

The Spirit of God Pt2

by Ralph Shallis

The Spirit of God is the breath of God that makes audible the thought in God's mind, bringing the universe into being and revealing Christ to us.

Duration: 57:13

Scripture: 1 Peter 3:20

Topics: "Spirit Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the power and significance of making a contract or covenant. He compares the binding nature of signatures on a piece of paper to the vows made in marriage. The speaker then explains that when God makes a covenant with us, it is not just a mere promise but a life-changing reality. He highlights the importance of accepting and identifying with Christ, as this decision leads to God's faithfulness in identifying us with Jesus. The speaker also mentions how the wonders of the universe reveal the intelligence and greatness of God, and how the Word of God and the Spirit of God played a role in the creation of the universe.

Transcript

In the background on this recording, you may be able to hear other voices and this is because there were people present from several nations and their friends were giving simultaneous translation to them because of language problems. If you want to begin to understand the greatness of the Spirit of God, well, you can study some astronomy and some biology, physics and chemistry. As the wise men of this world are beginning to discover the fantastic intelligence and greatness of God in the universe, but which they don't recognize as being that of God, we are having our eyes opened by the discoveries of science to the immense intelligence and greatness of God.

And the Bible tells us that God created the whole universe by his Word and by his Spirit, by the Word and by the breath of his mouth which makes that Word audible and intelligible. The whole universe has come into being through Jesus Christ. The thought of God expressed becomes the audible Word of God and the whole universe has been brought into being by this process.

And just as my breath is now carrying forward the Word which is born in my mind and which is spoken by my mouth and heard by your ears, in the same way the Spirit of God is the breath of God which makes audible, which makes concrete and real to us, the thought that is in the mind of God. And the Bible tells us that the Word became incarnate, became flesh and dwelt among us, and we could see all the glory of God

through the human personality of Jesus of Nazareth. And it is the Spirit of God which reveals Christ, which makes concrete the thought of God.

It is the Spirit of God who has brought the whole universe into being in order to translate something of the thought of God which is Christ. And all that was incarnate in Jesus Christ. And we see the full meaning of it in the reaction of the soul of Jesus Christ on the cross.

That is where we see right into the heart of God. Now the Spirit of God, as Christ said, would come with one purpose which is to reveal Christ. The Spirit of God wants to do nothing else but to express Christ.

He has expressed Christ in the miracle of the galaxies and the star clusters, the nebulae, in the miracle of the Alps and the Himalayas, in the miracles of the flowering spring that comes each year, in the miracle of the birth of a little child. All these things are just fragmentary, dim reflections of the beauty and intelligence of God which is all summed up in the word Christ. All this was incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

All this was crucified and rejected by men, spat upon, despised. And all this has become precious to us because the Spirit of God has revealed it to us. As Christ said to Peter, you are blessed, you are happy, because flesh and blood hasn't revealed these things to you but my Father who is in heaven.

And Paul tells us that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned. They can only be discerned by someone whose spirit has been resurrected, whose organ of spiritual perception has again come to life and can perceive God who is spirit. They that worship God must worship him in spirit and in truth.

And the natural man cannot ever understand God or come into any conscious contact with him. He is separated by the gulf of his own spiritual death. And the new birth is when the Spirit of God brings us again into living consciousness of our Creator.

Now, the Bible tells us that all the children of Adam are born spiritually dead. With our soul, with our human consciousness, we are in touch with all the visible world around us through our physical senses. We are in touch with the universe around us by our eyes, our ears, our hands, but we have no spiritual senses with which to come into contact with the invisible world of God's own glory.

Because that was lost, it was atrophied at the fall. The very day that Adam disobeyed God, he died spiritually. And that spiritual death is really a disease, a virus or a corruption, a microbe which has passed from father to son all down through the generations so that we have been born with our spirits atrophied or dead, with no possibility of seeing or hearing God.

And so Christ said to Nicodemus, the only way you can enter into the kingdom of God and see the kingdom of God is by being born again. But the Greek word is really born from above, just as the seed falls into the soil from above and takes the dead earth and changes it into a living plant made after the image of the plant from which the seed has come. In the same way, the living seed of the word of God falls into our dead heart, is watered by the spirit of God, the rain of heaven, and germinates and takes the dead soil of our dead personality and out of it creates a new living personality which is made after the image of Christ from whom the seed has come.

