New Testament Baptism and the Holy Spirit 1
Class 6
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In order to fully understand the doctrine around New Testament baptism, a discussion of the Holy Spirit is vital, due to the fact that we are told that when we are baptized for the remission of our sins… when we are washed by the blood of Christ, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in **Acts 2:38**… and that necessitates the question "what does this mean?" No study of the subject of baptism is complete without an answering of this question, and so this morning and the next Lord's Day morning, we will provide the answers to that question that God's word gives us, and we will explore more fully the doctrine around the Holy Spirit himself as taught in scripture.

Scriptural doctrine surrounding the Holy Spirit, is quite clear, however the teachings and ideas surrounding Him are strangely neglected and some of the world's ideas about Him border more on Voodoo than Christian theology. The twisting of God's truth on the Holy Spirit is a perversity we must fight… we must have a clear idea of His identity (as clear as the scriptures reveal it to us), His nature, and His role as the third member of the Godhead.

The scriptures provide many answers for us as we think about the question, "Who is He… the Holy Spirit?" What role has He played and is He playing in the overarching theme of God's salvation plan for mankind… For He plays a distinct role and we now live in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. What exactly does that mean? It is not readily apparent is it? Nothing about the Holy Spirit is… we only know Him through revelation. **Psalms 19:1** tells us that, "**The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.**" So we can know God through observing creation, but we cannot know the Son or the Holy Spirit through this means… therefore the scriptures… God's revelation to us… becomes vital in knowing anything past what we can see and discover with our senses.

Let's define a dispensation; it is an epoch of time well marked by certain events, and as used here is means a system of principles, promises and rules ordained and administered for a finite period of time. The word dispensation also has to do with a dispensing of something and here that would mean truth revealed from the Godhead. There have been three dispensations at this point… one from each member of the Godhead. The first is the dispensation of God, the Father which essentially takes place from the beginning of time, continuing through the time of the patriarchs, the Old Covenant, and up to the time of Christ. Christ's dispensation began with his physical birth and began in earnest with His earthly ministry. It continued until His ascension into Heaven. The dispensation of the Holy Spirit began on the day of Pentecost as promised in **John 16:7** and **Luke 24:49** and as seen in **Acts 2:2-4**… We now live in the time of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit and this… the Spirit age as we are told in scripture is the last dispensation. There will not be another one… this is it, the faith has been delivered once for all as **Jude 3** tells

us… we have all of it and it is up to man to choose now what to do with it… obey it or ignore it… it is our choice. Mankind as a race will get no more chances at the end of this dispensation.

As an interesting side note is that we are now living under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in the Spirit age, under a spiritual covenant, have you ever thought about that?… What does that mean? Well for one thing, it means that the gifts and blessings that we receive are spiritual in nature, that when we are baptized into Christ, it is a spiritual cleansing that is going on… you are not physically contacting His blood and washing away your sins… your spirit is being cleansed of sin… not your body, and you are put into Christ spiritually and you become marked as His. You enter a spiritual covenant relationship with the Godhead with the spiritual sealing of the Holy Spirit, just the Israelites entered into covenant with God through the physical circumcision of the Old Covenant. We are told in **John 4:24** that, "**God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth**." So our worship becomes spiritual, it is not fleshly as under the Old Covenant… we do not sacrifice animals any more… our lives are to be living sacrifices unto the Lord as we are told in **Romans 12:1**.

In **Jeremiah 31:31-34** we learn that God is going to write His laws on our hearts and our minds in the latter days… we no longer have the laws written on tablets of stone… they are to be in us, and on our minds, and we are to live by them and know God. Today you cannot be in a covenant relationship with God with out knowing Him and having been taught about Him and His expectations for us. We are not born physically into a covenantal relationship with the Almighty as was Israel under the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. We learn of Him and of Christ through the dispensation of the Spirit's words to us in scripture, we obey His commands for us… i.e. the gospel, of which it is obedience to the commandment to be baptized that puts us into a covenant relationship with God through the spiritual new birth as referred to in **John 3:3-6**… then and only then can we know Him and this is the direct reference **Jeremiah** is making in **verses 31-34**.

