

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND CHRIST
Matthew 1:18-25; 1 Peter 3:18

Intro: The teaching of Scripture about the Holy Spirit contains many things which we cannot understand even though we believe them, and can profit from them. It is hard for us to conceive of the Holy Spirit as a Person since He does not have a body like we do, or even like the Lord Jesus has. We have that same problem with God the Father. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture, but how He directed the writers of Scripture so as to use their personalities, their experiences, and even their vocabulary, and yet has given us through them a Book which we rightfully call the Word of God. And He has done this by choosing the very words which they used. We speak of the infallibility of Scripture, and so the inerrancy of Scripture, but how this was all done, we do not know. We know that the Holy Spirit has been active in our salvation, and that applies to all of us, but how He convicts, and how He regenerates, we believe that He does, but how it all happens, we do not know. And I could go on and on speaking about the works of the Spirit which we know take place, and which we believe, but which we cannot understand.

However to me, one of the most mysterious of all of the works of the Holy Spirit is His work with our Lord in the days of His life here on earth.

I am using basically two texts tonight, one having to do with the beginning of our Lord's life upon the earth, and the second with His resurrection. I have selected these not only because of what they teach us about the Holy Spirit and Christ, but because they are the beginning and conclusion of several other verses which speak of the Lord's relationship with the Holy Spirit while He was here on earth. I am not going to try to include all of them. That would take more time than we have tonight. However, just in case you have not noticed them, I want you to be aware that they are in your Bible.

Let us look, first, at:

I. THE CONCEPTION OF CHRIST (Matt. 1:18-25).

We read about this not only in Matthew, but also in Luke. See Luke 1:35. The Luke passage tells us how Mary learned that she would give birth to the Son of God. The Matthew passage tells us how Joseph found out about this. Mary was told,

The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee,
and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:

therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35).

When Joseph found out that Mary was with a child, his thought very reasonably was that she had been unfaithful to him. And so he decided to, as we would say today, break his engagement with her. But it was then the angel of the Lord came to him and said,

Joseph, thou son of David,
fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife:
for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Obviously Mary was told before the conception; Joseph was told afterwards. However, the amazing thing is that both believed the message that was given to them. And yet even beyond that, there had been nothing like this in all of human history. God had appeared as an angel before, or even as a man, but there was no precedent for such a thing upon which Joseph and Mary would be draw encouragement for their faith. As the Matthew account indicates, Joseph may have been prepared for such a thing by the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, but who can explain that OT verse except to say that a virgin was going to have a baby whose name would be Emmanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23).

Who can explain how this would happen? It defies all that man knows about birth. And yet the participation of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Christ ought to alert every reader of Scripture to the fact that this had to be the most important conception and birth ever to take place. We can't explain it. We don't need to. But we believe it, and it explains for us how a human child could also be the Son of God. Anyone who denies what the angel of the Lord told Mary, and what he told Joseph, might just as well quit reading the Bible because the rest of it is not going to make any sense. The only way that Jesus of Nazareth can be rightly understood is by recognizing that, while He had a human mother, He did not have a human father. Our Lord was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit.

That was miraculous, wasn't it? The incarnation of the Son of God would never have taken place were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit.

After this it is not surprising to learn that the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit, and that He was led by the Spirit, and, from our Lord's reading of Isa. 61:1, 2 (cf. Luke 4:16-22) when he was in the synagogue in Nazareth, it appears that all of the Lord's preaching and all of the Lord's miracles were done in "the power of the Spirit" (Luke 4:14). We can tell that this was the case, but why it was, or how it was, or why it was even necessary (since our Lord

was God also), we do not know! But that is the way it was. The Lord Jesus is described by Luke in Luke 4:1 as being "full of the Holy Spirit." And it was the Holy Spirit Who led our Lord into the desert to be tempted by the Devil for forty days and forty nights.

All of this is really amazing. Moses was not the only one who was standing on holy ground. So did Joseph. And so do we when we tread on ground like this. God does not owe us an explanation of these things. He simply has recorded it all so that we can believe it.

But now let me move on to the end of our Lord's life here on earth where we see the work of the Holy Spirit in:

II. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST (1 Pet. 3:18).

Please turn to 1 Pet. 3:18.