Christ is the very seed, he is the germ of life in the seed of the word of God. As we read the Bible, as we assimilate the written word, just as the germ of life is hidden in the grain, in the seed of a plant, so the

living word of God, Christ, the logos by which God created the universe and made us is hidden in the written word of Scripture. The mere letter of Scripture can't give us life any more than the husk of a grain can give us life.

But in the word of Scripture there is hidden the spiritual word of God which is Christ himself. Every letter of the Bible is divinely inspired, I believe that with all my heart. But to be attached merely to the letter without the spirit, as Paul says, is just dead.

The spirit of God and the word of God cannot be separated. There are some churches and spiritual movements that lay so much emphasis on the spirit of God that they neglect the word of God. And the result is they are unbalanced and evil spirits can most easily introduce themselves, as Paul said, disguised as an angel of light or as an apostle of Christ with the most evangelical language and come in and actually get a purchase hold upon that church or upon that Christian.

I know it because I've seen this sort of thing happen many times. There are other churches which are very faithfully attached to the word of God but they are so attached to the letter that they forget that it is the spirit of God who wrote this book and who interprets it. And the true Christian life is a balance between the two things.

God has three divine agencies by which he reveals himself to man. The son of God, the word of God, and the spirit of God. And these three things are indissociable.

You can't have one without the other. If you do have one without the other, it just becomes a dead letter, a mere form, a symbolism. So let us have that balance in our Christian life.

Let us ask God always to keep correcting us and bringing us back to the truth. Yesterday I tried to show how the spirit of God brings us through a sort of prenatal stage, a real work of grace in our heart which brings us to a full consciousness of the meaning of Christ. And then we have to decide.

The only thing that we human beings can do in order to be saved is to say yes or no to what God reveals to us and what he gives us. There's nothing else we can do. And if I say yes to the spirit of God, to the word of God, to the son of God, in that moment God takes me at my word.

The moment I accept identification with Christ and I agree also to be identified with Christ in this world that crucified him, in that moment God takes me at my word because he is faithful. He never fails to do that and he identifies me with Jesus Christ. This isn't just a figure of speech.

We have this sort of thing all over the world every day in every city. We have contracts being formed, signatures being put on bits of paper, only a bit of paper, only a bit of ink, but those signatures bind men, companies, countries and sometimes continents to a certain line of action. And every day all over the world there are people being married, young fellows and girls who sign a document and make a vow.

But that little bit of paper and that little bit of ink and that mere word or two that is pronounced is sufficient to change the whole course of the life of those two. And so when God makes a contract with us, when he makes his new testament, his new covenant with us, it isn't just a bit of paper, it isn't just a mere promise in ink written in the Bible, it's a real thing which changes the whole course of our existence. And when God says he identifies us with Christ, even though we may not feel anything, just as you may not feel anything when I put a check in your hand, signed perhaps by Jonathan McGrostie for a million dollars, that you may not feel any different, except that you can just feel the little sort of feel of the paper in your fingers, but you

may not feel anything else at all, but if you've got that check in your hand and it's made out in your name and dear brother Jonathan has come into a fortune, well, that piece of paper changes all your future life, all your future existence.

And so God gives us, so to speak, his little piece of paper, his check, and it's a contract, the word covenant or testament means a contract or a will, and it's binding. And in that moment I belong to Jesus Christ, therefore my sin belongs to Jesus Christ, becomes his sin. My heart also now belongs to Jesus Christ, and I have no right over myself any more.

I have given myself to him. But at the same moment Jesus Christ gives himself to me, just as in marriage, the boy and the girl give themselves to each other totally, forever, with no strings attached. So Jesus Christ and I, we give ourselves to each other.

And Jesus Christ gives me his death. He has died, so his death is mine. And he gives me his righteousness, and he gives me his life.

And these things really become mine. And as I say, it isn't a figure of speech, and all of us who have been really born again, we know this is true. It really does mean everything in the world.

So when I believe in Christ, the Spirit of God immediately acts. It's one great act which just fuses me with Jesus Christ and integrates me into God. But the New Testament shows us this act in five phases, which all happen simultaneously.

There is a logical order, if you like, but I don't think we can consider there's a chronological order. God, in any case, is outside of time in his working. Now I'd like to look at these five operations of the Spirit of God which happen simultaneously at the new birth.

And here again we're up against a problem of terminology. I think some of you will possibly be shocked, or you'll just mildly disagree with me, or question what I say. But please remember that Christ has told us we've got to love each other.

And even if you think my doctrine is right up the pole, please go on loving me. And I'll try and do the same, so far as you're concerned. But I'm just going to try to show you what I believe is the biblical terminology.

Now, I believe it's more important to have an authentic experience of God, of the Spirit of God, of Christ, than to have a mere correct terminology without the experience. And I know many Christians who have had a really authentic experience of God and his Spirit. But who get their terminology, as I believe, mixed up.

Well, I just say hallelujah, I'm glad you had the experience, brother. But if ever we have time to sit down and look at the Bible together, I'd like to get that chap clear on his terminology. If he doesn't agree with me about terminology, well I say never mind, brother, I love you, and God bless you.

But it is much better if we can get the terminology right. Because if we get the terminology mixed up, it does leave the door open to a lot of confusion, and we can even be led to seek illusory experiences, which are not the ones which are really put before us in Scripture. So bear with me as I go through these next minutes with you, please.

I'll just say, give you a list of these five things which I believe happen simultaneously. The New Testament states quite clearly that all these things have already happened to the believer. Nowhere is the believer told to seek any of these things.

But every passage that mentions them, mentions them as applicable to all believers without distinction, and in the past or perfect tense. The first thing, don't be angry with me, is the baptism of the Spirit of God. The second thing is the indwelling of the Spirit of God, or the presence of the Spirit of God in us.

The third is the new birth, the birth of the Spirit, spiritual regeneration. The fourth is the seal of the Spirit, and the fifth is the anointing of the Spirit. Now I repeat, every passage in the New Testament which mentions these words in connection with the believer, and in the case of baptism, referring to spiritual baptism, show that every believer has already received these things without distinction.

You just take your Greek dictionary and Greek lexicon, if you've got one, and if you haven't, well, your English concordance, and your Greek concordance, if you've got it, and just go through your New Testament studying every mention of these words in all their different forms. And I challenge anybody to find any other conclusion. I've been through my Greek Testament many, many times on this subject as well as many others, and I know before the Lord that what I'm saying is true.

Now, the first thing logically, if not chronologically, that happens then when I believe in Christ is that the Spirit of God baptizes me. Now, many Christians use the term baptism of the Spirit for an experience or experiences which happen after conversion, after the new birth. Well, I don't want to quarrel with you about that.

If you've had a wonderful experience of the Lord and you call it the baptism of the Spirit, well, I'm not going to quarrel with you. But I don't call that baptism, because I don't believe the New Testament calls it baptism. There are several words in the Bible, in fact many words to describe such an experience.

Perhaps the most useful word, and the clearest word of all, is the fullness of the Spirit. And during my talk with you, I'm going to use these two terms, baptism and fullness, as two quite distinct things. We should not confuse the fullness of the Spirit with the baptism of the Spirit.

The fullness of the Spirit in the New Testament is shown to be a progressive experience, an experience which you can lose, which you can recover, of which you can get more and more and more. Whereas the baptism of the Spirit is one initial act which takes place, as I believe, at the moment you believe in Jesus Christ. Now, that doesn't mean that many Christians don't have a fantastic experience of God sometime after their conversion.

But that is mainly due to the fact that the Gospel, as it is preached and presented, and as it is lived out in the churches today, is usually of such a poor quality, so presented very often in such a diminished and watered-down form, that souls, when they're born again, are often born spiritually weak. And instead of entering into a church or a group of Christians that's absolutely on fire for Christ, where Christ is manifestly present and everybody's in love with God and loves one another, they come into churches which are virtually spiritual refrigerators. And many people who've been born again in these conditions have to stumble along for years, very often in spiritual bondage in tight sectarian systems, without knowing what the fullness really of the life in Christ is.

And then one day they meet somebody who says there's something much better than that, and you seek it and you get it. Well, that's the important thing. It doesn't matter so much what you call it.

And I believe that many Christians need such an experience, but don't imagine that that experience is all you can get. If you've had such an experience of God, well, now prepare for the next one. I once heard of a dear old lady who came to a friend of mine and said, Oh, dear Dr. So-and-so, what shall I do? I've lost my second blessing.

He said, Well, what about a third? Well, I know I've had many from the Lord, and I know I haven't had enough, I'm seeking more now. I feel I've barely even begun. God isn't limited to a second blessing.

The universe can't contain God. All the wisdom and energy and intelligence and beauty that exists in the universe is only a dim, fragmentary reflection of what is in the heart of God. Who has ever been able to contain God and keep Him? Solomon, after he'd built his most marvellous temple, could only say, How can God accept to live in a thing like this, when even the universe can't contain Him? Then let's limit God.

Now, let us examine for a few minutes the meaning... Let us examine for a few minutes the meaning of baptism. First of all, the meaning of the word itself. The Greek word βαπτίζω, the verb and the noun βαπτισμός, means to bury something in a liquid, to immerse.

When you wash your hands and do the washing up, or when you have a bath, if you were speaking in Greek, you would say, I've just baptised myself, oh, I'm going to baptise the crockery. But somehow we've given a peculiar, mystic aura to the word baptism, and we've forgotten what it basically means. Well, when the early disciples and Christ himself baptised their converts, what did they mean? What were they getting at? Well, the whole New Testament teaches us that it was a picture, a symbol of burial.

The moment I believe in Christ, the Spirit of God identifies me with Him, and in that moment God reckons I'm dead with Christ, buried with Christ. I've died for my sins. And then, the very same day probably, in the New Testament times it was like this, I would want the whole village, the whole town, the whole countryside to know what has happened to me.

I'm still too young in the faith to give a theological discourse, I can't explain all the doctrine of it, but at least I can get the apostle who's converted me to duck me in the village pond and lift me up again, and then as I come out dripping I can say to everybody, well, that's a picture of what's happened to me. I'm dead, and now I'm alive again, I've got a new life. I'm dead, all my sins are down in the bottom of the old mud pond.

And the early Christians used to get baptised, the early Christians used to get baptised as soon as they were converted. It was simply a picture of what had already happened to them. In other words, they had already been baptised spiritually.

And so baptism in the early church was a picture of death and burial, followed by resurrection. What else does baptism mean? What else does water baptism mean? What other reality could it convey? Water baptism is a picture of what, if not of spiritual baptism? But in the New Testament we are given only two symbols, only two ceremonies by Christ, breaking of bread and baptism, and both these symbols always follow the reality. You don't break bread until you have actually begun to partake of Christ.

And you don't get yourself baptised in water until you have actually been baptised spiritually. Otherwise it's a nonsensical rite. What are you being baptised for? What are you representing? What are you trying to say? And if you do get yourself baptised in water before you're baptised by the Spirit, really it's amounting

to a magical rite.

In fact, I've met people who've said, you can't have the baptism of the Spirit until you've been baptised in water. We've come right back to the Roman Catholic position there, where you've got to be baptised and have the rites of the church before you can be saved. Now this is the very opposite of what the New Testament teaches.

Then what did John the Baptist mean when he started baptising? He was the man who introduced baptism into the stream of biblical thought. Where did he get the idea of baptism? He didn't just pull it out of the air. He was preparing men for Messiah.

But all the teachers in the New Testament, Christ himself drew their teaching and their symbolism from the Old Testament. What could there be in the Old Testament which made John the Baptist use this symbolism of baptism? Having to die to self, die to the world, die to the devil, die to sin, in order now to be raised by God, to live a new life with God, with the power of the Spirit of God. Well, of course, John the Baptist knew his Bible.

He knew the story of Noah and the flood. And Peter, in his epistle, 1st Epistle, chapter 3, takes that thought up and we look at that passage. Peter speaks of a baptism that actually does save us.

1 Peter 3, and verse 20. Christ had been preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey when God's patience waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons were saved through water. And baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you.

I don't much like this standard version translation. In the case of Noah's flood, these people were saved through the water, through the flood. It wasn't the flood that saved them.

It was the ark that saved them. They went through the flood in the ark, just as we go through death, hidden in our ark, which is Christ. And Peter says that this is a picture of the baptism that now saves us.

So there is a baptism that actually saves us. And Noah's flood was a picture of this baptism. Well, isn't this clear? Just as Noah was saved through the flood by being hidden in the ark, so we are saved as we go through the baptism of death, hidden in Christ.

Well, that is why John the Baptist began to baptize. But there wasn't only the flood. There was also the Red Sea.

When Israel came out of Egypt, they had to go through death. There was no other way of escaping from their slavery in Egypt. They had to go right into death, right into the sea.

But they went through it dry shod. And they came out the other side to live a new life. And that same Red Sea, which was death to them, but allowed them to come through death into life, was destruction to the enemy that pursued them.

And Paul also takes up this thought in 1 Corinthians 10. He alludes to the Red Sea as a picture of baptism. In chapter 10, the first four verses, he says, I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized, just as all Christians have been baptized.

All Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual food, supernatural food, and all drank the same supernatural drink, for they drank from the rock which followed

them, and that rock was Christ. So Paul says that all the Israelites coming out of Egypt were baptized, the carnal ones as well as the spiritual ones.

They were all delivered, they were all saved by that baptism. And Paul, in verse 6, says, These things are warnings for us. And a little further down, in verse 11, he says, These things happened to them as a warning, but were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.

So you see, the apostles understood baptism in that same sense. And I have no doubt that John the Baptist also thought of the baptism of Israel in the Jordan as they crossed into the Promised Land, the baptism of Naaman in the Jordan, out of which he came healed of his leprosy, the baptism of Jonah in the whale's belly, at least the cachalot's belly, and in the depths of the sea for three days and nights, out of which he came as a resurrected man to go with a living message to the great city of Nineveh, which he converted, or brought to repentance. All these things were pictures in the Old Testament which gave the baptism of the New Testament a background meaning.

The apostles weren't at all mistaken. It wasn't a vague and a woolly idea for them. It was very clear.

The Church, all down through the many centuries since, has so complicated the simplicity of Christ, the simplicity of the breaking of bread, the simplicity of baptism, the simplicity of Christian fellowship and love. All these things have been chopped up into compartments and labelled and made causes of division and conflict, instead of uniting us all in one desire, to love our Lord and to witness for him, and to love one another and live out Christ one with another. How simple the Christian life is.

How simple the faith of Christ is. How complicated we men are. In France I often say, oh how simple Jesus Christ is and how complicated the Church is.

If only we could recover the simplicity of Christ. 99.5% of all our problems would just vanish away today. What problem have we really got? We've only got one problem in this world.

It's how to get the world evangelised and get as many people saved from hell as possible. That's the only problem really we've got. And if we can all unite in solving that problem, as well as the Lord will enable us to, well, our problem is solved.

All our other problems are really just footling little things that hardly matter. They just matter perhaps for a few years. In eternity what will it matter whether you had arthritis or not? What will it matter if God healed you or if he didn't? What will it matter if you shed 20 tears or one tear? What will it matter if your tummy was always full or sometimes empty? In eternity, if you're living your life out for Christ and fulfilling all your eternal destiny, what do these other things matter? What matters in eternity is whether you've been able to reap in a harvest of souls and save them from hell, and whether they're all there around you and thanking you for all eternity for telling them about Christ.

But then what did Christ himself understand by baptism? Let us look at Matthew 3. Christ himself was baptised by John the Baptist. At the end of chapter 3, verse 13, Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptised by him. And John said, No, I'm the chap who ought to be baptised by you.

You don't need to be baptised. John was baptising people because he was trying to point out to them the need to die to their old life and to live for the new life for the Messiah who was coming. John said to Christ, You don't need to be baptised.

Christ said, Yes, I do. I've come into the world for that very purpose, to die and be buried. And I want to begin my ministry with this symbolic act of death and burying.

I want everybody to understand that this is what I've come into the world for. And so he said, This is how the righteousness of God is going to be fulfilled. That's how Christ began his ministry.

And then in Luke chapter 12 and verse 50, I think, Christ again speaks of his baptism. Luke 12 and verse 50, he said, I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I constrained until it is accomplished? In other words, Christ considered that his real baptism was still future. In our case, we're baptised in water after we've been born again, after we've been through the experience.

But in Christ's case, it was a symbol before the experience. And his is the only case where the symbol comes before the real experience. Christ considered then, after two and a half years of ministry approximately, that he was still waiting for his baptism.

And it was going to be a terrible baptism. He just wanted to get it over. The nearer it came, the more agonising did the prospect become.

And in the garden of Gethsemane, he wept tears of blood, and sweat tears of blood, at the thought of the baptism he was going to go through the next day. That was Christ's baptism. Now let us see what Paul says in Romans chapter 6, speaking again of baptism.

And this is the clearest passage in the whole New Testament about spiritual baptism. And this, I believe, must be taken as the key to the whole understanding of the problem, of the question of baptism. Paul cannot be talking about water baptism in this chapter, because like Peter in 1 Peter 3, he's talking about a baptism that saves us, and that delivers us from our sins.

In chapter 6, verse 1, Paul says, Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means. How can we who died to sin still live in it? Paul reckons then that we have actually died. And then, in verse 3, he says, Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death.

So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. Isn't that clear? Verse 3 particularly, verse 4, We were baptized into his death. We were buried, therefore, with him by baptism into death.

Are you going to tell me that it's water baptism that gives us this, that identifies us with Christ in his death, so that God can forgive us our sins? If so, then we've come right back to the Roman Catholic position of admitting a ceremonial right which actually procures us the forgiveness of sins. No, I utterly repudiate any such interpretation. There's only one baptism that can be possibly meant in this passage, and that is baptism, the spiritual baptism, the reality of which water baptism is the obvious symbol.

And you can't be raised again until you've died. We can't be born again until we've died. God can't forgive us our sin until we've died.

You see, this is something which only came to me, I suppose, two or three years ago. I don't know why I was so dense that I never saw it before. God cannot do anything in me and for me as long as the barrier of my sin remains, as long as I am condemned and a criminal in the sight of his law.

Only if God's law can acquit me and take away the hostility between him and myself, only if God can take away the incriminating act of his justice against me, can God do anything for me. However much a judge may love personally a criminal who's standing in the dock in front of him, if the jury has found him guilty, the judge can do nothing for that man. He's bound to sentence him to whatever the law demands.

And however much God loves us, he is bound to sentence us to eternal death, unless we can be acquitted by some other means. Of course, in our case, the judge himself has borne the penalty for us. But God cannot forgive me until the penalty has been paid.

Well, the penalty has been paid in Christ. Christ died, spiritually, physically, totally. And now that I'm identified with Christ, Christ's death becomes mine.

And now God can consider me dead and buried with Christ. And now God can forgive me. But he couldn't forgive me before.

Therefore God cannot forgive me my sin until he has baptized me into the death of Christ, buried me with Christ. I can't be forgiven, I can't be born again until this has happened. And so really, as I understand the Scripture, spiritual baptism is the first act of God by which he is able to forgive us our sin and prepare the way for the entry of his Spirit into us.

And the moment that happens, then the Spirit of God enters into us. I want to go on to the question of the indwelling of the Spirit. I hope I can deal with that and one or two other things before this session is up.

But so that you don't think I'm just grinding a personal act, I would like to give you a short list of all the Scriptures in the New Testament which actually refer to spiritual baptism, and I would like you to study them yourself. If you're not satisfied with that, well, just get a Greek concordance, well, possibly an English concordance would do, but it depends which one, and make a list of every single mention of baptism and baptize in the New Testament, and just go through every single passage. I believe there are, if I'm not mistaken, about one hundred and eight occurrences in the New Testament of the word baptize, baptism, and baptist.

And, of course, the great majority of those refer, without any doubt at all, to water baptism. But I have discovered, I think it's fifteen passages which cannot possibly refer to water baptism, otherwise water baptism has to be considered a magic rite as the Catholics believe. Well, I know they don't call it a magic rite, but really that's what it amounts to.

I'm sorry if there's any Catholic here listening to me, I love you, but I don't agree with all your doctrine. These are then the passages which refer to spiritual baptism. There are four passages in the four Gospels, and all of them are the prophecy of John the Baptist.

Matthew 3.11, Mark 1.8, Luke 3.16, John 1.33, and all these are the prophecy of John which says that all that he was doing was a symbol but when Messiah came he'd give us the reality. But his prophecies don't tell us very much more than that. And then in Acts 1.5, Christ himself repeated the prophecy of John the Baptist but said to his disciples that it would happen very shortly.

And in Acts 11.16, Peter quotes this prophecy of Christ's. Then we have Luke 12.50, which we've just looked at, where Christ speaks of his own spiritual baptism. And there is one verse in Mark which is parallel to it, which is almost identical.

Mark 10.38, 38-39. Are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? That makes it, I think, 15 passages altogether. 16, I think it will make it.

Then we have that passage in 1 Peter 3, 20-21, which we've already looked at. We have 1 Corinthians 10, verses 1-4, which we've already looked at. And now we have come to Romans 6, 1-11, which we are looking at in a little detail.

Then we also have Ephesians 4.5, which I want to look at in a minute. We have 1 Corinthians 12.13, Galatians 3.27, and Colossians 2.12. After 40 years of steadily reading the Bible through and through, I haven't found any others. But if you find one, please send it to me by express letter, and I'll be very glad.

Now let us look once more at Romans 6. But first of all, let me come to Ephesians 4. Some people say, oh yes, brother, that's all very well. But there are two different baptisms mentioned in the Bible, or three, or four, or five. I've heard all kinds of strange complications, if you like, of that sort.

But see what Paul says in Ephesians 4, verse 4. He says there is one body, that is one church, and one spirit. Some people say the spirit of Christ isn't the same thing as the spirit of God. Well, this passage contradicts that.