One additional thought along these lines; if God is Spirit, and if as Christians we are being built into a spiritual house as we are told in **1 Peter 2:5**, and if our worship is now to be spiritual, don't you find it interesting that we are now to offer our praise in worship through songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in our hearts as we are told by Paul through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in **Ephesians 5:19** and **Colossians 3:16**? Wouldn't it make sense that God, in moving us towards a new spirituality under the New Covenant, away from the physical acts of worship under the shadow of the Old Covenant, would want us to refrain from the use of the mechanical instruments in worship that characterized the worship under the Old Covenant as well? I will tell you that when the tenets of the Old Covenant went away having been nailed to the cross with Christ, and with it the physical temple worship that was required, so did the prescribing of mechanical instruments for use in making melody and praise to God. They were just as much a part of the physical covenant as the animal sacrifices were. God now wants to hear our voices and our thoughts in praise not mechanically contrived noise (no matter

how good it may sound to us). We live in the Spirit age; let us do things according to the Spirit as we are commanded.

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The Godhead…

We have used the word Godhead quite a lot in this lesson so far and many people don't know what that term means… so let's define it for a moment. It simply refers to **the Triune God, the Trinity**, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Think of it like this, we do not worship three Gods… we worship one God. God is a term of description of the nature of these Divine beings just a Man (capital "M") is a term of description for humanity. Just as we use the word "humanity" as a description of our nature and many distinct persons so we have "Deity" as a nature and three distinct persons. The Holy Spirit is God because He shares the same nature as God the Father and God the Son.

It is a grievous error to think of the Holy Spirit as any less than God… meaning Deity. He is not a glorified "it", He is not the Word or the Bible, He is not a force or an influence, He's a distinct person with all of the attributes that we think of with someone distinct and individual as having. He thinks and has a mind, He acts, He communicates and He has character… these attributes clearly indicate a distinct and separate personality.

He is the third member of the Godhead, with God the Father and Creator standing first and Christ being the second. The Holy Spirit's nature, purpose and essence are the same as God and Christ, they are coeternal and coequal. **Matthew 28:19** tells us that when we are baptized we are put into a covenant relationship with Him just as we are with God and Christ, showing He has a role in the salvation of man. So it is important that we know all that Scripture tells us about Him… just as much as it is that we know about our Father in heaven and our Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Role of the Holy Spirit…

The Holy Spirit has had a role to play in each of the dispensations that have preceded His. Just as God and Christ have roles in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, so He has had a distinct role to play in the dispensations of the other two members of the Godhead.

He was present at creation. In **Genesis 1:1** the use of the word God in the original language is plural, and that means that there was a plurality of divine beings "in the beginning" when "heaven and the earth" were created. The Godhead was present and participated in creation. God was there planning the creative work, the Word or Christ was there as the agent through whom all things were created as seen in **John 1:1-3**, and the Holy Sprit was there as the organizer of the things created by God through Christ as we see from **Genesis 1:2**.

He has had a role in all revelations from the Godhead to us. We see in **2 Peter 1:21** that prophecy came to man through the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times. We know that Christ during His earthly ministry was filled with the Holy Spirit without measure, the

Holy Spirit was shown to be responsible for producing Christ in the flesh through Mary in **Matthew 1:18**. We see from **John 16:12-14** that He continued what Christ began under His dispensation through the continued dispersing of the knowledge that God wants us to have in the gospel for our salvation. And in His divine role as an organizer, He has organized all of God's revelation to us into the word that we have today.