This is one of the great verses on the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He died "the just for the unjust." We are the unjust; He is the Just One. And it is very important to believe that He was the Son of God or He could not have been the Just One. If He were not the Son of God, but the son of Mary and Joseph, or as Joseph was inclined to think at the beginning, of Mary and some other man, then He could not be our Savior. He would need a Savior Himself. But we can thank God that the Word is true, and that the Lord Jesus Christ was both God and Man. This is why He became a Man so He could die as the Savior of men.

Notice that this is one of the verses in the Bible where all three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned. (Point them out.)

This verse sounds a little like it might have been borrowed from Hebrews 9 and 10. I am referring to the word "once." It means once-for-all. This was the strong point made about the death of Christ in Hebrews, isn't it? Christ came to die just once, but He did in that one time all that the Father sent Him to do, all that was necessary for the salvation of all for whom He died. And the purpose was to bring us to God where we would find perfect and eternal acceptance with Him through the sacrifice of Christ. The Gospel is all here.

It cost our Lord His life to do this for us. But the Apostle Peter added here that after our Lord died He was "quickened by the Spirit." "Quickened" means to be made alive. Our Lord was resurrected by the Spirit. The Spirit restored His life as a human being, and, as we learned this morning, our Lord will never die again. He does not need to die again

because He did everything by His one death which the Father sent Him to do.

Let's think now about the resurrection of our Lord.

Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that they had crucified the Lord, but that God had raised Him from the dead. See Acts 2:24.

We also read in John 10 that the Lord had been given authority from the Father to raise Himself from the dead. Listen to what He said:

Therefore doth my Father love me,
because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
No man taketh it from me,
but I have power to lay it down of myself.
I have power to lay it down,
and I have power to take it again.
This commandment have I received of my Father
(John 10:17, 18).

So we can say that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead by God. We can also say on the authority of our Lord's own words that the Lord Jesus raised Himself from the dead. Try to explain that, if you will! But Peter says that our Lord was "quickenened by the Spirit," meaning that the Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead. How can we explain and harmonize all of these verses?

Well, the simplest thing to say is that all three Persons of the Godhead were active in some way in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or we can say that the Lord Jesus raised Himself by the Holy Spirit Who had been given to Him, and that God raised His Son, but that He did it by the Holy Spirit.

There is probably some way in which both explanations are true. But let us think particularly about the Holy Spirit. Why would the Holy Spirit have a part in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? What did it mean for the Holy Spirit to have a part in Christ's resurrection from the dead?

Let me attempt to answer that question by asking you to turn to 1 Tim. 3:16. And this is what we find there:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh, **justified in the Spirit,**
seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles,
believed on in the world, received up into glory.

This verse says that our Lord was "justified in the Spirit."

What did Paul mean by this? He certainly did not mean that our Lord needed to be justified Himself before God. He was the Just One when He went to the Cross, and He was still the Just One when He came forth from the tomb.

No, let us take the word "justified" in its basic meaning. The Spirit was declaring that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Righteous One, or the Just One.

When did He do this?

We can say that the Spirit's constant association with our Lord during His life here on earth was evidence that the Lord Jesus was the Person He claimed to be, and that His disciples believed Him to be: the Son of God. But the preeminent justification of our Lord was at His resurrection, when He had offered His sacrifice, and was ready to be raised.

As evidence of this, please turn to Romans 1, verse 4. This is what we read, that our Lord was:

...declared to be the Son of God with power,
according to the spirit of holiness,
by the resurrection from the dead.

Although the word "spirit" is not capitalized in the KJV, it is in the NIV and in the NASB.

Listen to the way it is stated in the NIV: "Who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead."

And so Peter would emphasize that our Lord was quickened by the Spirit to show that our Lord came out of the grave as He was before He died: the Son of God. Thus, we have this great confirmation that we have not been deceived in trusting Jesus of Nazareth as our Savior. Instead, those who do not trust Him are the ones who are deceived and need to be pitied.

Concl: As I told those who are in the Pastor's Class this morning, the Members of the Godhead are equal in their Deity. That is one way in which they are one. But they are also united in the work of redemption. And it was God's purpose in raising His Son from the dead, and leaving Him here on earth for those forty days, to show that He truly was the Son of God, and that He had accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation.