

Series Immanuel

This Message #4 The Indwelling Holy Spirit

Back in eternity past, before the existence of anything apart from Himself, God made the decision to bring into existence a material universe which would be a suitable location for His holy presence, and to place in that universe certain unique creatures who would be in His own “image and likeness.”

All three members of the Godhead were involved in this creative undertaking. God, the Father Almighty, is presented in Scripture as the initiator of the plan. The second Person of the Trinity is revealed as the one most directly connected with the work of creation. The Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture as the source of all life.

The situation in which the first humans lived was perfect and holy in every way. God was pleased with the result. He could have open and intimate fellowship with the human race. He declared His creative efforts to be “very good.” Unfortunately, when the first humans did not respond to their Creator with the faithful obedience that was necessary to maintain their fellowship with Him, God could no longer maintain a close fellowship with them. God had to withdraw His presence from them because impure, fallen creatures cannot live in His holy presence.

However, beginning with the promise of Genesis 3:15, God set in motion a plan for the eventual redemption and restoration of both the physical creation and His human creation. The initiatives and actions of God were revealed throughout the Old Testament. The incarnation of Jesus was the pivotal moment in history when God accomplished everything necessary to insure that His ultimate purposes in regard to mankind would be achieved.

Through the life and death of the incarnate Jesus, the justice of God in regard to sin was satisfied. The power of sin and evil over people was broken. Redemption of fallen sinners became possible. Life after physical death became reality. As dramatic and significant as all of this was, it was not the final step in God’s plan. Scripture reveals two more levels in God’s plan by which His connection with people becomes even tighter.

Jesus announced the next level to His disciples in the upper room, just a few hours before He was betrayed and arrested, He said, “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come” (*John 13:33*). This statement initially made the disciples sad, but Jesus encouraged them by saying: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (*John 14:1-3*).

A few minutes later in the conversation, Jesus explained what would happen after He went away: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you (*John 14:16-17*). Jesus then briefly explained the responsibility of the Counselor: “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (*John 14:26*).

The disciples were perplexed by these words, just as they had been perplexed when Jesus spoke of His approaching suffering and death. However, they should not have been. Just as there was information about Jesus throughout the Old Testament, so there were lots of statements about the Holy Spirit. In part three we read three passages from Isaiah which described the coming Messiah. In this part we will look at three passages from Isaiah which mention the Spirit of God.

Notice that, in each of these prophecies, statements about the Spirit are linked to prophecies concerning the Messiah. The first reference is from **Isaiah chapter 11**: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD — and he (the Branch) will delight in the fear of the LORD” (*Isaiah 11:1-3*).

These verses refer to the kingly line of David, who was the son of Jesse. When God made His covenant with David, He said, “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish ... the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son” (*II Samuel 7:12-14*).

God wanted the Israelites to know that the Messiah, who would be in the lineage of Jesse, would be filled with the Spirit of the LORD. Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy, which helps us to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnate life of the Messiah.

The second passage is from **Isaiah 42**. This is one of the passages we thought about in part three. “Here is my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his name, the nations will put their hope” (*Isaiah 42:1-4*).

Here again the Spirit is closely associated with the Servant/Messiah. The Holy Spirit is, in fact, the energizing force behind the work of the Messiah. In explaining His ministry, Jesus said that He could “do nothing by himself” (*John 5:19, 30*) and that He only did those things which the Father wanted Him to do and the Spirit enabled Him to do. The point is that Jesus, during His life as a man, did not utilize His Godly powers. Rather He lived with the resources provided to him by the Holy Spirit.

Notice that the word “justice” appears three times in the passage. “Justice” was one of the major concerns of the Father because the fallenness of mankind had quickly led to interpersonal relationships which were characterized by unfairness, selfishness, greed, exploitation, and cruelty. The word, “justice,” refers to the desire of the Father to have a world system in which people are at peace, and who demonstrate love and compassion toward each other, and maintain harmonious relations. According to Isaiah chapter 11, the establishment of “justice” among people would be one of the goals of the Messiah.

