has shown us the perfect example of how man must live by the power of God.

So God baptized the Lord Jesus with the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus baptizes His disciples with the Holy Spirit after His death and resurrection and ascension.

He wants us to live as He lived. The Lord Jesus lived His life perfectly according to the will of God as He lived as the perfect Man through the power of the Holy Spirit. So we are called to live in this way, following the example of the Lord Jesus.

So the Lord Jesus has now made provision for us so that we can enter into a deeper experience of God: The Holy Spirit is now freely available to us for us to know Him, to experience His power, His presence so that we can enter into a deep relationship with God.

And so we find that the Lord Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant, a better covenant, and in that context, the association of the new covenant with the ministry of the Holy Spirit is a very important feature.

Hebrews 8: 4-6

- 4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;
- 5 who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."
- 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

So in the old covenant, man is commanded by God to obey His moral laws, based on what God has already provided.

But man failed because man went his own way and man did not depend on God. He went to seek to fulfil the law on his own and so he failed.

The law will not help us in terms of its demands and that is why we see in the New Testament, the manifestation of the cross: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ manifested on the cross to help us in spite of our sins and failures; the way to find forgiveness and also the power to live according to the will of God.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is associated with the new covenant mediated by the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 8: 10-11

- 10 "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.
- 11 "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

This is what God said to the nation of Israel: that He would make a new covenant with them AFTER THOSE DAYS and from what the Scripture reveals, we can say the likelihood is: this refers to the covenant that God would make with the nation of Israel in the last days prior to the Lord Jesus coming again.

It has not yet happened and it is likely to happen in the not so distant future. We do not know the exact time but the indications are there that we are living in times that may be very close to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God will make a new covenant with the nation of Israel and in this new covenant, all of them would have an encounter with the Holy Spirit, where God pours forth His Spirit on all mankind and especially in the context of the nation of Israel.

“THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.”

God will deal with the nation of Israel. There will be purification, there will be suffering and pain and anguish; but in the process of that, God will bring about a group of people who will come to Him, who love Him, who are prepared to live according to His ways.

So in the new covenant, God writes His laws in our hearts through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

So God intends to make the new covenant with the nation of Israel in the last days.

But we must appreciate that the new covenant is intended for all mankind and not just for the nation of Israel, and this new covenant has already been established since the event of the cross.

And all of us can benefit from this new covenant in relation to the issue of the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3: 2-6

- 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men;
- 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
- 4 Such confidence we have through Christ toward God.
- 5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,
- 6 who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

So we are to be servants of a new covenant and to do that, we must know the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

We must understand what this is and we must minister in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then there will be life.

Otherwise, we may bring death, or we may give a false hope of life. Life comes from the Holy Spirit.

So God wants us to appreciate what He has provided for us through the baptism with the Holy Spirit and how to receive and benefit, so that our lives are transformed and we can minister in the context of the whole atmosphere and environment of the Holy Spirit: That what we say, what we do will have the impact and the life and the power of God, and not just our own abilities, intelligence and our natural diligence.

While we say that we must minister in the power of the Holy Spirit, let us always remember that the focus is always the Lord Jesus Christ, and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ through the cross and His resurrection and the body of Christ.

Romans 7: 21-25

- 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.
22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,
23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.
24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?
25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

This passage tells us that even after we become Christians, we can still be wretched people because we continue to sin.

We want to be righteous but we fail and we fail again. And the reason: We are depending on our own natural ability and power. Now we want to honour God, we want to serve Him, we want to do His will but we fail. We want to do what is right but we end up doing what is wrong. So: "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (or "from this body of death").

The answer: "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

The apostle Paul did not say, "Thanks be to God through the baptism with the Holy Spirit."

He could have said that; it is not wrong. But this tells us the focus: The deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord: Because He came, He lived, He died, He rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven, He poured forth the Holy Spirit to help us.

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" So it is through the Lord Jesus Christ that we will be delivered. We must live by His life, we must live by His power.

But how does that life and that power come to us?

Romans 8: 1-4

- 1 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.
- 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,
- 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

So we are saved through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are delivered by His power, but this comes to us through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus: We need to know the life, the power through the Holy Spirit – He will set us free from the law of sin and of death.

If we learn to walk by the Spirit, if we learn to submit to God, to depend upon Him in all that we do, we will know that freedom, that power.

“...what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*”. Because of the flesh, because we go our own way, because we depend on ourselves, we will always fail.

So the Law cannot help us, the Law cannot deliver us. But God did: He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He came into this world, He lived in our context, He experienced what we would experience in this body: the temptations, the difficulties, the pain, the anguish.

“...and *as an offering* for sin (or “concerning sin”), He condemned sin in the flesh.” So God in His moral perfection, dwelling in our midst shows to us how we can overcome sin even though we dwell in this body. And the way to overcome sin is not to depend on our own natural ability but to depend on the power of God through the Holy Spirit working in us.

“...so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”.

