Sacred Journey XXX

**Experiencing the Godhead**

Purpose in Presence and Power

Now we begin to move away from our meager attempts to define the three persons in the Godhead and look more directly at the activity and power by which we encounter God. The Scriptures that we look at will crisscross back and forth between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as the described agent or agents of activity, while we try our best to remember their unity in being and purpose.

I must admit that I have not been able to prioritize the interactive revelations that we will be studying over the next several weeks. The best we can do is to record the activities of the Holy Spirit without trying to put them into a format that tries to measure, in ascending order over time, the power released. The main reason for this is that even though the biblical narratives appear to show supernatural activities, as written down for us in the books of Acts, Genesis, or the books of 1st and 2nd Kings etc., such as the interaction between God and man, they do not demonstrate a sequential increase in power from encounter to encounter. In other words, we cannot speak of the activities being displayed by God in Scripture as proving an interpretive position that His power increased over time. There isn’t a steamroller effect where the Holy Spirit is picking up speed and growing stronger as we read from the Old to the New Testament narratives! You might argue that Scripture does tell us that the activity of the Holy Spirit will increase as we get closer to the end times, i.e., the last days: “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” (Joel 2:28). My answer would be, ‘*yes’* to the activity but ‘*no’* to an increase in power. Can we honestly say that the power that was displayed during the creation of the universe will somehow pale in comparison with the work of the Holy Spirit in power in any age, even the end times? I don’t believe we can. What we can admit is that there isn’t only one single form of Holy Spirit activity. We are speaking of the increase in human involvement with God’s power. God’s power has always been the same from the beginning. This is supported by the understanding that God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

God doesn’t need to go to the gym and workout to keep His strength up even though He is the Ancient of Days. The pouring out of His Spirit means He will bring about an increase of His Presence within us and throughout the world; and there will be an increase of His supernatural activity through us.

So, having no better counsel, I will start by talking about experiencing the **Presence of God** which, hopefully, will move us into an understanding of His power.

We look to scripture to reveal and define the Ancient Biblical Concepts of Presence.

**Genesis 1:26** 26 “Then God said, "Let us make man in ***our image***, ***in our likeness***,”

**Genesis 2:7 “**the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a ***living being***.”

A “living being” is derived from the Hebrew word ‘nephesh’ for which it can also mean “refresh” and/or “soul”. It often is used to reflect the whole person - the body, breath, and mind. The three consonants that are used to form this word are the nun, pey and shin. When translated to mean “soul” these words are also applied: “life, person, mind, heart, creature, body, dead, well, desire, man and self.” This variety of words which are attached to this singular Hebrew word ‘nephesh,’ adds to its obscurity in knowing as well as to its clarity. Its clarity demonstrates the fact that this word has no simplistic meaning. Its obscurity demonstrates that we cannot be so exacting in its meaning because they both imply something “bigger, deeper and spiritual” which demands a closer study. It’s one of those Hebrew words that are breathed. It’s a nasal sound that is blown through an open mouth with one’s teeth clenched. This is no accident. The ancient pictographs of this word would be a ‘seed’, (nun), a ‘pen mouth’, (pey), and a row of teeth (shin). This blowing through the teeth creates a breath-ful sound on purpose. Nephesh comes from the verb “naphach” which mean breathe, blow etc. and is used in the same verse as God breathed (naphach) and man became a living being (nephesh.) So ‘soul’ and ‘breath of life’ are correspondent to each other’s meaning.

Both, though, are somehow nondescript. Their absolute meaning is shrouded in the mystery of the supernatural purposes of God. But more than just His purpose it is a revelation of God’s intended connection to his creation. It’s relational but this relationship cannot just be defined as creator to creation or even father to offspring. This passage speaks less about the nature of man and more about the Spirit of God. A spiritual union, a unique oneness whereby a specific attribute of God is found within man. This place of totally unique and intimate joining, a place of meeting between the two, not of flesh but of divine spirit, can best be expressed as Presence!

**Promise of Presence**

It may seem that the desire for God’s Presence is a one-sided hope but there is the reality of God’s promise of His Presence.

NIV **Exodus 3:14** “God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' " [ hy<+h.a,( rv<åa] hy<ßh.a,( - ‘ehyeh asher ehyeh‘’ ]

Moses asks God to give him a name in case the children of Israel asked him who it is who he represents. The response is ‘I AM who I AM’. Taken from the Hebrew word for being, ‘hayah’ or ‘to be.’ Here the meaning of this word is not obscure but its use as a name for God certainly is. It truly requires interpretation and not just translation. It is another Hebrew word with a ‘blowing’ sound which expresses wind or breath as invisible qualities that are not easily defined. Jewish philosopher Martin Buber applied these following meanings to this phrase. “I AM WHO I AM”, is a revelation of God as “happening, coming into being, being there or being present.” Moses and the children of Israel are to understand that God exists in “movement.” Not as in constant agitation or the inability to stop or rest but in the understanding that He is always moving towards those He loves. He is in pursuit of them and moving toward a resolve on their behalf. God is understood as *Presence in Motion*. And the resolve He brings includes His Presence being with them.

