

Major Bible Themes

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CHAPTER XIV

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS ADVENT

The Spirit's advent into the world, like His predicted departure from the world, can be understood only as it is seen in relation to the various dispensations and revealed purposes of God. In ages past, the Holy Spirit was in the world as the Omnipresent One; yet He is said to have come into the world on the Day of Pentecost. Beginning with the Day of Pentecost, He is to remain in the world for a divinely determined and unrevealed time. When He shall have departed out of the world, He, as the Omnipresent One, will still be in the world. In arriving at the understanding of the order and harmony of these facts consideration should be given to four aspects of the Spirit's relation to the world:

I. IN THE AGES PRECEDING THE FIRST ADVENT OF CHRIST

Throughout the extended period before the first advent of Christ, the Spirit was present in the world in the same sense in which He is present everywhere, and He wrought in and through the people of God according to the divine will (Gen. 41:38; Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 27:18; Job 33:4; Psa. 139:7; Hag. 2:4, 5; Zech. 4:6).

II. DURING THE THREE-YEAR PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST ON EARTH

It is reasonable to suppose that the incarnate, active presence of the Second Person of the Trinity in the world would affect the ministries of the Spirit, and this we find to be true.

1. In relation to Christ, the Spirit first wrought as the generating power by which the God-man was formed in the virgin's womb. The Spirit is also seen descending in the form of a dove upon Christ at the time of His baptism. And again, it is revealed that it was only through the Eternal Spirit that Christ offered Himself to God (Heb. 9:14).

2. The relation of the Spirit to men during the earth ministry of Christ was progressive. We first read of the assurance which Christ gave to His disciples that they might receive the Spirit by asking (Luke 11:13). Though the Spirit had previously come upon men according to the sovereign will of God, His presence in the human heart had never before been conditioned upon asking, and this privilege, being so new, was, so far as is revealed, never claimed at that time by any one. At the close of His ministry and just before His death, Christ said: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16, 17). Likewise, after His resurrection the Lord breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22); but in spite of this reception of the Spirit they were to tarry in Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4).

III. DURING THE PRESENT AGE OF THE CHURCH

As promised by the Father (John 14:16, 17, 26) and by the Son (John 16:7), the Spirit, who as the Omnipresent One, had always been in the world, came into the world on the Day of Pentecost. The force of this seeming repetition of ideas is seen when it is understood that His coming on the Day of Pentecost was that He might make His abode in the world. "We are led to believe that God the Father, though omnipresent (Eph. 4:6), is, as to His abode, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9). Likewise, we know that God the Son, though omnipresent (Matt. 18:20; Col. 1:27), as to His abode now, is seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). In like manner, the Spirit, though omnipresent, is now, as to His abode, tabernacling here on the earth. The taking up of His abode on the earth was the sense in which the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. His dwelling place was changed from Heaven to earth. It was for this coming of the Spirit into the world that the disciples were told to wait. The new ministry of this grace-age could not begin apart from the coming of the Spirit.

Two revelations are given concerning the Spirit's abode in the world:

1. He is said to indwell each and every child of God (1 Cor. 6:19). This fact, which is age-characterizing, is to be the theme of a succeeding chapter.

2. He is said to be tabernacling in a structure of living stones -- the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:18-22). This temple of living stones is now "growing" and is none other than the

whole company of the saved ones of this age. By the salvation of souls through the power of the Spirit this tabernacle is growing to its completion.

The redeemed who form the Church are mentioned in the Scriptures under various figures -- the sheep, the branches, the stones of the building, the new generation, a kingdom of priests, the body, and the bride. Of these figures, the body and the building lend themselves to the thought of growth or gradual increase unto completion, and are so used in the Word of God (Eph. 2:18-22; 4:13-16).

When the elect number of this heavenly company of redeemed ones shall have been saved, the Spirit will have accomplished the purpose of His advent into the world and will then depart from the world as definitely as He came. He will, however, continue His ministry and presence as the Omnipresent One with His abode changed from earth to Heaven. Though His name is not revealed, His departure is indicated in 2 Thessalonians 2:7. He is most evidently the Restrainer who continues to restrain the evil of the world so long as He remains in the world. It should be observed that though the Spirit may remove His abode from the earth, as He will, He cannot depart without taking the saved ones with Him; for they cannot be separated from Him (John 14:16, 17).

IV. DURING THE KINGDOM AGE

As the Omnipresent One, the Spirit will have a peculiar ministry in the world during the Kingdom age, which period will immediately follow the present age of the out-calling of the Church (Isa. 11:1-3; Joel 2:28-32).

QUESTIONS

1. In what sense was the Spirit present in the world before the first advent of Christ?
2. a. What was the ministry of the Spirit in connection with the birth of Christ?
 - b. What was His ministry at the beginning of Christ's public service?
 - c. What was His ministry in connection with the cross?
3. Why, may we believe, did the disciples fail to pray for the Spirit?
4. a. What is the petition concerning the advent of the Spirit in Christ's prayer as recorded in John 14:16, 17?
 - b. Could any prayer of Christ be unanswered?
5. In what sense did the Spirit, who is always omnipresent, come into the world on Pentecost?
6. Where is the home of the Father, and of the Son?

7. Where is the home of the Spirit during this age of grace?
8. Were the disciples appointed to wait for their own filling by the Spirit, or for the advent of the Spirit into the world?
9. What two aspects of the Spirit's present abode are mentioned in the Scriptures?
10. What Scripture indicates each?
11. By what process is the Spirit's temple growing?
12. What will be the consummation of the development?
13. a. When will the Spirit depart from this world?
 - b. Can He go without the Church?
14. What is said of the Spirit's ministry in the coming age?