

The Era of the Spirit Series

Part 1: The Era of the Garden

- I. Introduction
 - a. As we go through these studies, try to keep track of when you learned something, your critique of it then and your critique of it now.
 - b. If something is a brand-new idea, definitely take note of that and your initial critique and how you feel about it later.
 - c. As humans we have many needs: love, acceptance, friendship, spirituality, etc.
 - i. The church we go to can meet a lot of those needs—but no church is perfect and cannot meet all our needs all of the time.
 - ii. The needs churches can meet are things like worship, prayer, faith, love, friendship, preaching, teaching, and serving.
 - iii. Depending on where you are in life, the church can help in different ways. Say you have young kids; then if the church provides children’s ministry, that helps you worship God, for instance, and naturally it will help the children as they grow older to learn about God and the Bible.
 - iv. The church may have striking visuals, lights, sounds, and a band which can help one worship, but this can also be a distraction from worship.
 - v. It’s difficult for a church to meeting one’s need for teaching during the main sermon, because everyone is at a different place in the walk with God and their knowledge of God’s Word.
 - vi. Here I’d like to start with what I consider basic teaching about the Holy Spirit, but which in my experience is not well known.
- II. The Eras
 - a. Normally eras are long periods of time, like millions of years. Here I use the term to describe and distinguish periods of time where our relationship to God changed dramatically. The name of the era has something to do with what characterizes it.
 - b. The first era is “The Era of the Garden”. It’s where we’ll start tonight. It starts just after the creation of the universe and begins with God making humans, and two special humans, Adam and Eve, whom he puts in a beautiful garden.
 - c. The second era is “The Era of Sin”, and it starts in the Garden just after Adam and Eve have eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They receive the knowledge of good and evil but are unable to comprehend it and cope with it. Humans from this point until the next era struggle to relate to God through their adherence to The Good and avoidance of The Evil. Ill-equipped, they constantly violate good and evil, which is sin, and therefore sin is what characterizes this era, which goes all the way until Jesus’ death and resurrection.

- d. Does Jesus get his own era? Perhaps, but he pointed out throughout his ministry that sin was still the defining word (e.g. Mat 4:17, Mat 5:18, Luke 13:1-9, Mat 21:28-32)
 - e. The third era is “The Era of the Spirit”. Jesus’ death destroyed the curse of the Garden where humanity was bound to Good and Evil. Jesus’ resurrection restored the proper way of relating to God: through the Indwelling Holy Spirit.
- III. The Era of the Garden
- a. Let’s start with Genesis 1:26-27. This is the last day of creation, and God is creating human beings—they’re like the other creatures he made, but with one big difference: They are creating in His image.
 - b. What could this mean? Many have speculated, and it certainly could mean more than one thing.
 - i. Some say it’s our high level of consciousness.
 - ii. Some say it’s our ability to love, seek justice, and give mercy—basically divine moral characteristics of God—not at the same level as God but a taste of them.
 - iii. Some say it’s God’s physical attributes. Maybe he’s much bigger or can control his size, but he has a head and heart and body, etc.
 - iv. Here’s what I say it is: We were created to house a part of God, a part of his Spirit, the Holy Spirit.
 - v. Evidence for this is in the Hebrew word for “image”, “selem” and how the Hebrews used the word in normal parlance: they would use it to indicate how a child resembled their parents. Today we say, “spitting image”. Even though they had no idea about genetics, they still knew it was not a mistake that one’s children look like their parents: *a part of their parents was in them*.
 - c. Now let’s look at Gen 2:7. Beginning at verse 4, the Bible zooms into the lives of Adam and Eve.
 - i. This is verse uniquely worded: “He breathed into his nostrils”, “the breath of life”, and “the man became a living being”.
 - ii. We don’t have time to go into all the particulars, but these phrases are different from all the animals and future references to animals.
 - iii. I believe in addition to Adam’s soul, God breathed His own Spirit into Adam. He breathed the Holy Spirit into him—the same Holy Spirit we as Christians get.
 - d. Gen 2:16. The Era of the Garden had just one command, “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, and there was just one punishment, “on the day you eat of it you will die”. [or when you eat of it]. Whichever it is, it’s pretty quick.
 - e. Gen 2:21-22. God creates Eve from Adam’s rib.

- i. *Tsela* is the Hebrew word. It's also an unusual word that is only found in a few other places: 3 times for the side of the Ark of the Covenant and 11 times to the side of the Tabernacle and 11 times to the side chamber of the Temple. One example is Exo 25:12.
 - ii. Therefore, I don't think "rib", or "the side of Adam" is correct. It refers to the idea that Eve too was created to house the Spirit of God.
 - f. The Fall. Gen 3:1-7.
 - i. We're running short on time, but let's touch on some important things:
 - ii. Verse 1 Satan is doing the same job he has now, tempting us. He does it with truth, half-truths, and lies.
 - iii. Verse 3 Eve likely learned the law from Adam, and it seems Adam threw in— "You know what, just don't even touch". Perhaps Eve was asking too many questions. There are more lessons on this concept, but this is what humans do with Laws: they put hedges around them to simplify them but often mess them up in the process.
 - iv. Verse 5 Satan's big temptation: God's holding out on you. You will be more like God if you have the knowledge of good and evil.
 - v. Verse 7 Something happened to them immediately—but it wasn't death (at least not physical death). So, what's the deal? ***I believe they died spiritually.*** They gained the knowledge of good and evil; they did become more like God but without the capacity, and God had to change the way he related to them.
 - g. They get kicked out.
 - h. Something happens with the kids Cain and Abel too.
- IV. Conclusion
 - a. Thinking this way puts the Indwelling Spirit at a very high place—the highest, really.
 - b. It is circumstantial. But I believe together, all the evidence helps harmonize the overall Biblical Narrative.
 - c. Although it's not a requirement that Adam and Eve initially had the same spirit that we now have access to, it does seem to be important.
 - i. I had heard many sermons on the Holy Spirit and how awesome He is.
 - ii. I would always nod my head in agreement, but deep down knew I didn't understand him or feel his presence.

Part 2: The Era of Sin

Short review of Part 1 (but a little longer than what I plan on doing in the future because of the foundational nature of the material), The Era of the Garden:

- From when Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden until when they ate from the tree that God had commanded them not to eat, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
- We read several clues that the Holy Spirit of God indwelt in Adam and Eve, the same indwelling that is available to Christians:
 - The idea "in the image of" means a "spitting image" and "part of the parents is in the child".
 - The curious words "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life", and, "the man became a living being."
 - The unusual word for "rib" and its connection with the temple and temple artifacts.
 - God said they would die "on the day" yet they didn't die physically. This meant they died spiritually in that God withdrew his Indwelling Spirit.
 - God did not look with favor of Cain's offering. Arbitrary? Cain was older than Able and he had reached the age during which one's mind becomes accountable to the knowledge of good and evil.
- Could it just be that God dwelled physically with them in the Garden?
 - If given the choice to be in God's presence or have his Spirit in you, which would you choose?
 - Adam and Eve's change started immediately (they saw they were naked and hid) not when they were kicked out of the Garden.
 - The reason given for kicking them out of the Garden was not to leave God's presence, but to no longer be able to eat from the Tree of Life.
- Read Gen 3:21-22:
 - I didn't cover this last week, but this is the first sacrifice of blood for sins (the animal that had to die for their skins).
 - It doesn't seem like eating just once from the Tree of Life granted immortality, but that eating from it sustained one's life.
 - Therefore, not eating from it would lead to their eventual death.

