

“Holy Spirit”

Introduction

If someone asked, “What is God like?” how should we answer them? Of course, we should point them to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14; 14:9). Additionally, throughout the Scriptures, many words and ideas describe and define “who” God is and “what” God is like. In fact, God even revealed himself through a variety of names, like *Jehovah-jireh* (“the Lord sees/provides,” Ge. 22:14) and *Jehovah-shalom* (“the Lord is peace,” Jud. 6:24). But perhaps one of the most definitive words to describe the nature of God is “spirit.” Then one might ask, “What is the Spirit of God like?” The Bible describes the Spirit of God as *holy* Spirit. In today’s lesson, we will study the nature of God: he is spirit, and he is holy.

Key Verse

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

Lesson Summary

When Jesus talked with the woman of Samaria, he challenged her thinking about God explaining that worship has little to do with physical dimensions, like where we worship. Instead, real worship depends on “spirit” and “truth.” However, to the worldly mindset both spirit and truth are intangible and remarkably strange. When Jesus was on trial, Pilate scoffed at him, asking, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). Regarding the Spirit of truth, Jesus declared, “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not” (Jn. 14:17). Because “God is a Spirit,” we worship him accordingly, yet our worship is strange to the world (Jn. 4:23-24). Though God has certainly revealed himself to us in human terms and forms, especially in the revelation of his only begotten Son so that we can comprehend who he is, we nevertheless cannot confine him to human limitations (1 Jn. 1:1-3). Since the nature of God is eternal spirit (Ps. 93:2), we know him not in forms and rituals, but spiritually (Jn. 4:24; 1 Co. 2:9-12). Though the Bible ascribes to God man-like characteristics, (for example, hands, arms, face, and eyes), he is actually Spirit. The apostle John further emphasized the spiritual nature of God when he wrote, “No man hath seen God at any time” (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:20). When Moses went to meet with God, he did not see God, per se, but rather he saw the glory of God’s Spirit and presence (Ex. 33:7-11; 34:5-8, 28-35). As Christians, we therefore know God by the Word and the witness of his Spirit within us. Again, Jesus said that “the world cannot receive” the Spirit, because he cannot be seen, for he dwells within believers (Jn. 14:17). What is the Spirit of God like? When the psalmist wrote about worshiping God, he explained, “it [his name] is holy” (Ps. 99:3), “God is holy” (vv. 5, 9), and “worship at his holy hill” (v. 9), a reference to the temple (tabernacle) of the Lord. The psalmist’s emphasis is: “God is holy.” The apostle Paul wrote about the temple of the Lord. Although we may worship God in physical buildings, we ourselves are actually the temple of God. Through faith in Christ, we are transformed into the temple of the Lord (1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16). As such, God indwells us by his Spirit. Paul went on to say that the temple of God is holy (1 Co. 3:17), and that’s why our body is holy? It is holy because the holy Spirit of God dwells there (Ep. 4:30). We should, therefore, reverence God’s Spirit and our body as holy, being God’s special dwelling place (Ep. 2:21-22). Note: We will study more about the indwelling Spirit in lesson four.

Scripture Study

God is Spirit – Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Co. 2:9-12; Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:7-11, 20; Ex. 34:5-8, 28-35; Jn. 14:17

God is Holy – 1 Co. 3:16-17; 2 Co. 6:16; Ep. 4:30; Ps. 99:1-9; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 2:12-14

Conclusion

The apostles walked with Jesus Christ upon the earth. They knew him face to face. The apostles heard, saw, observed, and touched the Word of God incarnate (1 Jn. 1:1). But today, Jesus resides at the right hand of the Father. Though we do not see God and hear him in the natural, per se, we nevertheless know him personally and discern who he is by his Holy Spirit indwelling us (1 Co. 2:12-14).



“Omnipresence”

Introduction

We serve an awesome omnipresent God, which means his Spirit permeates the entire world. God’s presence transcends our human limitations. For example, although a man cannot be in two places at once, God’s Spirit is not confined to such physical barriers and constraints. The writers of the Holy Scriptures explain God’s omnipresence both from a cosmic perspective and a personal point-of-view. In today’s lesson, we will see that God’s presence is far beyond mankind, yet at the same time his presence extends to all who call upon his name (Ps. 113:4-6; Ro. 10:13). He is transcendent yet immanent. He “sits upon the circle of the earth” (Is. 40:22), yet he dwells in our hearts.

Key Verse

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence” (Ps. 139:7)?

