

On the Holy Spirit (Part 5 of 7: Inspired by the Spirit)

Historic Faith Series on Holy Spirit

XI. Further Lessons from the 'Exodus Map'

- a. In this lesson we will build on things we discussed in the previous segment, from the account of the Exodus journey. They point to the important role of the Holy Spirit in our own spiritual journey.
- b. In the Old Testament stories, God provides graphic "pictures" that the stories create in our minds.
- c. The Wilderness through which the Israelites travelled was a desert full of snakes and scorpions. It was an inhospitable place; not somewhere you would want to go for a comfortable vacation!
 - i. It is hard for many Western Christians to appreciate that in reality, we are living in the midst of a *spiritual wasteland, a desert*. That is especially hard to appreciate in many parts of this land where, at least on the surface, our world can seem like a beautiful, garden-like place, filled with scenic beauty and abundant material blessings.
 - ii. A few years ago, when I taught about the Wilderness journey of the Israelites, a brother came up to me to discuss the significance of the Exodus journey for us, today.
 1. He had been taught that for a Christian, a "Wilderness Experience" was a temporary time of trials he or she might experience in this life, for example shortly after becoming a Christian.
 2. He was taught that after this short-term time of spiritual trial was over, the Christian should then expect to experience the blessings of 'the Promised Land': a happy and fulfilling Christian life here on earth.
 - iii. HOWEVER, the 'map of the Exodus journey' tells a much different story!
 1. All of the elements of the Exodus journey provide physical representations of a *spiritual reality*.
 - a. The Red Sea crossing foreshadows water baptism.
 - b. The Promised Land foreshadows heaven, our goal.

- c. The Wilderness, a 40-year period of temptation and testing in a snake- and scorpion-infested desert, represents *the Christian life* (the full time we are alive between baptism and death).
 - d. Egypt, the land of bondage, represents the old pre-Christian life of spiritual slavery to sin.
 - i. Whether they look like it or not, the people in the world around us are *in spiritual bondage, enslaved to sin*.
 - e. Pharaoh represents Satan, the oppressive ruler of a kingdom of darkness, who refuses to let go of his control over his subjects.
 - f. The pillar of cloud (by day) and fire (by night) that led the people throughout their journey represents the Holy Spirit, who has been sent to lead us on our spiritual journey.
- iv. It is important for all of us to understand: this life here on earth, for a Christian, is *NOT* the Promised Land!
- 1. We are currently in the desert, the Wilderness.
 - 2. If you feel tempted and tested, that is normal. That is exactly what we should expect here.
- v. After you are baptized and become a Christian, you are not “home free”. If you just “stay with the pack” of other Christians, that is no guarantee you will make it to the reward at the end. That is the *very point* Paul is making in **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**, when he discusses the Exodus journey!
- 1. Most of those who stayed with the pack did not make it into the Promised Land, at the end (they fell because of sin).
 - 2. Christians must be living holy lives, if we want to see heaven, our Promised Land!
- d. The significance of the Exodus journey is also discussed in **Hebrews 3-4**.
- i. Read **Hebrews 3:5-19**.
 - ii. Notice the points the Hebrews writer is making, based on **Psalms 95** and the Exodus journey.
 - 1. We are God’s house “if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope firmly to the end.” (**Hebrews 3:6**, NKJV)

2. “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...” (**Hebrews 3:14**, NKJV)
3. The people who hardened their hearts in the rebellion and did not obey God, “could not enter because of unbelief”. (**Hebrews 3:19**)
 - a. We see that the kind of “belief” that leads to salvation in the end is more than just the belief of an instant. It must also obey and persevere to the end.

iii. Read **Hebrews 4:1-5**.

1. God had said that the people who rebelled in the Wilderness “shall not enter My rest”.
 - a. This rest comes *at the end*. We must persevere in order to enter that rest.
 - b. This *rest* represents eternal life with God.
 - c. A reminder that the Christian life here is a time of work; the rest will come, but only *at the end*!
2. An unusual statement in the text: “The gospel was preached to us *as well as to them*.” (“them” here referring to the people who were on the Wilderness journey with Moses and Joshua).
 - a. **Question:** When was the gospel first preached?
 - b. **Answers Some Might Give:** By Peter in **Acts 2** on the Day of Pentecost? By Jesus in the gospels?
 - c. **What Hebrews Writer Says:** *The gospel was preached* even 1400 years earlier, to the Israelites in the Wilderness! Consider what they were told:
 - i. Passover Lamb must be slain.
 - ii. They must put the protective blood of the lamb on the doorframes of their houses. They must put away all yeast (representing sin).
 - iii. Led by the Spirit, they must pass through the water (baptism) to escape slavery.
 - iv. Pillar of cloud and fire (Holy Spirit) leads them all the way on their journey.