A small note about the reality and use of Genesis and the creation account:

- I think the primary use of these is spiritual and distinguishes itself in often subtle ways from the pagan mythologies of the time. As soon as one starts using the stories as a supernatural source of scientific facts, they are immediately distracted from its spiritual intent.
- Any supernatural information that God gives that can be used by distant generations to prove that the stories are indeed supernatural, gives an immense advantage to those distant generations.

- I. Introduction
 - a. One of the questions this part seeks to answer: Why did God's relationship to mankind change so drastically? Did God change?
 - b. It went from hanging out with Adam and Eve in the Garden to several times where God nearly destroyed humanity.
 - c. The answer upfront is: It is because of the curse of the Garden. Mankind chose to have the knowledge of good and evil to be more like God and relate to him through obedience instead of through his Indwelling Spirit.
 - d. Note how the Bible keeps its focus on the line of people involved with the given era (i.e. Adam and Eve and Cain, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc.)
- II. The Era of Sin
 - a. Gen 6:5-7 – The wickedness of the human race encompassed their every thought.
 - b. Gen 18:16-33 Abraham bargains with God over Sodom
 - i. v32 for the sake of ten I will not destroy it – interesting tangent about how the Jews weans everything they could out of the passage like the fig tree being the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.
 - ii. Here they reasoned at least 10 men spiritual men had to be in a city in order to guarantee God wouldn't destroy that city.
 - c. Exo 32: The Golden Calf
 - i. While Moses was with God getting the 10 Commandments, v1 they got tired of waiting.
 - ii. v7 God says, "...your people who YOU brought out of Egypt".
 - iii. v10 "so that my anger may burn against them and that I may *destroy* them." "...then I will make you a great nation."
 - iv. v11 Moses, like Abraham, pleads with God for them.
 - v. v14 Then the Lord relented.
 - d. 2Sam 24:1-17 The Lord's anger burned again.
 - i. v16 The Lord relented from further destruction.
 - e. Exile of Israel (northern kingdom) by Assyria (732 BC really onward because they never recovered).
 - f. Exile by Babylon (432-372 BC)
 - g. Controlled by Media/Persia (372-348 BC)
 - h. Controlled by Greece (371-140 BC)
 - i. Controlled by Rome (40 BC - 69 AD and beyond).
- III. Our Sin separates us from God.
 - a. Isa 59:1-2 It's not God's fault. It's the curse of the Garden. It is the fact that those of this era could only relate to God through obedience to Good and Evil but were incapable of doing that.
 - b. There are many definitions of "sin":
 - i. Doing something bad, doing something evil.

- ii. The strict Bible definition is: Breaking a Law of God.
 - iii. In the Garden there was one Law.
 - iv. After the Garden there was adherence to all that is good and evil.
 - v. The Mosaic Law, with the 613 commands, narrowed this down to a somewhat arbitrary set.
 - vi. Nevertheless, any law tries to codify/enumerate/write down some part of good and evil but is destined to fail.
- c. This era goes as long as we are bound to the knowledge of good and evil.

Part 3: Foretelling of the end of the Era of Sin

A little review and a “high altitude” view of what this series is about:

- Thus far I’ve talked about the Era of the Garden and Era of Sin, periods of time characterized by distinctly different ways through which God related to humankind.
- In the Garden (before the Fall) God related with Adam and Eve physically, but, more importantly, spiritually through His Spirit who indwelled within them. This is what it meant to be created in God’s image: We were created with the capacity and necessity to harbor the Holy Spirit.
- When Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, they gained the knowledge of good and evil, and their relationship with God changed to one of obedience to always doing good and never doing evil. In capable of this, God’s Spirit withdrew from them. Thus, they died spiritually and entered began a life immersed in/controlled by/characterized by sin—hence, The Era of Sin.
- Today we’re going to talk about some of the prophecies about the end of the Era of Sin. The prophecies talk about how God would send a messiah and start a new covenant and a new kingdom.
- What’s the point of all this? Simply put, to herald how important the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is. It is salvation. It is our connection to God. It is what completes us. Without it, there’s a bottomless void within us. We can try to fill it with other things, but it will never work. ***What an amazing time in which we live!*** Let us learn all that we can what it means to live in the Era of the Spirit.

I. Introduction

- a. There are far too many scriptures prophesying the end of the Era of Sin to possibly go over.
- b. For the sake of time, I will go over 2 about the Messiah, 2 about the New Covenant, and 2 about the Kingdom. Know that these three things are highly interconnected and can even be thought of as the same thing.
- c. Note about prophecies: Often prophecies have two parts: a near-term one and a far-off one.
 - i. The near-term one deals with the audience hearing the prophecy and is most often fulfilled within their lifetimes.
 - ii. The far-off one can be centuries in the future. It’s likely the near-term audience wouldn’t even know that the far-off one exists.
 - iii. The far-off one can typically only be known retrospectively (with any confidence). In other words, trying to predict what a far-off prophecy means before it has happened is basically impossible. Beware of those

who display overconfidence when interpreting as-of-yet unfulfilled prophecy.

- iv. Especially regarding far-off prophecies, they are written enigmatically, using symbolism, imagery, poetry, and other literary devices. In Daniel we'll see a form called "Apocalyptic style".

II. Prophecies about the Messiah

a. Psalm 22. Read v1-8 and v14-18 and v31.

- i. Christians can easily look at this verse in wonderment and see how this is talking about Jesus.
- ii. But did David know that he was prophesying about Christ? Possibly. He was definitely also talking about his current predicaments as king, though.

b. Isaiah 53. Read v1-7 and of v12.

- i. The near-term prophecy is about Israel itself. Israel (the nation) was the suffering servant of God.
- ii. But again, as Christians looking back, we can easily see how this prophecy is about the Messiah, that he was pierced for our transgressions and will bear our iniquities.

III. Prophecies about the New Covenant

a. Jer 31:31-40. Read v31-34.

- i. This verse actually says "new covenant". And we can be confident it is prophesying about the New Covenant because the writer of Hebrews refers to it several times as such.
- ii. The near-term prophecy was for the exiled Jews who would return to the land.
- iii. The far-off prophecy is about the covenant the Jesus would establish.
- iv. It says specifically the covenant will include the forgiveness of sins, but what of this, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" and "No longer will they teach their neighbor to know the Lord"? I believe this is poetically referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He will be in our mind (how we think) and our hearts (how we feel). We can teach people *about* God and the Holy Spirit, and we cannot make them *know* (relationally) God. Only the Holy Spirit can do this.

b. Eze 36 and 37. Read 36:26-27 and talk about the allegory and imagery of the Valley of the Dry Bones—so awesome!