Lesson Summary

Isaiah prophesied of God’s greatness and vastness in the universe (Is. 40:12; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50). Like the song says, “He’s got the whole world in his hands.” His knowledge and understanding of his creation far surpass our human comprehension. The knowledge of science, though incredibly extensive, is as nothing to the knowledge of God (Is. 40:13-17). While God knows so much about mankind, humanity knows so little about him. This is why fallen man’s attempts to honor God and worship him prove to be vain, for how can lowly, sinful man comprehend a lofty, holy God who inhabits and envelops the vast universe, whose eyes “run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Is. 40:18-22; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28). Certainly, God is present in his creation on a universal, cosmic level – he sees all and knows all (Je. 23:23-24). Although God “inhabits eternity,” he is also omnipresent in a personal sense. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Is. 57:15). Contrary to Deistic thinking, God did not create and then withdraw his personal presence from his creation, leaving us to our own destiny. Rather, God is currently working in his creation, primarily, to bring salvation and restoration to humanity through Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:8-9). To accomplish this, the Spirit of God is omnipresent and active in the world today. God can personally assist a single individual and meet his need, while at the same time help an unlimited number of others who call upon his name (Ro. 10:13). Being omnipresent, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his capacity to be present and personal to each and every believer at all times. The psalmist David explained that God searches the believer and knows everything about him (Ps. 139:1-6). God knows our activities, words, and the meditations of our hearts. In fact, his presence in our lives is so invasive that there is no place to escape his Spirit (v. 7). No matter where we go, God is there waiting on our arrival (vv. 8-10). Moreover, as children of God, we have this assurance: when we draw near to God, he also draws near to us (Ja. 4:8). We serve a personal God, who will be with us to the end of the world (Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5).

Scripture Study

His universal presence – Is. 40:12-22; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28; Je. 23:23-24

His personal presence – Is. 57:15; Jn. 16:8-9; Ps. 139:1-10; Ja. 4:8; Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5

Conclusion

God is omnipresent – his presence fills the earth. Understanding the nature of God helps us to trust the Lord more completely. Like the psalmist, when we understand that God’s Spirit is always present to us, no matter what we face, we can have the calm assurance that a loving Father is near, he knows our needs, and he is willing and ready to help us in our time of need. What a comforting thought to know that God is close at hand.



“Shekinah”

Introduction

Shekinah refers to the manifest glory of God. God has revealed himself by visible signs and miraculous demonstrations throughout history, even showing his presence with visible glory. In today’s lesson, we will review examples of God’s manifest glory in order to understand the glory that Christ has placed within the church.

Key Verse

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn. 17:22).

Lesson Summary

One of the most striking examples of the manifest glory of God occurred at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14). This temple was the house that King David desired to build for the Lord, but God would not permit him to construct it because he had been a man of war and shed excessive blood (1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3). His son, Solomon, fulfilled David’s dream of building a temple, and saw this vision through to its completion. In brief, when the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant to the temple, they offered innumerable sacrifices (1 Ki. 8:5) and worshipped the Lord with music and singing (2 Ch. 5:12-13). Then the glory of the Lord filled the temple as a cloud so that the priests were unable to continue their ministry (1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Ch. 5:14). The dedication reached its climax at the conclusion of Solomon’s prayer when the fire of God consumed their sacrifices and the visible shekinah filled the house of the Lord (2 Ch. 7:1). “And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever” (vv. 2-3). In the New Testament, the glory of God was visibly manifested through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He took Peter, James, and John “up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them” (Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36). His physical appearance was temporarily changed, so that he radiated with a brilliant light. The apostles actually saw the supernatural glory of God in Christ – glory that was veiled by his natural flesh. Moreover, they heard the voice of the Father speaking from the cloud that covered them, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mt. 17:5). Likewise, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the church, the visible presence and glory of God was manifested in and among the saints (Ac. 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12). Before his ascension, Jesus promised, “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (1:5). The apostles and many disciples “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,” waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit (vv. 14-15). When the Holy Ghost suddenly descended on the church, the natural atmosphere changed, for a “rushing mighty wind” was heard among them (2:2), and “cloven tongues” like fire appeared and sat on them as a miraculous sign of God’s glorious presence among them (v. 3). When the Holy Ghost filled them, they all “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (v. 4). The saints spoke with a spiritual language inspired by God. These signs and wonders were visible confirmations of God’s glory in the church.

Scripture Study

Solomon’s temple dedication – 1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14; 7:1-3; 1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3

Christ’s transfiguration – Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36

Holy Ghost outpouring – Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12

Conclusion

Whereas in the Old Testament the glory of God was revealed primarily in external manifestations, under the dynamic New Covenant, God desires to manifest his glory in and through man. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost in and among the saints explains how God’s glory is manifested in the church today (Jn. 17:22; Ha. 2:5-9). In the next lesson, we will see that God’s glorious presence indwells the saints of God.



“Indwelling Spirit”

Introduction

The glory of God’s Spirit that was manifested in the temple of Solomon, that was revealed in Jesus Christ, and that was witnessed on the day of Pentecost, still inhabits saints today. Jesus explained that his Spirit would not only dwell with the believer but would actually indwell him (Jn. 14:17). In today’s lesson, we will see that Christ abides in the believer by his indwelling Spirit, and the fullness of Christ’s presence is experienced through being baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17).

Lesson Summary

God promised to place his law (Word, Truth) within his people (Je. 31:33; He. 8:10; 10:16). But how would God accomplish this? Paul taught that Christ (the Word of God) dwells in our hearts by faith (Ep. 3:16-17), and he abides in us through his Spirit (Ro. 8:9-16). God’s indwelling Spirit assures us that we are indeed the children of God, and teaches us to abide in Christ (Ro. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:27). The Lord has given us “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” to be an inner witness and assurance of his abiding presence (2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13). Moreover, the prophet Joel declared how God would pour out his Spirit in the last days. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Jl. 2:28-29). On the day of Pentecost, when the saints “were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” Peter identified their experience as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Ac. 2:4, 14-18). When Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost, he identified their experience as the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:5). Today, God continues to baptize with the Holy Ghost and to fill with his Spirit. The apostle Peter declared, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Ac. 2:38-39). Moreover, we can be filled with the Holy Ghost at all times, that is, we can be re-filled again and again (Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31). The significance of the indwelling Spirit is evident in the proclamation of Christ at the feast of Tabernacles. Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Jn. 7:37). Then he promised, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (v. 38). Jesus was referring to his life-giving Spirit, the Holy Ghost (v. 39). When he witnessed to the woman of Samaria, Jesus spoke of living water that would satisfy the thirsty souls of men (Jn. 4:10, 14). Clearly, Christ places his Spirit within every believer to be “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (v. 14). As faithful followers of Christ, we should, therefore, seek to be filled with the Spirit in our daily walk with God.

Scripture Study

Indwelling Spirit – Ep. 3:16-17; Ro. 8:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13

Filled with the Spirit – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:5; 2:4, 14-18, 38-39; Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31

Living water -- Jn. 7:37-39; 4:1-14

Conclusion

The Spirit of God is given to every believer when we are regenerated and have new life in Christ. Indeed, we are born again of the Spirit of God (Jn. 3:6-7). Being a child of God born of the Spirit, we are called to walk (live) in the Spirit in order to reap eternal life (Ga. 5:16, 25; 6:8). Living in the Spirit necessarily entails being filled with the Spirit of God. As each member of the church is baptized with the Holy Ghost and then is continually filled with the Spirit, the church is itself a living-giving force in the world embodying the Spirit of Christ in and among us.



“Convicted by the Spirit”

Introduction

Quoting from the *Abstract of Faith*: “Conviction is a revelation to man by the Holy Ghost of the righteous judgment of God. Through conviction, unregenerated souls see themselves as sinners before God, experience guilt, and realize their separation from Him who is holy, just, and good.” In today’s lesson, we will consider some basic observations about conviction as it relates to the work of the Holy Spirit and the mission of the church.

Key Verse

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Ac. 2:37).

Lesson Summary

Jesus commissioned the church to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, but we are not alone in this missionary endeavor. As we declare the truth, God confirms his Word through the work of the Spirit. Jesus taught, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is *expedient* for you that I go away: for If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (Jn. 16:7-8). First of all, an essential point about conviction is that it comes by the agency of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God reproves or convicts the world of sin. Though we play an important part in the work of conviction in proclaiming the truth (Lu. 14:23; Ja. 5:20), the Spirit is actually the one who reproves sinners by the truth we proclaim. A good example of this point is the ministry of Stephen. When he declared the truth in the power of the Spirit, his adversaries were “cut to the heart” (Ac. 6:5, 10; 7:51, 54-55). The mission of the church relies on the work of the Spirit, indicated by Jesus’ use of the word *expedient* (v. 7). Moreover, “And when he is come” defines a change, a greater dimension of the work of the Spirit through the church in the world. Jesus departed, yet he did not leave us comfortless, without assistance, but gave his Spirit to us in order to move our missionary work forward through his conviction and reproof. Furthermore, conviction is God’s revelation in the heart of sinners, causing them to see the error of their ways. It is not merely being shamed or condemned by another. Although we can tell people that they are sinners and even shame them for their unrighteous actions, only the Holy Ghost can bring about true conviction, for it is a revelation by the Spirit whereby he shines the light of holy God into a sinner’s darkened heart (1 Jn. 1:5; Jn. 3:19). An individual’s sin and guilt must be exposed and brought to light (Ep. 5:13). Conviction is the illumination of the Spirit in the heart of sinners leading them to the truth, testifying of Jesus, and pointing them to Christ, the light of the world (Jn. 1:4, 9; 15:26; 16:13). Through the Spirit, the sinner is being drawn by the Father to the Son. Jesus taught, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Jn. 6:44). Finally, Holy Ghost conviction changes an individual’s self-perception. In Acts 2:37, the Bible describes the experience of conviction as being *pricked*. Peter, full of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4, 4:8), preached a dynamic message of Christ crucified and resurrected. When the Jews heard the Word of God, they were convicted – “pricked in their heart” (2:37). After listening to Peter’s witness, something changed in them. They no longer felt good about themselves (2 Co. 7:9). After the spiritual light of their soul was turned on, they saw themselves as guilty – as already condemned by God (Jn. 3:17-18). Thus true conviction by the Holy Ghost causes the sinner to wrestle with his personal, sinful condition.

