

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 7 The Holy Spirit and Christ

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Transcript

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Chapter 7

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We are afraid that our treatment of the particular aspect of this many-sided theme which is now before us is rather too abstruse for some of our readers to follow, yet we trust they will kindly bear with us as we endeavor to write for those who are anxious for help on the deeper things of God. The Deeper Things of God As stated before, we are seeking to minister unto widely different classes, unto those with differing capacities, and therefore we wish to provide a varied spiritual menu. He who is hungry will not leave the table in disgust because one dish thereon appeals not to him. We ask their forbearance while we seek to give something like completeness to our exposition of the subject as a whole. "As the humanity of Christ was assumed into the Hypostatic union, we may fitly say, on the one hand, that the Person of Christ was anointed, so far as the call to office was concerned; while we bear in mind, on the other hand, that it is the humanity that is anointed in as far as we contemplate the actual supplies of God's gifts and graces, aids and endowments, necessary to the execution of His office. But that we may not be engulfed in onesidedness, it must be also added that the Holy Spirit, according to the order of the Trinity, interposes His power only to execute the will of the Son as to the unction of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit, it was different according to the three grades successively imparted. The first grade was at the incarnation; the second coincided with His baptism, the third and highest grade was at the ascension, when He sat down on His mediatorial throne, and received from the Father the gift of the Spirit to bestow upon His Church in abundant measure" (G. Smeaton). The Spirit in the Incarnation and Baptism of Christ We have already contemplated the first anointing of the Lord Jesus when, in His mother's womb, His humanity was endowed with all spiritual graces, and when through childhood and up to the age of 30 He was illuminated, guided, and preserved by the immediate operations of the Third Person in the Godhead. We come now to briefly consider His second anointing, when He was formally consecrated unto His public mission and Divinely endowed for His official work. This took place at the River Jordan, when He was baptized by His forerunner. Then it was, while emerging from the waters, that the heavens were opened, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard testifying unto His infinite pleasure in His incarnate Son (Matthew 3:16, 17). All the references to that unique transaction call for close examination and prayerful study. The first thing that is recorded after this is, "And Jesus being full

of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (Luke 4:14). The reason why we are told this seems to be for the purpose of showing us that Christ's humanity was confirmed by the Spirit and made victorious over the devil by His power. Hence it is we read that right after the temptation, "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke 4:14). Next we are told that He entered the synagogue at Nazareth and read from Isaiah 61, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," and declared, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:18, 19, 21). Here, then, is to be seen the leading distinction between the first and second "grades" of Christ's "unction" from the Spirit. The first was for the forming of His human nature and the enduing it with perfect wisdom and faultless holiness. The second was to endow Him with supernatural powers for His great work. Thus the former was personal and private, the latter official and public; the one was bestowing upon Him of spiritual graces, the other imparting to Him ministerial gifts. His need for this double "anointing" lay in the creature-nature He had assumed and the servant-place which He had taken; and also as a public attestation from the Father of His acceptance of Christ's Person and His induction into His mediatorial office. Thus was fulfilled that ancient oracle, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make Him of quick understanding" (Isa. 11:2, 3). "For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34). This at once brings out the pre-eminence of Christ, for He receives the Spirit as no mere man could. Observe the contrast pointed out by Ephesians 4:7, "But unto everyone of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." In none but the Mediator did "all the fullness of the Godhead" dwell "bodily" (Col. 2:9). The uniqueness of the Spirit's relation to our Lord comes out again in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Note carefully the words we have italicized: not only does this statement reveal to us the source of all Christ's actions, but it intimates that more habitual grace dwells in Him than in all created beings. The Spirit in the Ascension of Christ The third degree of Christ's unction was reserved for His exaltation, and is thus described, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). This highest ride of unction, when Christ was "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows" (Ps. 45:7) and which became apparent at Pentecost, was an ascension-gift. The declaration which Peter gave of it was but a paraphrase of Psalm 68:18, "Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD might dwell among them." That bountiful supply of the Spirit was designed for the erecting and equipping of the New Testament church, and it was fitly bestowed after the ascension upon those for whom the Spirit was purchased. Christ Bestows the Spirit As Mediator, the Lord Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit for the execution of all His offices, and for the performance of all His mediatorial work. His right to send the Spirit into the hearts of fallen men was acquired by His atonement. It was the well-earned reward of all His toil and sufferings. One of the chief results of the perfect satisfaction which Christ offered to God on behalf of His people, was His right now to bestow the Spirit upon them. Of old it was promised Him, "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities: therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53:11, 12). So, too, His forerunner had announced, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). What has just been said above is further borne out by Galatians 3:13, 14. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us ... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the

Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The promised Spirit followed the great work of canceling the curse as the effect follows the cause. To give the Holy Spirit to men, clearly implied that their sins had been put away; see Leviticus 14:14, 17 for the type of this—the "oil" (emblem of the Spirit) placed upon the "blood"! Not only does Christ's right to bestow the Holy Spirit upon His redeemed intimate the cancellation of their sins, but it also clearly argues His Divine dignity, for no mere servant, however exalted his station, could act thus or confer such a Gift! A Joint Mission From the varied quotations which have been made from Scripture in reference to Christ's unction for all His offices, it sometimes appears as if He were in the subordinate position of needing direction, aid, and miraculous power for the purposes of His mission (Isa. 11:1-3; 61:1, 2, etc.); at other times He is said to have the Spirit (Rev. 3:1), to give the Spirit (Acts 2:33), to send the Spirit (John 15:26) as if the Spirit's operations were subordinated to the Son. But all difficulty is removed when we perceive, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there was a conjoined mission in which the Son and the Spirit act together for the salvation of God's elect. The Son effected redemption—the Spirit reveals and applies it to all for whom it was purchased. In writing on the Holy Spirit and Christ, it is to be understood that we are not now contemplating our Lord as the Second Person of the Trinity, but rather as the God-man Mediator, and the Holy Spirit not in His Godhead abstractly considered, but in His official discharge of the work assigned Him in the Everlasting Covenant. This is undoubtedly the most difficult aspect of our subject, yet it is very important that we should prayerfully strive after clear scriptural views thereof. To apprehend aright, even according to our present limited capacity, the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Redeemer, throws much light on some difficult problems, supplies the key to a number of perplexing passages in Holy Writ, and better enables us to understand the work of the Spirit in the saint. "Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning: from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent Me" (Isa. 48:16). This remarkable verse presents to us the Lord Jesus speaking of old by the spirit of prophecy. He declares that He had always addressed the Nation in the most open manner, from the time when He appeared unto Moses at the burning bush and called Himself, "I am that I am" (Ex. 3); and He was constantly present with Israel as their Lord and Deliverer. And now the Father and the Spirit had sent Him to effect the promised spiritual deliverance of His people; sent Him in the likeness of sin's flesh, to preach the Gospel, fulfill the Law, and make a perfect satisfaction unto Divine justice for His church. Here, then, is a glorious testimony unto a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead: the Son of God is sent in human nature and as Mediator; Jehovah the Father and the Spirit are the Senders, and so is a proof of Christ's mission, commission, and authority, who came not of Himself, but was sent of God (John 8:42). "The Lord hath created a new thing in the earth: A woman shall compass a man" (Jer. 31:22). Here we have one of the prophetic announcements of the wonder of the Divine incarnation, the eternal Word becoming flesh, a human body and soul being prepared for Him by the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit. Here the Prophet intimates that the creating power of God was to be put forth under which a woman was to compass a Man. The virgin Mary, under the overshadowing power of the Highest (Luke 1:35) was to conceive and bring forth a Child, without the help or cooperation of man. This transcendent wonder Isaiah calls a "sign" (7:14); Jeremiah "a new thing in the earth"; the New Testament record of which is, "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Mathew 1:18). "And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:40, 52). Not only was the humanity of Christ supernaturally begotten by the Holy Spirit, but it was "anointed" by Him (cf. Lev. 2:1 for the type), endued with all spiritual races. All the progress in the Holy Child's mental and spiritual development, all His advancement in knowledge and holiness must be ascribed unto the Spirit. "Progress," in the human