- v. Those who remain faithful (not just believing initially, but also obeying and persevering to the very end of the journey) will reach the Promised Land and enter “God’s rest”.
 - vi. Indeed, the gospel *was preached to them*, just as it has been preached to us!
- e. Two helpful illustrations we discussed in the prior lesson, regarding the Holy Spirit.
 - i. The pillar of cloud and fire in the Exodus journey.
 - 1. Paul ties this back to the Holy Spirit when he says that they were all “baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea”, in **1 Corinthians 10:2**. Similar to when Jesus spoke about water baptism for Christians as being born again “of the water and the spirit” in **John 3:3-5**.
 - 2. It led them every day on their journey, all the way to the promised land.
 - 3. It was the center of their camp; unified the nation.
 - ii. The water that came from the rock, on the Exodus journey.
 - 1. Paul said that rock represented Christ (**1 Corinthians 10:4**), and Jesus said he would provide water (referring to the Spirit) which those who drank from it would never thirst again (**John 4:10-13, John 7:37-39**).
 - 2. In the desert, water is essential for daily survival.

XII. Seeking a Healthy View of the Holy Spirit

- a. Those Christians who speak the most about the Holy Spirit can *tend to* have a very emotion- and feelings-based religion, anchored in subjective personal experiences more than in the word of God. Also, sometimes the manifestations of the Spirit that they claim can seem *rather odd* to many of us.
- b. At the other extreme, we have groups of Christians who believe the Spirit did little or nothing related to our salvation beyond inspiring the Scriptures.
- c. Our goal should be to have an accurate, Scripturally grounded view of the Holy Spirit, not reacting against any of the extremes we have seen around us.

XIII. The Scriptures are Inspired by the Holy Spirit

- a. Two important things Jesus said about the Spirit, on the night before He was crucified: Read **John 14:25-31**.
 - i. Jesus said that He (the Spirit) would:
 - 1. teach them (the apostles) *all things*, and
 - 2. bring to their remembrance *everything Jesus said to them*.
 - ii. In this lesson, we will look at the *second part* of this statement: that the Spirit will remind the apostles of everything Jesus said.
- b. Promise of Jesus: "He (the Holy Spirit) will bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (**John 14:26**)
 - i. In reaching out to unbelievers in New England, I am often challenged by them at the outset regarding the reliability of the New Testament account.
 - ii. Christians believe the New Testament Scriptures were written one to five decades *after* Jesus died and was resurrected.
 - iii. **Question:** What if the apostles forgot something, or misremembered, over that long span of time?
 - iv. **Answer (from Jesus):** Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit *would enable apostles to accurately remember* everything he taught.
 - 1. When challenged regarding the accuracy of the gospel accounts, *I point to this passage, and to the words of Jesus*. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would enable the apostles to accurately recall, even years later, everything He said to them.
 - 2. *If Jesus is the Son of God*, confirmed by him fulfilling all the prophecies and being crucified and rising from the dead on the third day, then I can have confidence in everything He says. And He promised that the Holy Spirit would guide His apostles to recall everything He told them.
 - 3. *If Jesus is the Son of God and was raised from the dead*, it is not difficult to believe He is able to help His apostles recall what He said, through the help of the Holy Spirit!
- c. **Questions:** This statement of Jesus would apply to the New Testament. What about the accuracy and inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures?
 - i. Recall that earlier in this lesson we read from **Hebrews 3**:
 - 1. "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice..." (**Hebrews 3:7**, NKJV)

