**Sacred Journey XXXII**

**Encounters with the Spirit of God**

**John 20:19-22**  19 “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.”

**1 Samuel 10:9-10** 9 “As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day. 10 When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying.”

**2 Kings 13:20-21**  20 “Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. 21 Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.”

We continue with our inquiry concerning the substantial impact of the Presence of God upon His creation, most specifically man, by examining three unique passages of Scripture. Our position thus far is that God can be experienced because His Spirit is substantially impactful when we encounter Him. His Presence is in His Power and His Power is in His Presence. In His Presence we encounter and experience an impartation of Himself to those who believe in Him. With each impartation of Himself, we encounter His character and nature. Our spirit and soul receive witness by the Holy Spirit that God is who the Scriptures declare Him to be. He is righteous and holy, loving and trustworthy, our savior and hope of eternal life. How do we describe this illumination that we now have internally received? Our spirit/soul response is: "I know that I know that I know!"

Now, having made that discovery and declaration we can literally go anywhere in the Bible to find examples of man being positively and substantially impacted when encountering the Presence and Power of God. Evidence is not just found in Acts Chapter 2 or in the life of Jesus, but is also found within all the historical narrative presented to us in both the Old and New Testaments.

Some are more spectacular such as the Glory of God coming into the magnificently constructed Temple in Jerusalem.

**1 Kings 8:10-12**  10 “When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. 11 And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. 12 Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud;”

Or in a private domestic setting when Peter witnessed the Holy Spirit falling upon the household of Cornelius in Acts 10.

**Acts 10:43-47** 43 “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, 47 "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."

 Or in the very gently expressed "on the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit," in Revelation 1.

**Revelation 1:9-18**  9 “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see…” 12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. 17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever!”

The first two are encounters involving more than one individual simultaneously. In 1 Kings, King Solomon, the Temple Priests and the thousands of worshipers are all impacted by the Presence of God. In Acts it is an entire Gentile household that is visibly impacted by the Holy Spirit causing Peter to confess that their experience matched what God did among the Jews on the day of Pentecost. The third is an account of one solitary believer, who being "in the Spirit" is given an open vision of the resurrected Messiah.

Each of these encounters with the Presence of God reveal the Holy Spirit coming upon all types of people who willingly are seeking an encounter with God. The whole point of building a permanent house of worship in Jerusalem was for the Presence of God to come and dwell among His people. Cornelius sent his servants to entreat Peter to come and share the revelation of the resurrected Messiah with the searching souls of his household and God’s Presence came in power. And John was doing what John did on the Lord's Day and that was to enter into the Presence of God.

It's time we take a look at the three opening passages that provide examples of unusual impartations to encounters with the Presence of God. These encounters are unique because they happen only once in Scripture. But they are similar examples of how the Presence of God substantially impacts His creation.

**John 20**

In this brief encounter with the resurrected Son of God, “He breathed on them" and says "Receive the Holy Spirit". This intriguing passage depicts a receptive expectation of a spiritual encounter with God.

"There are a number of ways in which this command to ‘receive’ (take, take hold of) the Holy Spirit is interpreted. Liberal critics often call this the Johannine Pentecost, as if John had never heard of the Pentecost of Acts 2 and never experienced the Spiritual promise on that day.

Others argue over the lack of a direct article (the) before Holy Spirit meaning that they received "power" and not the “Person” of the Holy Spirit.

Still others say the disciples did not receive anything at all and the language was merely symbolic of when the Spirit would come upon them on Pentecost. There are many difficulties in accepting these interpretations.

The language used in John 20:21–23 does not fit the idea that nothing happened, however. The act of breathing is parallel to the breathing of God in Genesis 2:7. When God breathed, something happened. When God called for breath to come on the corpses in Ezekiel's vision (37:8–10), life came into them. When Jesus touched people or spoke the word they were healed. It seems ridiculous to suppose that Jesus would breathe on them, or give a command and have nothing happen. The authority of Jesus was such that all He had to do was speak the word, and it would be done, as even a Roman centurion recognized (Matthew 8:8). Further, the use of the word ‘receive’ (lamba,nw “lam-ban-o”) is used later of actual receiving of the Spirit (Acts 8:15,17; Romans 8:15; 1Corinthians 2:12).