Just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call, we're all going to the same heaven, we have one Lord, one Lord Jesus Christ, one faith, only one way of being saved, one baptism, not two, one baptism, which is the real baptism, spiritual baptism, of which water baptism is the picture, the symbol, one God and Father of us all, seven unities. So I think we must be careful to remain within the strict framework of Scripture. Once we start fiddling around with Scripture and trying to make it mean what it doesn't actually say, we're on very dangerous ground.

That is what all the false cults do. So now we can come back to Romans 6 and look at that passage a little longer. There's no doubt there's only one baptism in the mind of Paul as he writes this passage.

And look at verse 5. If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. So here we have that idea of identification, unity with Christ in his death, so that we can be united with him in his resurrection. There is another variant Greek text here, and it's very difficult to know which is the correct one.

I think probably Paul wrote both words originally. We could translate this, if we have been planted together with him in a death like his. The two Greek words are very, very similar, and the manuscripts vary.

But I think that both things are true. We are united with Christ in his death, and we are planted with Christ in his death. Christ said, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Well, just as Christ was planted in the earth, so to speak, in burial, and rose again to bring this great harvest of the Church, so the Spirit of God plants us, so to speak, with Christ in his grave, and fuses our dead little grain of wheat into Christ's grain, so that the germ of life which is in Christ takes hold of our dead grain as well, and there's just one new life that comes up. We just integrated into Christ, and as Christ is raised from the dead, so now the elements of our old dead soul are now integrated into Christ and made alive in the living organism of his true body, and so we are raised again with Christ.

This is the new birth. And the culmination of the new birth is the resurrection of the body when Christ comes back. We've just had the first instalment.

Well, once then I'm dead with Christ. God has taken away all his incriminating act against me. He's got nothing against me.

His law now isn't against me. His law is on my side. The policeman, Satan, can never come again and try to put me in prison.

If he does, if he does, I can appeal to God's law. I'm on the right side of God's law now. And therefore, since God has got nothing against me, he can give me everything.

He gives me Christ. And in that moment, not only Christ's death becomes mine, but Christ's life also becomes mine. And how can Christ's life become mine? Only if the Spirit of God enters into me.

Now will you look at Ezekiel chapter 37, where we have the vision of the valley of dry bones, which may seem very irrelevant, but it isn't. This speaks of the spiritual resurrection of Israel at the coming of Christ. What a marvellous thing it will be, and how I long for it, and how we ought to pray and work for the conversion of Israel now, to pray for the blessed remnant of Israel that will be converted at Christ's coming, when all the remaining nation will belong to the Lord.

What a blessing for the earth, when from all over the earth they'll come hitchhiking to Jerusalem to find something about Jesus Christ. And as they arrive at the frontiers of Israel, they'll just be welcomed. On every face they will see the reflection of Jesus Christ.

It won't be the old Jews trying to screw something out of you, but every Jew, every Israelite will be just full of Jesus Christ, welcoming them and say, Oh, you've come to meet our Lord. Wonderful. Everyone will have a testimony to give him.

Everyone will have some hospitality and some love. And from all over the world, the Isaiah tells us, the Zechariah tells us, people will come streaming every month, every year, up to Jerusalem to meet the Lord. What a wonderful thing it will be.

I'm looking forward to it. Now, in chapter 37 of Ezekiel, we have the vision of Israel like a valley of dry bones, which are resurrected and made into a great, wonderful army by the Spirit of God. But this is, of course, a picture also of the new birth of the Christian.

We are just like a lot of dead bones before. And there's a very important principle that comes out in this chapter. Verse 5, God says, I will cause breath to enter into you or spirit to enter into you and you shall live.

And at the end of verse 6, I will put breath in you and you shall live. Verse 7, I prophesied and the bones came together. But the end of verse 8, there was no breath in them.

And verse 9, God said, prophesy to the wind or breath. It's the same word in Greek. Or spirit.

It's all the same word. Ruach. In Hebrew, rather, and in Greek, for that matter.

Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind or the spirit. Thus says the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live. And so I prophesied as he commanded

me, and the breath came into them and they lived.

And further down in this chapter, verse 14, God says to Israel, I will put my spirit within you and you shall live. So the new life, the resurrected life, is the result of the entry of the spirit of God into the body. The very first thing that ever happened to all of you, as you came into, was that you got a big whack on the behind from the midwife.

Or the nurse. Or the doctor. And you let out a yell.

That's how you began your painful existence on this earth. And they do that to you because if you don't start to breathe as soon as you come into this world where you're separated from your mothers, from the placenta by the umbilical cord, the moment that's cut, you've got no further sustenance. And your brain has got to take all its nourishment and its life from the bloodstream.