Scripture Study

The agency of the Spirit – Jn. 16:7-8; Lu. 14:23; Ja. 5:20; Ac. 6:5-10; 7:51-56

The illumination of the Spirit – 1 Jn. 1:5; Jn. 3:19; Ep. 5:13; Jn. 1:4, 9; 6:44; 15:26; 16:13

Pricked by the Spirit – Ac. 2:36-37; 2 Co. 7:9; Jn. 3:17-18

Conclusion

The mission of the church cannot be accomplished without the conviction of the Holy Ghost. Our effectiveness in winning souls to Christ depends on his reproof. We should therefore seek to be filled with the Holy Ghost, declaring Christ and the Word of God, in order to illuminate sinners with God’s truth.



“Regenerated by the Spirit”

Introduction

Regeneration (“born again,” Jn. 3:3) is a word that conveys the idea of a “new beginning.” We seldom use this word in casual conversation, but we use other words that essentially communicate the basic concept of regeneration. For example, he *restored* the antique furniture; he hired the contractor to *renovate* his home; she *renewed* her driver’s license; and the doctor *revived* her patient. When people die, they are sometimes *resuscitated* or brought to life again. Fallen man is spiritually dead, but God has provided the way in Christ for all who believe to be brought to life again – to be spiritually restored to new life or regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Key Verse

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (Jn. 3:6).

Lesson Summary

When Adam was created, “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Ge. 2:7). Of course, Satan deceived Eve; she ate the forbidden fruit, and in turn, Adam also ate and disobeyed the Lord’s commandment. The results were physical and spiritual death. Reflecting on Adam’s disobedience and rebellion against God, the apostle Paul explained humanity’s sin condition and its consequences, saying, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Ro. 5:12). Because of sin, mankind inherited the physical penalty of death (Ge. 2:17), but also experienced the greater consequence and judgment of spiritual death, being “dead in trespasses and sins” and “by nature the children of wrath” (Ep. 2:1, 3; Ja. 1:15). Regeneration is God’s solution to this problem of spiritual death. Jesus explained it to Nicodemus in terms of being “born again” (Jn. 3:1-8). The Spirit quickens or gives spiritual life in Christ (Jn. 6:63; 11:25; Ro. 8:5-6, 10-11; 1 Co. 15:45). By the Spirit of God, a sinner is born again by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, whereby he becomes a child of God and “is passed from death unto life” (Jn. 3:6-7; 5:24; Col. 2:12-13). Being brought from death to life is a spiritual transformation – a radical change in the heart of the believer producing a translation from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3, 5; Col. 1:13). For this reason, the apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Co. 5:17). Clearly, regeneration means a completely new life in Christ – a fresh, new beginning in the Lord. Thus after we are regenerated by the Spirit, we should “walk in the newness of life” in the Spirit (Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; Ga. 5:25), not walking after the sinful desires of the flesh (Ga. 5:16).

Scripture Study

Spiritual death – Ge. 2:7, 17; Ro. 5:12; Ep. 2:1, 3; Ja. 1:15

Spiritual life – Jn. 3:3, 5-7; 5:24; 6:63; 11:25; Ro. 8:5-6, 10-11; 1 Co. 15:45; Col. 1:13; 2:12-13

Living in the Spirit – 2 Co. 5:17; Ro. 6:4; 8:1, 4; Ga. 5:16, 25

Conclusion

The spiritual evidence of a regenerated life is the fruit of the Spirit (Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 5:9-10). Simply put, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, his life will change. The way he talks and behaves will be transformed even as his soul has been transformed by the Spirit. However, one should keep in mind that regeneration is not the same as sanctification. The only way a believer can continue to experience victory and power over sin is through the crucifixion of sinful flesh (Ro. 6:6). Indeed, Jesus also shed his blood for our sanctification; every child of God should embrace this by faith.



“Sanctified by the Spirit”

Introduction

The essential idea in sanctification is holiness – being set apart from sin and unrighteousness. God’s will for every believer is sanctification (1 Th. 4:3). Since we are called to be holy in Christ, God wants every child of God to conduct himself in purity and honor (vv. 4, 7). This is a part of our “high calling” in Christ (Ph. 3:14; He. 12:14). However, though we are called to be sanctified and set apart to God, man cannot free himself from the power and dominion of sin. Only God can do this for us and in us. In today’s lesson, we will see that the Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies the believer and delivers him from the grip of sin.

Key Verse

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Ro. 8:13).