If we learn to walk according to the Spirit, then we will know God's power and freedom to be free to live as God intends for us.

John 15: 26

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,*

So when people concentrate on the Holy Spirit, they are concentrating on the wrong aspect of what God wants to communicate to us. We come to the Holy Spirit, we seek Him; yes, we need Him, we depend on Him, we ask Him to enable us. But our focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to know how we should live our lives, we must behold the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why the Holy Spirit will testify about the Lord Jesus. When you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you, the primary ministry, the all-consuming ministry of the Holy Spirit is to teach us about the Lord Jesus Christ. He will testify about Him.

John 16: 13-14

- 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.

So the Holy Spirit will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. That is His ministry. He comes to help us so that we can properly glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

So from all this, we can see that if we are to properly benefit from the experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, we must focus on the Lord Jesus Christ and set our heart completely to live for God and glorify the Lord Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit in accordance with God's call.

If we do not approach it in this way, it is very easy for us to be led astray. It is very easy for us to be self-centred, preoccupied with what we like, what we experience, what we enjoy: So whenever we experience something good that God gives to us, we can very readily forget about God and be occupied with the thing that we have received. Whether it be an experience, or an accomplishment, or what people may say about us, we can be affected by all these things.

But if we are to live well, then we must constantly appreciate what is God seeking to do: Why did He come into this world to live as a Man?

It is such a wonderful thing! God became man and dwelt among us. So we need to spend time to ponder over the way He lived His life on earth, how He conducted Himself, what He manifested; and as the perfect Man, the Lord Jesus shows to us how we must always live in the context of the working of the Holy Spirit.

But we must understand that we are not like the Lord Jesus Christ in some important aspects, although we are like Him in other ways.

The most critical aspect is that the Lord Jesus Christ is God Himself. We are not. So He is God. He is morally perfect in absoluteness. We must learn to develop to be like Him. We must keep on growing to that kind of quality that will be truly pleasing to God, that will be truly good for us and for the universe.

So when we look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see in Him the perfection that we must work towards: this is what we want. Christ must be formed in us increasingly, more and more. And when we do that, then we will become perfect like God the Father is perfect: because the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the image of the invisible God – image in the sense of the reality, the manifestation, of the invisible God.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is like us in that He lived as a man. He experienced all the temptations, difficulties and problems in this world that we experience in terms of its meaning, in its essence, in the moral and spiritual equivalence. He may not experience exactly the same situation that we go through, but He knows the meaning, He has gone through it in all its difficulties and far more difficult than all that we have gone through.

And yet in the midst of all these, He never sinned.

This tells us it is possible for us to learn to be like Him. If our hearts are totally given to God and we learn to live fully for Him and by His power, then we can overcome sin: the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can set us free from the law of sin and of death.

So how far will we go? To the degree we hold back in any aspect, to that degree we cannot be truly pure, we cannot truly live for Him and the evil one will be able to find a place, a foothold to work in our lives. And the evil one is cunning; he knows: he knows what you like, he knows where your weaknesses are, he knows what will make you happy. And he will attack these areas.

So if we are to be delivered from all this, we must make sure that we hold nothing back: We give our lives absolutely to God, just to live for Him according to His will.

It is in that context that the baptism with the Holy Spirit will become very helpful to us.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, in itself does not change our heart.

But if we learn to give ourselves fully to God and we are committed to Him, we are determined to live for Him: in that situation, we can receive the Holy Spirit to transform our inner man, we can partake of the divine nature so that the Lord Jesus Christ will be formed in us increasingly. And that is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, which is what God is looking for. And the more we develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, the more we can properly live in the context of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, where the Holy Spirit is our environment, we constantly live in His presence, by His power, His guidance, His enabling in all the things that we do.

So to appreciate this subject in its proper context, in accordance with God's intention, we need to be careful not to be drawn away by other things, however exciting they may seem to be.

We need to constantly concentrate on the meaning that God wants to bring about, and that centres on the Lord Jesus Christ.

So if we want to live our lives well and fulfil God's call in our lives, we must ensure that we live by the power of God, focused on the Lord Jesus and being led by the Holy Spirit to become a faithful child of God.

If we do that, we will find life very enriching, liberating and each day will be a wonderful life on earth and in preparation for eternity.

That is what God wants to give to each one of us, but there is a cost and that cost is: everything.

If we are not prepared to give up everything for this, then we cannot truly experience the life and the freedom that God wants us to have and we will constantly be going through struggles, insecurities, fears and anxieties and distress that we find that we cannot cope with.

There will be moments of joy and happiness, there will be times of peace and achievement, but it will not be deep enough.

God wants us to live a life of true freedom of a meaningful kind. So let us learn to respond well to Him and bring joy to His heart.

Let us as we come before the Lord ask Him to help us to ponder over these issues more deeply to understand how to approach life in the right way, that we may benefit from what God has provided for us.

The Lord willing, we will consider further the work of the Holy Spirit, so that we may learn to cooperate with God in what He desires to do in our lives.