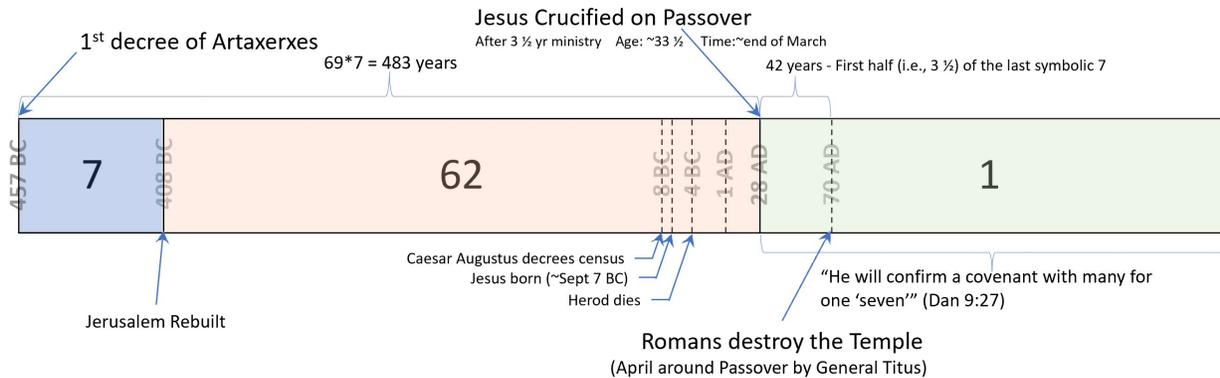
- i. The near-term prophecy is about the Jews returning to the Promised Land from exile and give hope to them.
- ii. The far-off prophecy is directly about how God will put his Spirit in us.

IV. Prophecies about the Kingdom of God

a. Daniel 2. The whole chapter is awesome! Read parts of v31-35 and v36-45.

- i. This is the near-term interpretation. Is there a far-off one? Maybe (it's hard to tell).
 - ii. This was 550 BC. It's amazing that he describes the next three world empires, how the Messiah will come, and how the Kingdom will start during the fourth empire. (see below)
 - iii. Daniel 7 and 8 talk about four different beasts and attributes about the beasts and their "horns". The beasts are the empires, and the horns are their leaders. In 8:20-21, the names of the second and third empires are actually given!
- b. Daniel 9:20-27. Read v24 and v27.
- i. This also is the near-term interpretation. I'm not sure if there's a far-off one.
 - ii. How can God put an "finish transgression and put an end to sin" while the earth still stands? It's because Christ, by fulfilling the Law ending the curse of the Garden, the curse of the knowledge of good and evil.

Daniel's 70 'Sevens'



Part 4: The Mission of the Messiah

A little review of what we've talked about thus far:

- Note that the typical use of the word “era” pertains to “The longest division of geologic time”, but here I’m using the definition, “A period of time characterized by particular circumstances”. I could have just as easily eon, age, or period. And the “particular circumstances” I’m keying in on is how God and mankind related with each other.
 - During the Era of the Garden, mankind related to God both face-to-face and through God’s Indwelling Spirit.
 - During the Era of Sin, because of Adam and Eve’s fateful decision to listen to the serpent and eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, God had to treat mankind as entities knowing good and evil, therefore His Spirit could no longer indwell in mankind, and mankind could only relate to God through their adherence to the Good and avoidance of Evil.
 - God planned and foreknew the time when he would end the curse of the knowledge of good and evil by coming down to earth and living in as a man. As the Godman, he was the only one who could live a life adhering totally to Good and in total abstinence of Evil. He called this god-man the Messiah and the covenant that he would enact the New Covenant and the people who would enter this new covenant the Kingdom of God.
 - What then is the Old Covenant and its purpose?

- I. What is the Old Covenant and its purpose?
 - a. Before we can understand the mission of the messiah, we must understand the Old Covenant, as it was the Messiah’s purpose to fulfill and end it.
 - b. The Old Covenant was a “codified version” of Good and Evil; in other words, the 613 Laws of Moses enumerated what was good and what was evil. It also provided ways to atone when they inevitably would break any of the laws.
 - c. The law was given to the lineage of Abraham, who obeyed God because he was the most faithful person God could find. God needed a conduit people who would not become as corrupt as the rest of mankind and who could thus give birth to the Messiah. In the others, the Messiah could not be born under just any nation with any set of laws. Gal 3:19 says, “Why, then, was the law given at all? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.” The “Seed” (singular) is Jesus Christ.

- II. The Mission of the Messiah: to fulfill the Law.
 - a. The last part of Heb 12:2 says, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

- i. The “joy” was most definitely not the cross itself, or even his human life of obedience to the Law.
 - ii. “The joy” was his mission: to end the Law and usher in the Era of the Spirit, the Kingdom.
 - b. Thus, the Messiah had the unenviable and impossible task (to any normal human) of following the Law of Moses.
 - c. Read Mat 5:17-20.
 - d. The phrase “least in the Kingdom” is a Jewish idiom that actually means, “excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven”. To teach someone to break the Law of Moses was considered blasphemy whose punishment was death by stoning (Lev 24:13-16). Blasphemy was unatonable as one would not only have to atone for their own sin but also for the sins of those who would perpetuate the false teachings; and this is impossible though because humans could only atone for their own sins—only God could forgive sins of others.
 - e. Jesus gives the condition under which the Law would disappear in v18: “until everything is accomplished”. What does this mean?
 - i. Could it mean the end of the world? Some think this.
 - ii. I believe it means “the Curse of the Garden has been undone”. Otherwise, what did the Messiah accomplish?
 - iii. In Mark 9:1, Jesus tells his 12 apostles, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.” This sets a timer, so to speak, of the lifespan of those around him. By saying “some”, one or more had to die but at least one of them had to be around. I believe one died, Judas, and that the other 11 apostles were alive when the kingdom started.
 - f. The fact that Jesus could not be perceived by the Jews as “teaching against the Old Covenant” put Jesus in a conundrum because he would have to be very careful about saying anything about the New Covenant. I believe this is why a largely spoke in parables and only spoke directly about the New Covenant in private amongst his disciples and a few others (like Nicodemus).
- III. The Mission of the Messiah: to restore the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Just about every parable and enigmatic statement Jesus made was about the Kingdom. For the sake of time, we’re going to end on a passage from Matthew 12.
 - i. The clearest passage, though, about the coming of the Holy Spirit is John chapters 13-17. This is by far the best “behind the scenes footage” of Jesus’ last night at the Passover meal with his disciples.
 - ii. Mat 26:17-29, Mark 14:17-25, and Luke 22:7-38 are the other passages that discuss this, but this is a combined 54 verses, as opposed to the 160 verses in John 13-17.