**Acts 8:15-17** 15 “When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might **receive** the Holy Spirit, 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they **received** the Holy Spirit.”

The other difficulties can [also] be explained. The fact [that] Jesus said, "So send I you” and they did not go until after Pentecost is only parallel to the other expressions of the Great Commission (which Jesus found necessary to repeat more than once). He is simply stating here that in the same manner as the Father sent me, so I am sending you. This was a statement of the authority He was giving them as John 20:23 indicates.

Some have tried to meet the objection that Jesus must ascend before the Spirit can be poured out by saying that there were two ascensions, one were Jesus ascended immediately after death to present His blood once for all before the Father (Hebrews 9:12, 14), and another after the 40 days of Resurrection appearances….

**A Measure of the Spirit Given**

The majority of those who recognize that John 20:22 is an actual impartation of the Spirit take it as a bestowal of a measure of the Spirit. In response, some argue that since the Holy Spirit is a Person, it is impossible to split Him up. They take it that to receive the Spirit is to receive all there is of Him so that we cannot receive more of Him, we can only give more of ourselves to Him. But we too are persons. If we can give more of ourselves to Him, He can give more of Himself to us. Paul said, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21). By gain he meant gain in Christ. That is, ‘to live’ meant ‘Christ in Him’, and ‘to die’ meant ‘more of Christ’. Certainly, it was possible to receive a measure of the Spirit from Messiah on the day He was resurrected (John 20:21) and an overflowing experience from Him on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4)."**1.**

**1 Samuel 10**

This encounter follows the narrative of the prophet Samuel anointing Saul to be the first King of the children of Israel. Samuel prophetically describes the direction and outcomes of certain events that will help Saul verify his anointing to be king. But the most profound evidence will be the Spirit of the Lord coming upon him.

**1 Samuel 10:5-7**  5 "After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. 6 The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person. 7 Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.”

We are not told about Saul's spiritual life prior to his meeting with Samuel, but when he is in the company of prophets the Holy Spirit comes upon Saul and he joins them in prophesying. Peter speaks to such impartations.

**2 Peter 1:21 - 2:1**  21 “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

Saul didn’t become holier and now could prophesy. It was the Holy Spirit at work through him. Saul's encounter with the Holy Spirit gives us an example of what can happen when the power of God comes upon an individual. Scripture does not show that Saul continued to prophesy beyond that moment, and we see flaws in his character. Thankfully individual perfection is not a criterion for the giving of the Holy Spirit. Let us recognize this truth for it gives hope to all of us who seek to be used by God.

**2 Kings 13**

The encounter described in this passage of Scripture may be one that we might want to read and then quickly move on. Elisha and an unnamed Israelite are the two principles mentioned. Scripture tells us about Elisha's spiritual walk and how God used him as a prophet and miracle worker. The Israelite can be assumed to be a believer in Yahweh, but we can't confirm that. Elisha has died and was buried in the tomb. As was the custom, his body would lay in the tomb open to the elements thus allowing his body to decompose. His bones would remain. The Israelite man had died. Out of necessity those who were going to bury him had to quickly throw his body into the open tomb where Elisha's bones rested. What took place next was a miracle of restoration. Apparently, the Presence of God that was upon Elisha when he was alive remained upon his bones in death.

**2 Kings 13:20-21**  20 “Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. 21 Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.”

Elisha died after suffering from an illness that took his life. The dead Israelite came back to life after touching Elisha's bones.

What can we take away from such a revelation of Scripture?

1. No matter how substantial the anointing or important the calling that God may place upon our lives, death is still in our future. But death does not mean that the power of God has somehow been diminished concerning us.
2. The power of God can restore life to the dead. The life we have in God isn't lost in death.

Does this passage imply that God's Presence resides or is hidden within dead things? No. What we need to understand is that death does not usurp or remove or hinder God's supernatural authority over ALL things.

What can we say then?

***“Thus, human life, however blessed, has its limits*.”2. *But not the Spirit of God!***

1. **Excerpts from Stanley M. Horton. *What The Bible Says About The Holy Spirit* (Springfield, Gospel Publishing House, 1976) 127 – 130.**
2. **Michael L. Brown. *Israel's Divine Healer* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) 100.**