2. The Hebrews writer then goes on to quote from **Psalm 95** (designated **Psalm 94** in the LXX).
 3. In **Hebrews 4:7**, the writer says that David wrote **Psalm 95**. Clearly, the **Hebrews** writer understood that *the Holy Spirit had inspired David* in writing the psalm.
- ii. Read **Acts 28:23-27**, where Paul is speaking to the Jews in Rome.
1. Paul is arguing with his fellow Jews, using the Old Testament (from **Isaiah 6**) to make his point.
 2. Paul says to the Jews, "*the Holy Spirit spoke...through Isaiah the prophet...*".
 3. Note that the Jews *did not* respond by saying, "What Holy Spirit?" nor by protesting, "Who said the Holy Spirit was speaking through the prophets?".
 - a. Paul and his Jewish listeners all believed in the Holy Spirit; and shared the conviction that the Spirit inspired prophets like **Isaiah**, who wrote the Hebrew Scriptures.
- iii. Read **2 Peter 1:16-21**, where Peter is writing to Christians.
1. Peter said they were not making these things up, regarding Jesus being the Christ and being resurrected from the dead.
 2. Peter stated that he was there *as an eyewitness*.
 3. Peter considered it foundational to understand that all writings of the prophets were written under divine inspiration. He reminded them, "men spoke from God *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*".
- iv. Read **2 Timothy 3:12-17**, where Paul is admonishing Timothy.
1. Recall that in **Acts 16:1** we are introduced to Timothy as a young disciple whose father was a Greek, but whose mother was Jewish.
 2. Paul reminds Timothy of the Scriptures that Timothy had been taught from childhood (*literally, from infancy*). Since the New Testament had not been written at the time Timothy was a baby, it seems clear Paul is speaking here *about the Old Testament*, the Hebrew Scriptures.
 3. Paul says, "all Scripture is given *by inspiration of God*".
 - a. This phrase also is translated, literally, "God-breathed".

- v. Read **Nehemiah 9:9-12** and **9:28-31**. The prophet Ezra is recounting to the Jews the history of their disastrous spiritual rebellion against God and calling them to repent.
 - 1. He recalls the story of them being led by the pillar through the Wilderness, to show them the way to go.
 - 2. The Lord testified against the people *by the Holy Spirit, through the prophets*.
 - 3. We see that Peter and Paul are teaching nothing new; *it was clear from the Old Testament* that the Holy Spirit was speaking through the prophets.
- vi. Read **Zechariah 7:7-12**.
 - 1. The people had refused to hear the words of God *sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets*.
 - 2. Again, this was exactly what Peter and Paul later explained in their writings. The writings of the prophets come from the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. The Spirit is writing through the hands of the prophets; the personalities of the prophets may come through, but the message is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- d. We have absolute confidence in the Scriptures (gospels, New Testament writings, Old Testament) because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - i. The inspiration of Scripture by the Holy Spirit is a foundational principle that we must never, ever compromise on.
 - 1. This is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, and breathed life into the dry bones in **Ezekiel 37**.
 - 2. Everything else in the Christian faith rests upon this foundation, which is why Satan will often attack to undermine this first.
 - 3. While no translation of the Scriptures (from one language into another) is perfect, the Scriptures themselves are inspired. We can have full confidence in them.
- e. Many believers today struggle especially with unpopular things contained in *Paul's* writings.
 - i. Many believers attempt to make a sharp distinction between Jesus' teachings (which they accept) versus the writings of Paul (parts of which they want to reject).

- ii. Typically, they want to dismiss things that Paul teaches which go against modern popular culture (for example on male spiritual leadership, submission and homosexuality).
- iii. Recall that Jesus had said the Spirit would guide His apostles *into "all truth"* (**John 16:13**) Certainly that applied to Peter, who was in the room when Jesus said that.
- iv. Now let us read **2 Peter 3:14-16**, and consider *what Peter says* about Paul's writings.
 - 1. Peter admits that some things in Paul's writings are hard to understand.
 - 2. Unstable people twist the meaning of Paul's writings.
 - 3. However, Paul is writing with the *wisdom God gave him*.
 - 4. Peter equates Paul's writings to "the rest of the Scriptures".
- v. Clearly Peter considered Paul's writings to be inspired, on the same level with the other Scriptures (which also were twisted by people). We should feel confident in relying on Paul and his writings as being inspired by Scripture.
 - 1. Also, we should not be surprised when we see the Reformers and others twisting and distorting what Paul wrote. Peter said that people were doing that even in his own day.