- iii. And the synoptic books are largely overlapping speaking about the Lord's supper, who was the greatest, Peter's denial, and Judas' impending betrayal.
 - iv. Only John, which doesn't even mention the Lord's supper. Instead, he focuses on what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit.
- b. The passage in Matthew is chapter 12, verses 22-45. It's a long passage filled with tons of awesome information, but for the same of time, let's talk about the first part and then I'll summarize the rest of it at the end.
- c. The passage is about Jesus healing a blind and mute possessed man, the Pharisees saying Jesus did it by Beelzebul, and then Jesus' four-part response, the Pharisees asking for another sign, and Jesus' three-part response to that. Naturally I don't have time to go over the entire passage, but we'll hit the parts about the Holy Spirit.
- d. Most would not say this is a great passage to highlight Jesus' mission to restore the Holy Spirit, but I think it is!
- e. Read v22-24. This is the last of the Three Miracles of the Messiah. (You can read more about it on my blog).
 - i. Obviously, Jesus did way more than three miracles, but he did three specifically called out by the Pharisees as ones *only the Messiah* could perform to prove to the Jews that he was the Messiah (the other two were healing a person with leprosy and healing a person born blind).
 - ii. The clue to this is when the people say, "Could this be the Son of David" and the Pharisees strong response. The people asked this because they were aware of the hoops the Pharisees had established in order for the Messiah to prove himself. You have to give them a bit of a break because, after all, this is a gargantuanly significant feat that you wouldn't want to get wrong!
 - iii. Specific to this miracle was a person who had to be mute. This is because the procedure the Pharisees used to cast demons out of people was to get the demon to identify their name, and then they would command them by name with the power of the Living God to come out. This is why Jesus says, "by whom do your people them out?" in verse 27.
- f. Read verses 25-28.
 - i. One would expect Satan, being the quintessential Machiavellian, could use cunning and deceptive schemes like casting a demon out of someone to confuse people. But Jesus has the Pharisees cornered and uses their own logic against them. (i.e. Satan driving out Satan)
 - ii. This is also why Jesus in verse 28 declares, "Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." In other words, "I jumped through all your hoops, so you have no choice by to declare me the Messiah!"

- iii. Verse 29 about the strong man is the same argument.
- g. Read verses 31-32. I believe these could be the most wrongly interpreted verses in the Bible.
 - i. As evidence of this, I offer the fact that churches *rarely* ever talk about it, even though it would be the most important verse to understand if it meant what churches say it means—namely, that there is a sin out there that if you commit it, you’re lost for good!
 - ii. Here’s what I think this passage is saying: The Blasphemy of the Spirit is the rejection of God’s Holy Spirit once the New Covenant begins. It is unforgivable because in the New Covenant, the Era or Age of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit *is what saves you*.
 - iii. Thus, to not accept the Spirit, whether directly or indirectly, is to reject the only thing that can save you.
 - iv. This is why it says, “in this age or the age to come”, meaning the Age of Sin where the Spirit was lost in the Garden, and the Age of the Spirit, the age of the New Covenant and the Kingdom of God.
 - v. It says that words and slander spoken against the Messiah, like the ones they just spoke, will be forgiven because one still would have the opportunity to repent and recognize him as the one and only Messiah.
 - vi. Whew!
- h. Summarize verses 33-37: The good fruit is the fruit of the Tree of Life. The bad fruit is fruit from the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (that’s why Jesus calls them “a brood of vipers”—a reference to the serpent in the Garden).
- i. Summarize verses 38-42: Jesus says he will do one more miracle: He will rise from the dead after three days and three nights. Most will reject this miracle which is why he says it will be easier for folks in the past who did not have miracles like this and yet repented.
- j. Summarize verses 43-45: here Jesus refers to the “house of a person” which is the tabernacle of the soul which can house the Spirit of God. For the Jews at this moment, their tabernacle is filled with the spirit of the Old Covenant. Once Jesus dies, the Old Covenant will end, and this is “the impure spirit coming out of a person”. The empty tabernacle is now meant to be filled with God’s Holy Spirit; however, for the Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah, their houses will be left empty and will be filled with things even worse than the Old Covenant.
- k. These are complicated interpretations, but I implore you to reread them and see if you think what I’m saying fits.

Part 5: The Beginning of the Era of the Spirit

A little review of what we've talked about thus far:

- Last week we talked about the two primary missions of the Messiah: 1) To undo the curse of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil by fulfilling the Law of Moses, and 2) To restore the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in mankind.
- Once accomplished, this would end the age of sin and spiritual death, and usher in the age of grace and spiritual life. Note that it did not bring physical immortality—we remain mortal without access to the Tree of Life but will inherit spiritual eternity in Heaven.
- Read John 14:12-17
 - Jesus says we will do even greater things than him. Does that mean bigger healings or longer strolls on water? I believe it means we will be greater because of the indwelling of God's Spirit within us.
 - Ask whatever you want in Jesus' name, and he will do it for the Father's glory. Does this mean we should end all our prayers "in Jesus' name"? I believe "in my name" is an idiom for "in my cause or purpose".
 - Like in earlier Gospel verses, I believe "ask for anything" means, "[You ought to] Ask for the Holy Spirit because the indwelling is more awesome than any material thing you could ever ask for or dream of."
 - v16 and 17: Jesus will ask the Father, and he will send the advocate, the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth. He has been living with them (i.e. Christ has) and he will then be *in* you.
- Thus, the restoration of the Holy Spirit was the "joy set before him" (Heb 12:2).
- A note about the Bible: *whenever the Bible explains something enigmatic*, we must listen! We'll see that a few times today, but, for example, book of Hebrews is chock-full of them:
 - It refers to Jer 31:31-34 three times, it quotes Psalms 2:7, 40:6-8, 110:4, 118:6-7, Gen 14:18, 21:5, 22:17, Deut 31:6, Prov 3:11-12, and Hab 2:3-4 verbatim all as having to do with the New Covenant.
 - It says the things and events of the Old Covenant were shadows of future events and of spiritual realities (Heb 8:5). Heb 9:8, "The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. ⁹ This is an illustration for the present time..." and Heb 10:1 "The Law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."
 - I believe the Jewish holy days could have been celebrations for future events fulfilled by the Messiah. We know he was crucified on Passover and rose during the feast of unleavened bread. It is possible that Jesus was born on Rosh Hashana and circumcised the day before or on Yom Kippur. And here I hope to show that the Kingdom began on Pentecost.