Lesson Summary

As followers of Christ, we must not yield ourselves to sin (Ro. 6:1-2; Ep. 4:26-27). Sin should never reign in our lives and dominate us (Ro. 6:12-14). The apostle Paul declared, “for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (v. 19). Clearly, the responsibility to be holy and separate from sin falls upon our shoulders. But we ourselves have no innate power to cease from sin. In fact, man’s fallen nature is prone to sin (6:20; 7:14-20). In response to this dilemma, Paul taught the flesh-Spirit conflict that must be resolved in the life of every believer (Ro. 8:4-9, 12-14; Ga. 5:16-17, 24-25). Since the Spirit and flesh work against each other, the flesh with its sinful desires and works must be put to death, crucified, or mortified (Ga. 5:19-21, 24). This second definite work of God’s grace is called sanctification. Fortunately, God provided the way for a Christian to be sanctified and delivered from the sinful flesh when he deposited his Spirit within him in regeneration (Ga. 5:16, 25; Ro. 8:9). On this basis of the indwelling Spirit, the apostle Paul implored the church at Thessalonica to live in a manner pleasing to God and consistent with the Spirit of holiness (1 Th. 4:1-8). In fact, to resist holiness is to resist the Holy Spirit abiding in us (v. 8). Accordingly, regeneration by the Spirit to new life in Christ anticipates and expects sanctification by the Spirit unto holiness. The Word of God teaches the difference between sin and righteousness (Ro. 6:13), between carnal and spiritual (Ro. 8:6), and between iniquity and holiness (Ro. 6:19). Moreover, the Word of God teaches the way of freedom and deliverance from sin through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ (Ac 26:18; He. 13:12). In brief, when we accept God’s will for our sanctification (1 Th. 4:3) and embrace God’s provision of sanctification by faith in Christ, we can both expect and experience the sanctifying grace of God in our lives. The Spirit indwelling the believer provides the agency of God’s power and deliverance from sin. By the work and enablement of the Spirit in our lives, we are sanctified in Christ in order to put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh and live holy (Ro. 15:16; 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13; Ro. 8:13; 2 Co. 7:1; Ro. 12:1).

Scripture Study

The flesh-Spirit dilemma – Ro. 6:1-2, 12-14, 19-20; 7:14-20; 8:4-9, 12-14; Ga. 5:16-17, 24-25

Called to holiness – 1 Th. 4:1-8; Ro. 6:13; Ro. 8:6; Ro. 6:19

Sanctified by the Spirit – Ro. 15:16; 1 Co. 6:11; 1 Pe. 1:2; 2 Th. 2:13; Ro. 8:13; 2 Co. 7:1; Ro. 12:1

Conclusion

When we come to Jesus Christ as Savior and are born again, the conflict of the flesh and Spirit indwelling us must be resolved. The Spirit that regenerates us to new life also compels us to be sanctified – to be made holy. God will not allow a believer to continue sinning, but will by his Spirit sanctify the inner man and empower him to live holy and victorious over sin and unrighteousness.



“Fruit of the Spirit”

Introduction

Have you ever bought a bag of fruit that looked ripe and delicious only to discover later that one piece was bad? You examined the fruit thoroughly when you made the purchase, but you could not see the inner rottenness. After a couple of days, what was hidden became self-evident. Perhaps, you noticed the obvious dark, mushy spot or maybe you smelled the curious odor when you examined it. Like the old saying goes, “One bad apple can spoil the whole bushel,” so you threw it out before it corrupted the rest. Suffice it to say, when you are ready to take a bite, picking out good fruit is essential, and recognizing bad fruit is just as important. In today’s lesson, we will consider the role of the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian life.

Key Verse

“For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ep. 5:9).

Lesson Summary

In Matthew 7:15-23, Jesus warned of false prophets who appear to be sheep when in fact they are wolves ready to devour unsuspecting souls. Not every minister who proclaims Jesus Christ is a true prophet of God (vv. 22-23). Likewise, not everyone who professes to know God and follow Christ is a genuine Christian (v. 21). For this reason, Jesus said, “Beware” (Mt. 7:15). Although we should avoid suspicion in our relationships, particularly within the church, we should not be spiritually naïve, but rather discerning. We can recognize false brethren by their fruits, because a good tree bears good fruit and a corrupt tree bears evil fruit (vv. 16-17). In fact, “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (v. 18). Therefore, a tree, good or bad, is known by the fruit it produces (v. 20). The truth of God’s word will always reveal and bring to light. Though at the first recognizing deception can be difficult, in time the bad fruit will become self-evident as we continue to walk in the light of the Truth of God’s Word and Spirit (Ep. 5:6-13; 1 Jn. 4:1). The light of God’s Truth reveals and exposes “things which are done of them in secret” (Ep. 5:11-13). A child of God does not walk in sin and unrighteousness, but he produces the good fruit of the Spirit because he is born of the Spirit (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:4, 18). As a child of God walks in the light manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, he will recognize deception. What is the good fruit that the Spirit produces in the life of a true believer? In his writings, the apostle Paul made a sharp distinction between what we were without Christ and who we are in Christ (Ep. 2:1-22). In Christ we are no longer servants of sin, but being free from it and now serving the Lord, we have our “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Ro. 6:22). The fruit of the Spirit is holiness and righteousness: separation from sin and set apart to God. The fruit of the Spirit aligns to all that is good, right, and true (Ep. 5:9). Specifically, Paul identified the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Ga. 5:22-23). Though we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts, we are saved by the grace of God to produce good works that please the Lord (Ep. 2:10). Our good works attest that we are God’s workmanship, a new creature in Christ Jesus (v. 10; 2 Co. 5:17).

Scripture Study

Good or bad fruit – Mt. 7:15-23

Recognizing deception – Ep. 5:6-13; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:1, 7; 5:4, 18

The good fruit – Ro. 6:22; Ep. 5:9; Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 2:10; 2 Co. 5:17

Conclusion

A tree is known by its fruit, good or bad. As we walk in the Spirit, we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and establish ourselves as true children of God. When we bear the good fruit, we distinguish ourselves from all that is bad in the world, enabling us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, and truth and error.