nature which He deigned to assume, side by side with His own Divine perfection, is quite compatible, as Hebrews 2:14, 17 plainly intimate. As George Smeaton has so helpfully pointed out in his book, the Spirit's operations "formed the link between Christ's deity and humanity, perpetually imparting the full consciousness of personality, and making Him inwardly aware of His Divine Sonship at all times." Thus the Spirit, at the incarnation, became the great guiding principle of all Christ's earthly history, and that, according to the order of operation that ever belongs to the Holy Trinity: all proceeds from the Father, through the Son, and is by the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who formed Christ's human nature, and directed the whole tenor of His earthly life. Nothing was undertaken but by the Spirit's directing, nothing was spoken but by His guidance, nothing executed but by His power. Unless this be steadfastly maintained, we are in grave danger of confounding the two natures of Christ, absorbing the one in the other instead of keeping them separate and distinct in our thoughts. Had His Deity been absorbed by His humanity, then grief, fear, and compassion had been impossible. The right use of the faculties of His soul owed their exercise to the Holy Spirit who fully controlled Him. "From birth to baptism the Spirit directed His mental and moral development, and strengthened and kept Him through all the years of preparation and toil. He was in the Carpenter as truly as in the Messiah, and the work at the bench was as perfect as the sacrifice on the Cross" (S. Chadwick). At first sight, such a statement may seem to derogate from the personal honor of the Lord Jesus, but if we perceive that, according to the order of the Trinity, the Spirit exercises His power only to execute the will of the Father and the Son, then the seeming difficulty disappears. So far is the interposition of the Spirit's operations from interfering with the glory of the Son, it rather reveals Him the more conspicuously: that in the work of redemption the activities of the Spirit are next in order to those of the Son. Misguided Theories To this we may add another excerpt from G. Smeaton: "The two natures of our Lord actively concurred in every mediatorial act. If He assumed human nature in the true and proper sense of the term into union with His Divine Person, that position must be maintained. The Socinian objection that there could be no further need for the Spirit's agency, and, in fact, no room for it—if the Divine nature was active in the whole range of Christ's mediation—is meant to perplex the question, because these men deny the existence of any Divine nature in Christ's Person. That style of reasoning is futile, for the question simply is, What do the Scriptures teach? Do they affirm that Christ was anointed by the Spirit (Acts 10:38)? that He was led out into the wilderness by the Spirit? that He returned in the power of the Spirit to begin His public ministry? that He performed His miracles by the Spirit? and that, previously to His ascension, He gave commandments by the Spirit to His disciples whom He had chosen (Acts 1:2)? "No warrant exists for anything akin to the Kenotic theory which denudes Him of the essential attributes of His Godhead, and puts His humanity on a mere level with that of other men. And as little warrant exists for denying the Spirit's work on Christ's humanity in every mediatorial act which He performed on earth or performs in Heaven. The unction of the Spirit must be traced in all His personal and official gifts. In Christ the Person and office coincide. In His Divine Person He was the substance of all the offices to which He was appointed, and these He was fitted by the Spirit to discharge. The offices would be nothing apart from Himself, and could have neither coherence nor validity without the underlying Person." If the above still appears to derogate from the glory of our Lord's Person, most probably the difficulty is created by the objector's failing to realize the reality of the Son's humanity. The mystery is indeed great, and our only safeguard is to adhere strictly unto the several statements of Scripture thereon. Three things are to be kept steadily in view. First, in all things (sin excepted) the eternal Word was "made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17): all His human faculties developed normally as He passed through infancy, childhood and youth. Second, His Divine nature underwent no change or modification when He became incarnate, yet it was not merged into His humanity, but preserved its own distinctness. Third, He was "anointed with the Spirit" (Acts 10:38), nay, He was the absolute receiver of the Spirit, poured on Him

in such a plentitude, that it was not by measure (John 3:34).

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