- I. When did the Era of the Spirit Begin?
 - a. Read Luke 24:44-49. This is one of those important times. Jesus puts together a bunch of prophecies. Had to “open their minds”—a true mind-blown experience—to get all of this!
 - i. “The Messiah will suffer”: Psalm 22:6-8 and Isa 53:3.
 - ii. “Rise from the dead on the third day” – Jesus prophesied this himself as the Sign of Jonah, but it had been very enigmatically prophesied in Hos 6:2 and Psalm 16:9-10 “you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let you holy one see decay.” [The idea that a person began to decay after the third day (and why Jesus rose Lazarus on the 4th day)]
 - iii. “Repentance for forgiveness of sins”: Jer 31:34, Eze 36:33
 - iv. “...will be preached in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem”: Isa 2:2-4, Joel 3:16, Amos 1:2. The apostles had to wait in Jerusalem because it was prophesied that the Kingdom would start at Jerusalem.
 - b. Read Acts 2:1-4. Now this is an undeniably power event! The Holy Spirit came both on them and in them (filled them).
 - c. Acts 2:5-12. The writer (Luke) is giving us a bone here when he says, “Now there was staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews *from every nation* under heaven.” He is clearly tying this event to Isa 2.
 - d. Acts 2:14-39. Peter does the first sermon of the New Covenant. He quotes three passages of the Old Testament:
 - i. Joel 2:28-32: How can this passage be happening if it’s not the end of the world? “Last days” refers to the end of an era. In this case, it is the end of the Era of Sin. What about the signs of blood and fire and billows of smoke and the sun being turned to darkness and the moon to blood? Perhaps there was something like a lunar or solar eclipse, but these are examples of the literary Apocalyptic Style. They all point to the “changing of the guard” or “end of an empire”.
 - ii. Psalm 16:8-11: esp. verse 10 (Acts 2:27) refer to the Messiah rising from the dead on the third day. Look at Acts 2:29-31: Peter is referring to the two-fold nature of many prophecies, that they have both short-term and far-off fulfillments. By saying, “I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried”, he’s saying, “Guys, there’s obviously a far-off prophecy here because David’s body *was* abandoned to the grave.
 - iii. Psalm 110:1: Peter’s talking about the clause, “The Lord said to my Lord”. The Jews likely had debated about what this could mean. As before, in verse 34, Peter is saying this clause refers to the far-off fulfillment where God the Father will commune with God the Son.
 - e. Verse 36 is the climax. Peter is saying: I have made my point. Jesus was accredited by God through miracles, by these prophecies, and by being

resurrected after being crucified *by you*; and God did all of this through a deliberate plan.

II. How to Enter the Kingdom of God

a. Read Acts 2:36-38.

- i. I don't want to make some procedure with steps and special words to say. This is what humans want and when applied to the New Covenant, it becomes a hedge like the hedge the Pharisees made for the Old Covenant.
- ii. Like the OC hedge, it separates us from the heart and purpose of the covenant.
- iii. Nevertheless, when specifically asked by the people in the crowd, "We just crucified the Messiah, what in the world can we do?!" Peter sort of gives a procedure: 1) Repent, 2) Be baptized (submerged in water) in the name of Jesus, and then 3) Your sins will be forgiven, and 4) You will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- iv. Now, there's a lot of Jewish culture to understand here, and I will talk more about this in next week's episode, but I believe the "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" is the most important part. Whatever it is we are meant to believe or do, the goal/purpose is to receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- v. I will say this about the full immersion baptism in water:
 1. It creates an event in time. Much like a wedding day, where a man and a women start the service as singles but emerge as one individual before God, baptism creates a moment in time where one can begin separated from God and emerge as one married to God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 2. Without such an event, we struggle to remember when it was that we entered the Kingdom (became a Christian), and it's likely we will doubt in the future if we ever did enter the Kingdom or if we've left it, and we can think back to that event.
 3. But it's difficult to answer if the event was created as the only way one can be filled with the Spirit or was created for us to have an event to participate physically in to create a memory.

b. A word about the miraculous gifts of the Spirit versus the Indwelling of the Spirit.

- i. I will talk in more detail about this next week (the Lesson is called "The First Gospel"), but if they are one in the same thing, then one would expect them to be present today. In fact, in Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, they claim they are still present.
- ii. If they are two separate things, then one can exist without the other and they could also exist simultaneously. I personally believe this is the case: The miraculous gifts, where God's Spirit is on or upon a person, are

- supernatural things God does to get our attention and/or accredit an individual (for instance a prophet or someone with a message from God).
- iii. If you look in the Old Testament at times where God's Spirit did something (literally you can search for "spirit" in the OT), you'll see that except in one place, the writer used the word "on" not "in". In the book of Acts, you'll see both "on" and "in" (or "filled with") are used. I believe this means they (the miraculous and the indwelling Spirit) were both at work at the same time. And I believe that now, after the accreditation of Jesus and his Apostles, the miraculous gifts have either ceased or are no longer ubiquitous (i.e. no longer "poured out on the people").

Part 6: The First Gospel

From Part 5, let's review what happened in Acts chapter 2, because it is very important:

- The Kingdom of God, aka the Era of the Spirit, began in Jerusalem on Pentecost 50 days after Jesus' crucifixion on Passover day in late March/early April approximately 30 AD.
- The day started around 9 in the morning with the Apostles gathered in a building. A flame appeared which produced a sound like a violent wind. The flame separated and landed on each of their heads. As Jesus had said in Mark 9:1, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God *has come with power.*" Surely this was a powerful moment!
- A crowd gathered because of the loud sound. Within the crowd were Jews from countries all around the world. Called the Diaspora, these were Jews scattered throughout the world who needed to return to Jerusalem, if capable, to celebrate the three Jewish holy feasts (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles). This fulfilled Isa 2, "all nations will stream to it."
- Even though these people spoke many different languages, they heard the Apostles declaring the wonders of God, each in their own language. The powerful moment continues.
- Peter addressed the crowd of Jews in what can be considered the first sermon of the New Covenant, the first Gospel. In this sermon he quotes three prophecies and claims they are being fulfilled at this moment: Joel 2:28-32 (great signs will happen and God will pour out his Spirit to the Jews in Jerusalem), Psalm 16:8-11 (the Lord will resurrect the Messiah after 3 days), and Psalm 110:1 (a proof that David was a prophet and not always speaking about himself but far off times).
- Peter also proves that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, and they were responsible for killing him.
- The people in the crowd who believed Peter, asked what they should. He replies in verse 38, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
- A note about the methodology of "a Radical": A Radical seeks to find the source, origin, and core of a matter. They believe that time itself causes things to stray away from the original purpose and intent of something.
 - In the case of the Gospel, a radical will intently study Acts chapter 2 to extract the pure essence of the Gospel message in its nascent form. The problem with this methodology is that new things often take some time to mature and solidify. Did the Apostles understand everything they needed to about the Gospel and the New Covenant. Some people would say, "maybe not, but the Spirit of God would make sure Peter said everything he needed to say."
 - While I agree that the Spirit of God *could* do this, the Bible is a living testament about how God works through processes and people to bring about his will. As

we'll see in this episode, God immediately began to narrow in on what the Gospel really was.