“The Promise”

Introduction

A promise is a binding commitment to fulfill one’s word: an obligation to do all that one has said. These days, taking a person at his word is risky. People say one thing but then do another. A man and woman stand before witnesses to pledge their undying devotion to one another in holy matrimony, only later to break their covenant by divorce and remarriage. Politicians make fair speeches filled with appealing words – promises they will never keep. Although man’s word is unreliable, God’s Word is trustworthy. He will do all he has promised in his Word.

Key Verse

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Ac. 2:39).

Lesson Summary

Without a doubt, we are living in the last days when “perilous times shall come” (2 Ti. 3:1-5). However, in these uncertain times of great opposition to our faith, God’s Word gives us “a strong consolation,” because he has made binding promises and cannot lie (He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2). In fact, this world will one day pass away, but his Word will never pass away (Mt. 24:35; see also Mk. 13:31; Lu. 21:33; 2 Pe. 3:7, 10-13). The Word of God proves reliable and his promises faithful. 2 Cor. 1:18-20 teaches us that God is true and his promises also are true. God’s Word is not uncertain: his Word is not “yes” one minute and “no” the next. All that he has promised to us in Christ will forever stand true. When God said it, he meant it. His Word to us is “yes” and “amen” (“so be it”)! Therefore, we can count on the Word of God, today, tomorrow, and the next day, even until the Lord comes again. God’s Word will remain true for all eternity (Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25). While the last days are indeed perilous, they also are full of promise. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached, “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29). When Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and for their future work and ministry in the church, he prophesied of the coming of the Holy Ghost, saying, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Lu. 24:49). Jesus referred to the Holy Ghost as “the promise of my Father.” Luke recorded these same words in Acts 1:4-5; “And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Again, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is the promise of the Father. Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Lu. 11:13). The Holy Spirit is the Father’s promise to his children. We can be sure he will fulfill his promise and give his Spirit to all who ask.

Scripture Study

God’s word is true – He. 6:13-18; Nu. 23:19; 1 Sa. 15:29; Ti. 1:2; Mt. 24:35; 2 Co. 1:18-20; Ps. 119:89; 1 Pe. 1:25
The promise of God – Ac. 2:16-18; Jl. 2:28-29; Lu. 11:13; 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:38-39

Conclusion

When the Holy Ghost was poured out on the church according to the Word of God, Peter understood that the baptism with the Holy Ghost was God’s promise to every believer, even to all future generations (Ac. 2:38-39). Therefore, every believer should pray and seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – the promise of the Father.



“Outpouring of the Spirit”

Introduction

In this lesson, we will examine the behind-the-scenes details surrounding the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when Christ’s promise to baptize with the Holy Ghost was first fulfilled in the church. By reflecting on the experience of the New Testament church, we will be able to more fully understand the baptism with the Holy Ghost and build our expectation for the outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.

Key Verse

“And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit . . .” (Ac. 2:18).

Lesson Summary

Before he ascended, when Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost (Jn. 15:26; 14:26), he told his disciples to “wait” and “tarry” for the promise of the Father” (Ac. 1:4; Lu. 24:49). They were to remain in Jerusalem until they were baptized with the Holy Ghost “not many days hence” (Ac. 1:5). However, “waiting” and “tarrying” should not be understood as passive in the sense of being idle until something occurred, but rather the apostles waited in active anticipation and expectation for the promise. For them, following Christ’s directives to wait and tarry took on a practical expression. Leading up to the day of Pentecost, the church “continued” to seek God for the fulfillment of his promise. They believed the promise and then took faithful action in order to prepare themselves to receive the Holy Ghost, praying and making supplication (Ac. 1:13-15; 2:1). Therefore, Christ’s disciples actively embraced the promise of the Spirit by faith (Ga. 3:14). True faith in the Word of God requires faithful action on our part for “faith without works is dead” (Ja. 2:17, 20, 26). Clearly, God’s promises in no way relinquish the church from responsibility; instead his promises expect faithful action and obedience from us. Today, we should not sit back and relax waiting on God to send Holy Ghost revival in the church. Instead, when we “tarry” we must embrace God’s promise by faith continually seeking the face of God for the outpouring of the Spirit among us (He. 11:6). God will surely fulfill his Word because he is faithful to keep his promises, but only those who remain faithful to God can expect to receive from the Lord (Ja. 1:6-8; He. 11:33). Furthermore, the church had unity in their waiting and tarrying. Luke, the writer of the book of *Acts*, gave emphasis to this characteristic within the fellowship of the church when they assembled to receive the promise. In regard to their praying, Luke wrote, “These all continued with one accord” – note the words “all” and “one” which indicate a comprehensive togetherness, a cohesion (1:14). All who were in the upper room had one mind (Ph. 2:2). They were pulling together (Ph. 1:27). Today, a great challenge in the church is motivating all of the church to pull in unison and move in the same direction. The apostles’ unity “continued” and persisted as they prayed for the promise of the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:14; Ro. 12:2; Co. 4:2). On the day of Pentecost, Luke again noted the unity of the church in the disciples’ coming together – “they were all with one accord in one place” (Ac. 2:1). This context of unity was directly connected to the coming of the Holy Ghost (v. 2). In other words, to think of the outpouring of the Spirit on a divided people is absurd (Ep. 4:3). The emphasis of unity in the outpouring of the Spirit is evident in that the Spirit “filled all the house,” he “sat upon each of them,” and “they were all filled,” as opposed to a partial or limited outpouring (Ac. 2:3-4).