***Presence as a Place and a Pursuit***

What is remarkable is that God’s Presence isn’t just to be experienced within us. His Presence can also be experienced within a Place and within a Pursuit.

**Exodus 13:21-22**  21 “By day **the LORD** went ahead of them **in a pillar of cloud** to guide them on their way and by night **in a pillar of fire** to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.”

**Exodus 40:34-38**  34 “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 36 In all the travels of the Israelites, **whenever the cloud lifted** from above the tabernacle, they would **set out**; 37 but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out-- until the day it lifted. 38 So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.”

**Numbers 9:15-23**  15 “On the day the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning, the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. 16 That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. 17 Whenever the **cloud lifted** from above the Tent, the Israelites **set out**; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. 18 At the LORD's command the Israelites **set out,** and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. 19 When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites **obeyed the LORD's order** and did not set out. 20 Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at **his command** they would **set out**. 21 Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they **set out**. Whether by day or by night, whenever the **cloud lifted**, they **set out**. 22 Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in camp and not set out; but when it **lifted**, they would **set out**. 23 At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they **set out**. They obeyed the LORD's order, in accordance with his command through Moses.” (The Israelites setting out in obedient pursuit is mentioned 7 times in these 9 verses).

The context of the Exodus 13 passage is immediately following the judgment and deliverance of Passover. Now, ‘I Am that I Am’ begins to lead the people, as a cloud by day and as a fire by night; and God was in the cloud and God was in the fire. His Presence was with them every moment of every day both internally and externally. They followed the Presence. Where the Presence of the Lord rested, there the children of Israel remained. God’s Presence became the place wherein they dwelt. When the Presence of God moved, the children of Israel would set out. They would follow the Presence and go to where it would lead them and where it came to rest, they would remain.

***God’s Presence became the place to dwell and a commanded obedient pursuit.***

The Israelites would come to give a name to the Presence within the cloud and pillar of fire. The name was ‘anani’ which in Aramaic means ‘cloud’, and ‘anani’ was understood to be ‘God Messiah!’ **Alfred Edersheim. The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah. Books I - III. (MacDonald Publishing. Maclean.) 179.**

**Encountering God**

The Presence of the Holy Spirit and His Relationship to Worship: *GOD is experienced in Worship!* Worship can be defined as “all actions that are dedicated to God and directed toward him.” Therefore, everything that a man or woman of faith does should be considered acts of worship. (Worship may not always feel good - maybe costly: i.e. time, possessions, and self-will, etc.)

*Worship places God as the object of our devotion.*

**The Pattern/Profile and Object of Worship**

**Note:** A worshiper or worship leader must be selfless in focus with regard to himself or herself.

The worshiper has a selfless posture before the Lord, and we can define that posture. But the posture must have a specific goal in mind. Here are some characteristics of the needed posture of the worshipper and their focused purpose.

 POSTURE FOCUSED PURPOSE

Grateful = Thanksgiving

Devoted = Intentional, Heart-felt

Reverent = Repentant - Broken Vessels

Honest = Without Thought of Entitlement

Selfless = Submissive Surrender

This posture does not change. Forms may change: i.e. music, poetic dance, quiet reflection, etc., but the posture does not change.

Is there a reward from our worship? “In worship, God and His people meet.” **Marvin R Wilson. *Exploring Our Hebraic Heritage: A Christian Theology of Roots and Renewal.* (Grand Rapids; William B Eerdman’s Publishing Company, 2014) 184.**

The answer is yes. The Presence of God!

*Presence is the reward of worship.*

*Presence is God’s acceptance of our worship.*

*Presence is the highest form of relationship man can have with God this side of eternity.*

**Developing Our Understanding of Presence**

The manifestation of the Holy Spirit allows us to encounter and experience the Presence of God. These encounters create a pathway for us to have a relationship with Him. From this understanding has come what I call **“The Doctrine of Presence”**

“Often unspoken, the Doctrine of Presence, with regard to the God of Scripture, refers to the underlying eschatological expectation of relationship.”

In Israel the ancient Judeans and their offspring, Christianity, placed a great deal of emphasis upon having a “relationship” with God; based upon repentant faith and then most clarifyingly through the acceptance of Jesus as our Savior and Messiah. Too little emphasis and teaching has been given to the idea of “presence” when speaking of aspects of this relationship. It may be time to elevate this truth from a passing understanding and experience to one of priority within our teachings. It seems very appropriate to do so as we emphasize the leading of the Holy Spirit in encountering God.

**Here are some statements that exemplify our understanding of Presence:**

*Relationship with God is defined in Presence.*

*Relationship with God is refined in Presence.*

*Presence is the ‘ultimate destiny’ of a relationship with God.*

*Presence is best defined as “spiritual intimacy.”*

*Presence is the highest sense of human awareness of God’s Spirit, specifically, His Holy Spirit.*