I. The First Gospel

- a. Wait, what? Is there more than one Gospel? No, not really. As Paul says in Galatians 1:6-7, “⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.”
- b. But who were these people throwing the Galatians into confusion? Crazy demon-possessed people non-Christians? No, known as “the Judaizers”, they were Jews from Jerusalem who had converted to Christianity and felt that Christians still needed to follow the Law of Moses. Where did they get this? From whatever the Apostles were teaching in Jerusalem.
- c. This then is the First Gospel: Follow the Law, be baptized, be filled with the Holy Spirit, but be justified by the death of Jesus instead of sacrifices.
- d. You can see this in the words of Peter in Acts 2:38: 1) Repent, 2) be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and 3) receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let's break this down:
 - i. “Repent” comes from the Greek μετάνοια, meta-noia, “meta” meaning “after” and “noia” meaning “mind”. It's a unique, powerful, difficult-to-translate word, which I find is best translated as “awakened” or “converted” in the spiritual sense.
 - ii. The Jews used this word to signify a recommitment to the Law. That is, when one found themselves backsliding, they would be ritually cleansed in water (mikvah) and recommit to following the Old Covenant. This is what John the Baptist's baptism was. Mat 3:2, “Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near,” and Mat 4:17, “From that time on Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent of the Kingdom of Heaven is near.’”
- e. So why would Peter think that one needed to repent and follow the Law? Because, as a Jew, the chosen race of God, he believed one had to be a Jew still. That is, they had to be a Jew to become a Christian. If one wasn't born a Jew, they could still convert to Judaism, which also involved, in addition to being circumcised, being baptized as an initial commitment to following the Law.

II. The Gentile Miracles

- a. It is true that one must be a Jew or become a Jew to become a Christian? No, and God showed this through a series of events, each progressively showing the Apostles who is accepted by God:
- b. It starts in Acts 6, where God shows the Hellenistic Jews (ones of Greek origin) are just as important as the Hebraic Jews.

- c. In Acts 6 and 7, Stephen is arrested and brought to the Sanhedrin where he gives a great monologue about Jewish history and is brought outside the city and stoned. This results in all but the Apostles being scattered throughout Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1).
- d. In Acts 8, Philip ends up in Samaria, which is the remnant of the northern kingdom of Israel and are considered half-Jews by those in Judea. Philip preaches the Gospel to them, and they accept it and are baptized in the name of Jesus. The Apostles in Jerusalem hear and go out to see with their own eyes.
 - i. Read Acts 8:15-21 They lay hands on the Samaritans, and they receive the ability to do miraculous signs. (v15)
 - ii. They are baptized by Philip in the name of Jesus, doesn't that mean they received the indwelling of the Spirit? Yes.
 - iii. But they didn't receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit because, apparently only the Apostles could spread this gift typically by the laying on of their hands.
 - iv. This is why Philip (not an Apostle) couldn't give the miraculous gifts to Simon the Sorcerer. But in v18, "When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of the Apostle's hands" wanted that ability, so that, v19, "everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."
 - v. The confusion comes because both gifts, the indwelling and the miraculous, use the same term, "Holy Spirit".
- e. In the second half of Acts 8, Philip is then called out to the desert south of Jerusalem where he finds an Ethiopian Jew, a eunuch. These Jews lived far from Jerusalem in Ethiopia, where Judaism had been brought back in the time of Solomon when Cadace, Queen of the Ethiopians, met with Solomon and then returned. The Eunuch accepts the Gospel, is baptized, and returns to Ethiopia where he presumably spreads the Gospel there.
- f. In Acts 9, Saul, later to be called Paul, is compelled to travel to Damascus to capture any Christians there and bring them back to Jerusalem for prosecution.
 - i. Damascus is a city north of Samaria in Syria. As he neared Damascus, he is confronted by Jesus by a beam of light that blinds him. During this confrontation, Jesus gives him instructions to be brought to a Christian in Damascus named Ananias.
 - ii. Meanwhile, the Lord appears to Ananias to prepare him for Saul's arrival (otherwise he would not believe Saul and likely would have run away). The Lord tells Ananias that Saul is "my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and Israel.
 - iii. Ananias meets Saul where he receives his sight back and is baptized.
- g. The second half of Acts tells how Peter traveled to western Judea to Lydda and Joppa and made some disciples. This sets the scene for Acts 10, where God does more miracles to show that all men (Jews and Gentiles) can become Christians.

- i. In Acts 10, the Lord appears to Cornelius who lives in Caesarea (northwest Samaria) who was Roman and was a centurion. God told him to send men to Joppa, find Simon Peter at Simon the tanner's house by the sea.
- ii. Meanwhile, God gives Peter, who is on the roof of Simon the tanner's house, a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven filled with unclean animals. A voice says, "Get up Peter! Kill and eat." Peter says, "No way! I will not eat anything impure or unclean." God replies, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happens two more times.
- iii. Peter wakes up and is thinking about this vision when Cornelius' men arrive. The Lord tells Peter to go meet them and go with them.
- iv. The next day they travel north to Joppa back to the house of Cornelius, where Cornelius invited a bunch of his friends to come over. When Peter arrived, Cornelius explains the experience and message he got "from a man in shining clothes".
- v. Peter tells them about Jesus and his death and resurrection. While he was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came on them (v44) just as had happened to the Apostles back in Acts 2. In Acts 11:16 Peter says, "...the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning." The spoke in tongues and praised God. (They go it without the laying on of hands)
- vi. Peter says in v47, "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." But they still had to all be baptized in the name of Jesus (the indwelling).
- h. In Acts 11, Peter must defend his actions to the Jews in Jerusalem.
 - i. The Jews that had gone with Peter to Cornelius' house turned him in to the Apostles in Jerusalem saying, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." (v3)
 - ii. Peter tells them the whole story, and the Jews in Jerusalem said, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."
 - iii. It's not very convincing, but at least the Jerusalem Jews are starting to get the point.

III. Summary

- a. The First Gospel was a "saving Gospel" (i.e. those who heard it and accepted it would be saved), but it was incorrect in that it claimed converts to Christianity had to be Jews or convert to Judaism.
- b. God worked through many people and at many places to show the Apostles that one did not have to be a Jew to become a Christian. Ultimately, he used the Apostle Paul to bring the True Gospel to the Gentiles.
- c. What then is the True Gospel? That will be the topic of next week's episode, "The True Gospel".

Part 7: The True Gospel

From Part 6, let's review and summarize what made this first Gospel unique and how God worked to correct what was wrong about it in Acts 6-11.