The Word of God is called "**the sword of the Spirit**" in **Ephesians 6:17** and it is through the word that He now convicts men of their sins and of the judgment to come. The word is His tool for that purpose and separate and apart from the word He cannot work on us. We see it confirmed that His power is in the Word in **Hebrews 4:12**, and we know from **Romans 10:17** that faith only comes by hearing the word of God.

So the Holy Spirit is not some mystical force that operates in just any fashion. He reigns supreme in this dispensation, and His power for accomplishing His mission with us comes through the word that God has given to us and that He, the Holy Spirit, has revealed and organized for us through human penmanship and His divine inspiration. Obviously knowledge of the scriptures is essential for the Holy Spirit to be able to carry out His role as our "Helper". We strip the Holy Spirit of the tools He has for shaping us when we do not grow in our knowledge of the scriptures … just as surely as we would strip a sculptor of his power to shape a marble image it if we took his hammer and chisel away.

So the Holy Spirit speaks to man and works on man through the agency of the word… and so from this we know that He does not speak to man today. Some people might ask, "How can we know that?" And that is a very good question with an equally good answer.

We learn from **Jude 3** that we are to "**contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**". What does Jude mean by using the term "**the faith**" here? And what does he mean by, "**was once for all delivered**"? Jude, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is referring to the teaching and doctrine that needed to be presented completely to us, in order for us to have a full record of what we need to know that God wants us to know.

"**The faith**" tells us what to do to be saved… it includes the gospel which is God's power for saving everyone who believes (**Romans 1:16**), and "**the faith**" also tells us what to do in order to please God with our lives after we are saved. **Acts 6:7** uses this term in the same fashion where it says "**a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith**"… meaning they obeyed the sum total of God's revealed salvation plan which included being baptized for the remission of sins and in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **Romans 1:5** and **16:26** both also refer to "**obedience to the faith**" or obedience to that body of teaching given to us. **Jude** is telling us in **verse 3** of his letter that as far as "**the faith**" goes we have all of it. There is not going to be any more tenets of the faith delivered to us… it has been delivered "**once for all**". So if it has been delivered once for all then there are no new revelations coming.

It stands to reason there are no more revelations for us, because if there was, then "**the faith**" of **Jude 3** (that we must be obedient to) would be a moving target based on what people would still be revealing through the Spirit today and tomorrow… we would not have a full revelation to guide our lives by.

The Holy Spirit's very mission was to guide the apostles into all truth (**John 16:13**) and to complete Christ's teachings to them (**John 16:12, 14-15**)… He did that already. We have Jude's confirmation of that for us, and we have the completed scriptural record, the Bible. It stands to reason that since the miraculous gifts were given to validate the gospel message of salvation and Gods teachings to us… that the miraculous gifts the Holy Spirit used to do that with would have ceased, since the scriptures are now complete and have been so for 1900 years or so.

Another way to think about this is, we can know with certainty that God is a loving God, not some capricious entity that changes on a whim and speaks in secret where no one else can hear Him (**Malachi 3:6**, **Isaiah 45:19**). God declares the truth to all so that all can obey. Jesus said in **John 8:32** "**You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free**", so how can I know the truth and be set free, if the truth has only been given to you or some guy down the road and not to me? I can't. That is one reason that the early church had the supernatural power to test the prophecies they were given to see if they were genuine (**1 John 4:1, 1 Corinthians 12:10**) so that they could not be mislead. We don't have the ability "**to test the spirits**" today either, so it logically follows that if the one does not exist today, the other cannot either. The Scriptures are all sufficient for the truth, everyone can read them and know the truth which God has given us to be saved by… in the Scriptures "**the truth**" becomes objective truth, not subjective that can change according to the whims of mortal man. The Bible says what it says for all to hear… so that all can know the truth and be set free.

God has not given us a moving target to try to fathom… He couldn't do that and be the loving God that we know He is. So we can rest assured that we have all that we need to know and that we will not be getting more.

Next week we will explore the gift of the Holy Spirit vs. gifts of the Holy Spirit.