Scripture Study

Wait for the promise – Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5, 13-15

Faith to receive – Ga. 3:14; Ja. 1:6-8; 2:17, 20, 26; He. 11:6, 33

Unity in the church – Ac. 1:14; 2:1-4; Ep. 4:3; Ph. 1:27; 2:2

Conclusion

Like the New Testament church, we also should wait and tarry, praying and supplicating in order to receive the promise of the Father. Those who desire to be baptized with the Holy Ghost should seek for the promise, and by faith expect to receive the spiritual blessing. Moreover, the saints of God should join together in one accord to receive a mighty outpouring of the Spirit in the church today.



“Speaking in Tongues”

Introduction

Today’s subject has been a topic of widespread debate in Christian circles. Some groups have denied the authenticity of speaking in tongues in our day, limiting this practice to the era of the New Testament church. Others accept speaking in tongues but confine it to a private expression like individual prayers. Still others have misunderstood the spiritual purpose of speaking in tongues and its place in the church. In this lesson, we will clarify the role and importance of speaking in tongues.

Key Verse

“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Co. 14:2).

Lesson Summary

Speaking in tongues is the ecstatic utterance of a language other than one’s own, spoken by the divine enablement of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and spoke in other languages “as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Ac. 2:4). Contrary to the teaching and practice of some Christians, nowhere in the Scriptures should speaking in tongues be made fundamental to salvation. Instead, speaking in tongues is directly connected to the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; see also *Abstract of Faith* under “Speaking in Tongues”). When believers are baptized with the Holy Ghost, they always speak in tongues which confirms their experience. Tongues are an external witness of the indwelling Spirit – the Holy Ghost manifesting his abiding presence in the life of the believer (Mk. 16:17). Therefore, speaking in tongues is a normative experience among Spirit-filled Christians. Though speaking in tongues is a sign following believers, it is also a sign to unbelievers (1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12). [Note: This writer has witnessed the role of speaking in tongues in bringing unbelievers to Christ. On one occasion, after the Holy Ghost had uniquely manifested himself in tongues, a sinner man came forward with his wife to accept Christ as Savior. His background was completely incompatible with the Holiness-Pentecostal tradition. As the pastor was praying with him at the altar to receive salvation, the man’s wife also prayed at the altar, simultaneously receiving the baptism with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues.] Furthermore, tongues serve to edify the church itself. Individually, speaking in tongues builds up a believer because his spirit communicates with God in mysteries (1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27). When the Holy Spirit prays and intercedes through a believer in this way, his faith is built up (Ju. 20). However, when the Spirit-inspired language is interpreted (see interpretation of tongues, 1 Co. 12:4, 10; 1 Co. 14:27-28), the tongues serve to edify all of the members of the church, fulfilling a much greater purpose in the body (1 Co. 14:5, 12-13).

Scripture Study

The witness of the Spirit – Ac. 2:4, 6, 8, 11; 10:44-46; 11:15; 19:1-7; Mk. 16:17

A sign to unbelievers – 1 Co. 14:21-23; Ac. 2:6-12

Self-edification – 1 Co. 14:2, 4, 14; Ro. 8:26-27; Ju. 20

Edifying the whole body – 1 Co. 14:5, 12-13

Conclusion

How should we think about speaking in tongues? Tongues are inseparable from the work of the Holy Ghost in the church. Holy Ghost-baptized saints will speak in tongues. In fact, when writing to the church at Corinth, Paul encouraged the saints in regard to the practice of speaking in tongues in the church (1 Co. 14:5, 18, 39). Nevertheless, excessively speaking in tongues is not an indication of superior spirituality (vv. 19, 23, 40).



“Filled with the Spirit”

Introduction

God’s plan in Jesus Christ is to indwell his people. When Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, he said, “Ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17). While God desires to dwell with his people, he desires even more for his people to remain consecrated and filled with his Spirit. Certainly, every born again believer should seek to be filled with the Spirit.

Key Verse

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:18).