- The First Gospel was incorrect because it still believed in observance of the Law of Moses. It was different from the Old Covenant in that atonement came once and for all through the shedding of Christ's innocent blood on the cross (as opposed to the limited atonement acquired through the shedding of animal blood by priests at the Temple) and, because of this full forgiveness of sins, the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Tabernacle moved from the Most Holy of Holies at the Temple, into the hearts and minds of those who became Christians.
- Nevertheless, in order for one to become a Christian, they must recommit to following the Law of Moses through baptism if already a Jew, and through circumcision and baptism if not already a Jew.
- In the early chapters of the Book of Acts, we see God right the Gospel in a series of events:
 - Acts 6: God deals with even subtle differences between Hebraic and Hellenistic Jews.
 - Acts 7: God rejects the Sadducees (the Sanhedrin mostly consisted of Sadducees) through the killing of Stephen. Stephen preaches that throughout Jewish history the Jews have always resisted the Holy Spirit. The Sadducees took special offense to this as they did not believe in a spiritual realm or afterlife. We also are introduced to Saul who approved (and likely orchestrated) the stoning of Stephen. Saul was probably a Sadducee himself evidenced by his disdain of the Christians' belief in Jesus' resurrection.
 - Acts 8: God shows that half-Jew Samaritans and far-off Ethiopian Jews can be Christians.
 - Acts 9: God calls the Apostle Paul. Saul (later renamed to Paul) was a very special case indeed. Called Theophany (theo-phanos, God appearing in light), we see Moses called from a burning bush (that wasn't burning up), heaven open up and a dove descend on Jesus, and the flames that landed on the heads of the apostles at Pentecost. Here we see a beam of light. Saul's conversion is unique because God targets him when he believed the opposite of Gospel and through miraculous events, is converted to be God's chosen instrument to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles and the Israelites (verse 15).
 - Acts 10: God simultaneously works with Cornelius and Peter to show the Gentiles are acceptable just as they are. A great miracle happens when the Spirit is poured out on Cornelius and his friends just like had happened in Acts 2 (verses 44-45 and in 11:15).

- Acts 11: The miracles in Acts 10 convinced Peter, but not the Jews who had come with him. Here Peter has to defend his actions (of going to Cornelius' house). This sort of convinced the Jews in Jerusalem (verse 18) but you can tell they're still on the fence. Acts 15 further helps them when Paul presents his case to James and the apostles. Here you can see they're convinced Gentiles and be Christians without converting to Judaism, but they in Jerusalem will still follow the Law (verses 19-21). The book of Hebrews is written to these Jewish Christians, and the writer says they are in danger of falling away because of this adherence to the Law.

Good people with good intentions and hearts have tried literally for two thousand years to define Christianity and its fundamentals (i.e. its core beliefs and requirements). Who am I to say what the true gospel is? No one really; just another good-hearted individual with some ideas that harmonize and reveal the Messianic narrative in the whole Bible.

- I. What is the True Gospel *not*?
 - a. We know it's not Paganism or any other world religion. John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
 - b. We also know that it is not the Old Covenant as stated in Jer 31:32, "'It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord." But what does this mean to "not be like the Old Covenant"?
 - i. Sin no longer separates us from God. In other words, sin no longer defines and controls our relationship with God.
 - ii. Why then would we devote our lives as Christians to stop sinning?
 - iii. Whatever the "sin" is. Whether it's the Old Covenant, parts of the Old Covenant (like Sabbath Law or Dietary Law), or covenant-like church doctrines, mankind has an affinity to following laws because of the curse of the knowledge of good and evil. Modern churches love to define rules or guidelines that their members abstain from modern tools of sin.
 - iv. Therefore, the Christian does not seek righteousness through holiness. They are fully justified (i.e. made to be sin) (Rom 3:22-24) and receive every spiritual blessing at the get-go (Eph 1:3). Instead, Christians must live "by or of the Spirit". Read Rom 7:6, Rom 8:13-15. The Corinthians were called immature because they did not live by the Spirit: 1Cor 3:1. Gal 5:22-25: Those who live by the Spirit have their needs met by the Spirit. It is the Spirit who provides us with the fruits of the Spirit.
- II. What *is* the True Gospel?
 - a. Simply put, the Gospel is receiving the Indwelling Spirit of God.
 - i. Jer 31:33-34 The Spirit is how we know (relationally) God.

- ii. John 7:37-39 (remember from Part 5 where we should pay great attention to whenever the Bible interprets something enigmatic for us?)
 - iii. 1Cor 2:12-13. In fact, is it the *only way* to know God.
- b. The question then becomes, “How does one receive the Spirit?”
 - i. Belief in Jesus as the Messiah. John 3:16-18.
 - ii. Baptism in the Holy Spirit. In other words one is saturated and filled with the Holy Spirit when they are baptized in the Spirit. But how is one baptized in the Spirit? ***I have thought a great deal about this.*** Do they just ask God? Perhaps it just happens when you believe. There are only two ways given in the Bible:
 1. The Breath of God. Gen 2:7 and John 20:22.
 2. Immersion in Water. Is there another way? I don’t know. How would I? 1Pet 3:20-21. Water has a way of purifying things. In the OC, it was used in conjunction with blood sacrifice to purify the Jews from their disobedience to the Law. Here Peter says the baptism of the NC is not about that (“not the removal of dirt from the body) but about receiving the Spirit. This is what “pledge [request] of a good (clear) conscience toward God” is. In other words, we are made spiritually clean and tabernacles of God.
- c. Can one know or feel they have the Spirit? Let’s look at two passages.
 - i. Acts 19:1-7. Paul asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” There’s a lot to this question.
 1. It implies one can know they received the Spirit. These guys didn’t even know He existed, so, duh. But what if they had known about Him?
 2. It also implies belief *manifests itself*. Verse 2 mentions belief, but in verse 3 Paul asks, “then what baptism did you receive?” This implies had they believed properly, their belief would have manifest itself in/with baptism.
 - ii. Rom 8:26. When the Spirit intercedes for us, we feel it and literally “groan”.
 - iii. 1Cor 3:16 and 1Cor 6:19. We also can know the Spirit is in us through our faith. “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?

Next week is the final episode of the Era of the Spirit. It is called, “Living by the Spirit” and will be a summary of the series and talk about what it means *to live by the Spirit*.

Part 8: Living by the Spirit

Foreword

How would you summarize the Bible in one sentence? It can't be done, right? If I had to do it, I'd say, "The Bible tells us how we should live in order to know God and have eternal life." In the Era of the Garden, this meant, "Walk with God and trust him as he meets all your needs with no need for the knowledge of good and evil." During the Era of Sin, this meant, "Obey all of God's Laws and fall on his mercy as you sin and are separated from Him." In the Era of the Spirit, this means, "Believe in the saving works of the Messiah, receive his Spirit, and live by the Spirit."

In fact, that was the primary purpose of this series: to highlight the remarkable significance of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Many Christian denominations don't talk about the Spirit at all, some think it's the Word of God in us, some give a nod to Him but fail to understand His significance in their lives, and still others focus completely on the miraculous gifts of the Spirit and not the indwelling.

The secondary purpose of the series was to show how much God loves us. We are created in His image, meaning that He created us not only to be capable of holding his Spirit, but to be deficient and void without it. I believe the message of most churches is, "Yes God loves you, but in spite of you. You better quit being yourself or you will leave God's grace." How do they proclaim this? Believe it or not, by preaching the cross from the perspective of, "Look at what you did to God! You are an object of wrath, a cockroach, and a menstrual rag in God's eyes. He only loves you because of his incredible patience, tolerance, and mercy. At best this is a message from the Old Covenant. The message of the Garden and the New Covenant is that God loves us because he is our father. He knows what he created, and he made no mistakes doing it. The angry God of the Old Testament, ready at a whim's notice to destroy humanity, had everything to do with Adam and Eve's choice to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and to relate to Him like a god through obedience to all that is good, a task of which humans are incapable. With the curse of the knowledge of good and evil undone by Christ's perfect life, willing sacrifice, and triumphant resurrection, we can now receive God's indwelling Spirit and live by scriptures like:

- Jer 31:33: "I will be their God and they will be my people".
- <gospel>: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- Rom 8:15: "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." (Really all of Romans 8 is great!)
- Eph 1:3: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."
- And Gal 4:6-7: "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."