But the blood isn't circulating properly until, at least it's circulating, but the lungs aren't working. And if the lungs don't work, the blood, almost immediately, in a matter of half a minute, will become so turgid that it cannot possibly renew the tissues of the brain. And a baby can be dead in a matter of even two or three minutes after birth if it doesn't start to breathe.

So every one of us has got to breathe as soon as we come into this world. But the little lungs aren't used to breathing. And that is why you start off with your great big wallop on the behind and you let out a yell and immediately the oxygen comes into your lungs and you start to breathe.

And nobody can live in this world without breathing all the time. If you haven't got the breath or the wind or the spirit, so to speak, in your lungs all the time, filling your lungs all the time, you can't live. Well now, you can't live in the kingdom of God unless you have got the spirit of God in you.

This is what the New Testament teaches. You can't live in the kingdom of God unless you are actually breathing the spirit of God all the time. But as soon as the spirit of God does enter into me, I do start to breathe and I am born.

I am actually living in a new world. I am no longer living in my mummy's tummy. I am actually living in this world here.

It is just like a plant that comes up out of the earth and is now living in a new dimension. And of course the instant result of that is that I am born again. I am resurrected.

I am a new creature. I am living under the great blue sky of God's eternity. I am living in the sun of his face.

I am swept by the wind of his spirit. All the colours of God's spectrum are now visible to my eyes. The other people who are not born again don't even know what I am talking about.

I am just living in another world. I am still rooted in this old world. I am still very much down to earth.

I still do my duties and get tired and work and have to eat and sleep just like everybody else. But at the same time, just like a plant living above the ground and rooted in the soil, I am living in two worlds at once. And one day God is just going to pluck me up and tear me up out of this soil and plant me in another soil in his new creation.

That's going to be wonderful. Well, I ought to have stopped. But I just want to mention one or two more things before I do stop.

I want to say that there are at least twenty passages in the New Testament which make it quite clear that every believer has the Spirit of God in him. You can't be a born again child of God without that. I haven't time now to give you a list of scriptures.

There are more than that, actually. But I will give you one which is perhaps the very clearest of all, in 1 Corinthians 6.19. And let us bear in mind that these words were written to the Corinthian church, who were just a bunch of carnal Christians. They were perhaps the most carnal church of all the ones to whom Paul wrote letters.

And yet Paul makes no distinction. He doesn't say some of you have got the Holy Spirit and some of you haven't. In verse 19 of chapter 6 he says, Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? And then he says again, in Greek it's clearer than in the Revised Standard, Which is in you.

He says it twice over. And now he says it three times over. Which you have from God.

Three times over in the same verse. He says the same thing in three different ways. And there are many other verses.

You can look them up yourself or ask me some other time. So there's no doubt about that. I don't need to give you references for being born of the Spirit.

I think you know enough about that yourselves. What I haven't dealt with this morning is the sealing of the Spirit and the anointing of the Spirit. And I don't know whether I'll have time to go into those at all now.

Because there are other matters which I think are perhaps more important. But just in a word or two let me say this. The seal of the Spirit is our spiritual circumcision.

Which is the sign of our having been justified. Romans 4 says, Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness which he already had before he was circumcised. And he was circumcised because he was already justified.

And it was a sign of the covenant between God and him. You can never undo circumcision. When you have been circumcised you can never become uncircumcised.

And in a sense spiritual circumcision is God's actual signature in our heart that we have been justified and we belong to him. Just as Abraham bore in his body to his dying day this signature, so to speak, of God. This sign that forever reminded him that he belonged to God, he was justified.

So we have the signature of God in our very heart which nothing can take out that we belong to God eternally. It's a wonderful thought. And the anointing of the Spirit is simply this.

In the Old Testament the anointing was given to the prophet, the priest and the king. And by our receiving the Spirit of God we have been made kings, priests and prophets of God. We are his spokesmen.

We have right of access to the very heart of his presence. And we are able to use the authority of Christ's name to get the will of God done. These are terrific thoughts.

Now all these things that I've been talking to you about this morning in every passage in the New Testament are described as applicable to all believers without distinction and as having already taken place. We are nowhere told to seek them. We are nowhere told that there's any possibility that we haven't got them.

But it's only as we are filled with the Spirit, which is the next thing that happens, that all these things begin to have their true value in our daily existence. And that's what I hope to talk about tomorrow. Father, I pray that you will take these words into your own hand as well as the truth and the thought of your own word.

That you will efface anything and everything which is contrary to your mind. But that you will guide us all into all truth. We ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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