Lesson Summary

On the day of Pentecost, the fullness of the Spirit came into the church through the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-4, 14-18). When the saints in the upper room were baptized with the Spirit and spoke in tongues, devout Jews of every nation were also in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost (2:5). The Spirit dynamically came into the room with manifestations like wind and fire, filling not only “the house where they were sitting,” but filling every believer as well (vv. 2, 4). Some 120 saints, perhaps more, received the Holy Ghost baptism with the evidence of tongues, experiencing the fullness of the Spirit in the depths of their souls. When the Jews in the city heard about this strange phenomenon and came to see what was happening, they actually heard the saints speaking the wonderful works of God in their many diverse languages (Ac. 2:6, 11; 1 Co. 12:10). This spiritual manifestation was met with mixed reviews. Realizing that all of these saints were Galileans, all of the Jews were astonished, asking, “What meaneth this?” (Ac. 2:7, 12). But some mocked this mighty move of God refusing to hear his voice, saying, “These men are full of new wine” (Is. 28:11-12; Ac. 2:13). To sinful, fleshly men, this manifestation of the Spirit was reminiscent of intoxication. Of course, Peter contended that they were not drunk at all, but rather that God poured out his Spirit upon them and they were filled with the Spirit. He said, “For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . . I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Ac. 2:15-18). These saints of God were not filled with alcohol but were under the influence of the Spirit, being baptized with and full of the Holy Ghost. Intriguingly, the apostle Paul explained the will of God for the church, admonishing not to drunkenness (intoxication) but to “be filled with the Spirit.” He wrote, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ep. 5:17-18). Being filled with the Spirit and being baptized with the Spirit are interrelated, yet not exactly the same. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is a one-time experience that immerses us into the fullness of the Spirit. However, as Spirit-baptized believers, we can and should be filled with the Spirit again and again. For example, after the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter and John, along with the saints, were again filled (not baptized) with the Holy Ghost. When they prayed in one accord, the place where they were assembled shook; and then they were filled with the Spirit and spoke God’s word boldly (Ac. 4:23-32).

Scripture Study

Baptized into fullness – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-5, 14-18

Like drunken men – Ac. 2:6-13; Is. 28:11-12

Be filled with the Spirit – Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:23-32

Conclusion

Through the baptism with the Holy Ghost, God desires to fill up his church continually with his spiritual life and presence. As the Holy Spirit fills all of the members of the church individually, God fills the church with his Spirit corporately. In this way, the church functions as the temple of the living God: “an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16).



“Empowerment”

Introduction

Have you ever felt weak or inferior as a Christian, not because of anything you did wrong, but you simply felt insufficient to meet some challenge in your life? At some point, every child of God feels this way because we are limited in our humanity. But our weaknesses are not a problem for God. The apostle Paul declared, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Co. 12:9, 10). Jesus said, “For my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9). Therefore, we are to understand that our strength is not in our humanity, but that we stand by the power of God.

Key Verse

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ep. 3:20).

Lesson Summary

We fight a spiritual and formidable enemy (Ep. 6:12; 2 Co. 10:3), but Jesus Christ has given us the spiritual power and authority to overcome Satan (Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7). For this reason, the Scriptures place responsibility on us: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ep. 6:10); and “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Co. 16:13). Truly, we can be strong in the Lord when we are full of the Holy Ghost. Jesus gave us his example to follow. He showed us how to be strong in resisting the enemy’s temptations (Lu. 4:1-13). He demonstrated how we should be filled with the Holy Ghost and spiritual power. Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, emerged from his forty-day temptation in the power of the Spirit which thereafter characterized his earthly ministry (vv. 14-15). He evidenced the power of the Spirit in his life through exercising authority over demonic spirits, sicknesses, and diseases (vv. 30-36, 39-40). However, Jesus not only demonstrated the power of God in his life and ministry, but he also gave this same power of God to the church (Lu. 24:49). The baptism with the Holy Ghost, the fulfillment of Christ’s promise (and the Father’s) to the church, empowered the saints and enabled them to speak and act beyond their human ability (Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43) – it was a baptism of power! One of the primary reasons the Holy Ghost was given was empowerment. For example, the apostle Paul testified that spiritual power, that is, the power of the Holy Ghost, distinguished his ministry (1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19). In fact, he insisted on God’s power as the basis of his effectiveness in the ministry (1 Co. 2:4-5). In the Old Testament, many were powerfully used by the Holy Ghost to perform tasks and duties for the Lord. Among them were the judges of Israel. Samson, a Nazarite and judge, illustrates this point (Jud. 13:5; 16:31). The Bible explains, “And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times” (13:24-25). The Holy Spirit would come upon Samson mightily and he would do great exploits (14:6, 19; 15:14-15). But today, under the New Covenant with the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit fills us and his power actually indwells us. Not only does the Holy Ghost move upon us, but now his power is working in us (Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29).

Scripture Study

Be strong – Jn. 1:12; 2 Ti. 1:7; Ep. 6:10; 1 Co. 16:13

Christ’s example – Lu. 4:1-15, 30-36, 39-40

Baptism of power – Lu. 24:49; Ac. 1:8; 2:4, 43; 1 Co. 2:1-5; Ro. 15:18-19

Indwelling power – Jud. 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14-15; Ep. 1:19; 3:16, 20; Co. 1:29

Conclusion

As Spirit-baptized believers, we have an unlimited supply of God’s power available to us (Jn. 7:38-39). Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, the power of God resides within us. When we consider that God can do anything, that nothing is beyond his power, and that Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and in earth, we are comforted to know we also can do great things by his Spirit that dwells in us.