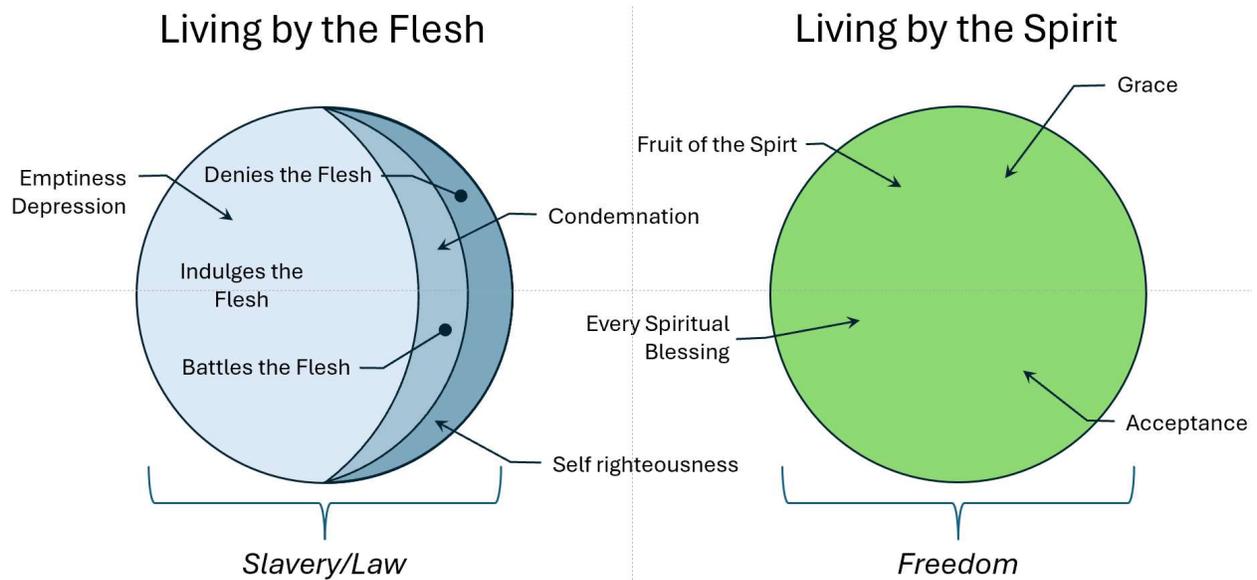
Do these scriptures describe a god who is disgusted with his creation but loves them because of his discipline and commitment? No! Rather, these describe a loving father, a caring parent, who is happy to share with their children his immense love and grace.

Review of last week's Part 7 The True Gospel:

- The true Gospel is the message that teaches *all* people can now be saved through faith in Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - The idea that the Gospel is for everyone may seem obvious to us, but it was not for the Jews of the first century; God had to do many post-resurrection miracles to prove to the Jews that are “lower-class” Jews and Gentiles could be saved.
 - The Bible seems to indicate that the Holy Spirit is received through the waters of baptism.
 - The main question to ask yourself is the same one Paul asked the disciples in Ephesus, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” If the answer is a resounding, “yes”, even though you weren’t baptized, then great!
 - I do caution about the difficulty in answering this question, though. First, there is the “Emperor’s New Clothes” phenomenon, where one believes something is really true just because of their desire to believe it is true and the consequences if it’s not true. Secondly, it’s how does one know the feelings they think come from the Spirit actually do?
 - Note that answering the question, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” is no easier *even if one has been baptized*. The disciples in Ephesus had been fully immersed in water, yet their faith in the existence of the Spirit and, by definition, the purpose of the Spirit, was incomplete.
- I. Teaching about the Spirit is Admittedly a Difficult Task
- a. There is no way to escape the mysterious and enigmatic nature of the Spirit.
 - i. I believe this is why is why the Church strays away from it.
 - ii. The Church deals in certainty and authority. Would you go to a church whose motto is, “Come and worship with us; we have no idea what we’re doing but let’s figure this out together!”?
 - iii. Churches confidently contrast themselves with other churches saying they’re the one, they’ve got it on straight, they have the right interpretation of the Bible, etc.
 - b. Consider Christ’s words in John 3:12, “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?”
 - c. Or Jer 31:34, “No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the

greatest,” declares the LORD. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

- d. With a verses like Jer 31:34 and the others, what business does any human have teaching others how to “know the Lord”? I believe the purpose of evangelists and teachers is to bring people as close to the Living Water as possible, but one must still choose to drink from it themselves.
- II. Living by the Flesh or the Spirit
- a. Read Galatians 5:13-25 and then look see the image below.
 - b. The main thing to notice is that “Living by the Spirit” (the green circle on the right) is an entirely different way to live life.
 - c. Consider the three sections of the left blue circle:
 - i. Those who indulge the flesh (left light-blue section), but those indulgences don’t meet their spiritual needs, so they’re empty.
 - ii. Living a life of denial *is still living by the flesh*. The warning of Gal 5:21 is for *everyone* in the blue circle.
 - iii. Most people of Christendom are still in the “Living by the Flesh” circle, unaware that there’s a completely different way to live. In their minds, the Christian way of life involves high effort on their part denying their flesh.
 - 1. Those in the middle section feel condemnation, disappointment, and unacceptance from their God.
 - 2. Those in the right dark blue section fool themselves into thinking they are holy. Their fruit is false virtue and self-righteousness.
 - d. True Christianity is living by the Spirit in the green circle.
 - i. Those in this circle feel grace and acceptance from God and know he loves them because he made them and knows everything about them.
 - ii. The Fruit of the Spirit is given to us. It is not something we can try to mimic, which is putting the cart in front of the horse.



III. How to Listen to the Spirit

a. Quiet please!

- i. Alone: Mark 1:35, "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed." Also, Mat 6:6-8, in your room with the door closed and don't babble with many words. It's not about showing off, it's about solitude.
- ii. With a few friends but alone: Mat 26:36-39, esp. v39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."
- iii. Acts 10:9 – on a roof all alone. He must have been meditating as he fell into a trance.

- b. Still your mind and meditate. This isn't an eastern thing where you hum mantras; it's simply about quieting all the voices and distractions in your head. Psalm 46:10 "be still and know that I am God!" Col 3:2 "Set your minds on things above, not on the things that are on earth."

IV. Summary

- a. I hope you enjoyed this series. It defines a Christianity that is different from most of Christendom, one that is centered on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and one which rests in the grace and acceptance of God.
- b. The next series will be, "The Pharisaical Lens". Here we'll learn some important historical and cultural lessons necessary for interpreting the Gospels.