Verse 2 explains that the Servant/Messiah would not be boisterous and noisy, or draw unnecessary attention to Himself. Rather, He would carry out His work quietly, at the personal level. Spiritual work is typically done one-on-one quietly. Notice that the Servant/Messiah will work with those who are “bruised” and barely “smoldering,” a reference to those who are weak and are experiencing injustice and oppression. The passage makes clear that this Servant of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be both faithful and effective in His ministry. These verses from Isaiah are quoted in the Gospel of Matthew as explanation of Jesus’ ministry (*see Matthew 12:18-21*).

The third passage is in **Isaiah chapter 61**. “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, and to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair” (*Isaiah 61:1-3a*).

There are two objectives expressed in this passage. The first is “to preach good news to the poor,” and the second is “to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God.” Jesus read the first part of the passage at the beginning of His public ministry, after which He said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (*Luke 4:18-21*). During His years on earth, Jesus was concerned about the preaching of the “good news.” The second objective did not apply to His incarnational ministry. “The day of vengeance” will come at the end of the age. The point of the passage is that the “Spirit of the Sovereign LORD” would be the driving force behind both of these emphases.

During His years on earth Jesus lived and ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is this same Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to give to His followers. He said, “I am going to him who sent me, ... I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you” (*John 16:7*).

Jesus did not explain to His disciples why the Spirit would not be able to come until after His separation for them. However, we can surmise the reason: As long as Jesus was on earth, He would be limited physically to one place at any one time. Since it was God’s desire to dwell with all followers wherever they might live, God had to have some way by which He could simultaneously relate to people wherever they might be. If God was going to take His dwelling with mankind to a higher level, then a new kind of relationship was required. This is what Jesus was explaining to His disciples when He said, “It is for your good that I am going away.”

Jesus gave the disciples a description of the work of the Counselor who would come. “When he comes,” Jesus said, “he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment, ... He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, ... He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (*John 16:8-14*).

At this point in time, the disciples had only a very limited understanding of what Jesus was about to endure. They did not know that a short time after this conversation, Jesus would be arrested, condemned to die, crucified, and buried. Neither did the disciples anticipate the resurrection of Jesus, nor His ascension, nor did they understand the future ministry of the Holy Spirit as explained by Jesus.

The three days between the arrest of Jesus and His resurrection were emotionally traumatic for the disciples, but the 50 days between the resurrection and Pentecost must have filled them with unimaginable joy because Jesus was alive and was with them. “On one occasion, while he was eating with them, Jesus gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (*Acts 1:4-5*). He also said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (*Acts 1:8*). God was about to advance them to the next level in His program of spiritual restoration.

On the day of Pentecost, when a number of the followers of Jesus were “all together in one place, suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (*Acts 2:1-4*).

A crowd gathered in bewilderment when they heard the sounds of the many languages, and this led to a sermon by Peter. He applied the words of the prophet Joel, spoken several hundred years earlier, to the situation. “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” According to the following verses, “all people” included “sons and daughters, young men and old men, and servants, both men and women.” God’s Spirit would be poured out on all people for a specific purpose: that “everyone who called on the name of the Lord would be saved” (*Acts 2:17-21; Joel 2:28-32*).

In his conclusion to his sermon, Peter invited his listeners to respond: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call” (*Acts 2:38-39*).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs after people repent of their sins. With the Holy Spirit there comes spiritual regeneration and a new relationship with God. In His conversation with the Jewish religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus said, “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” because “that which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (*John 3:5-6*). These words mean that the believer’s whole spiritual existence depends on the activity of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus had His conversation with His disciples in the upper room, He stated that the Father “will give you another Counselor to be with you forever” (*John 14:16*). There are two thoughts worth highlighting from this statement. First, we learn that the Spirit is a gift from the Father. The initiative is not with man. The Spirit’s presence cannot be earned. Secondly, we learn that the Holy Spirit, once it has entered into the life of a person, is present “forever.” It is the presence of the Holy Spirit that conveys eternal life.

The outpouring of the Spirit was a major advance in God’s program to dwell with His people. This can be seen in both its individual and corporate results. For example, the Apostle Paul, in three passages, identified the believer’s physical body with the temple of the living God. When the Spirit is present, God is present (*see I Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19, and II Corinthians 6:16*). In backing up that assertion, Paul attributed to the Holy Spirit what God had said in the Old Testament, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they will be my people” (*Leviticus 26:12*).

The Apostle Peter wrote that believers, “like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house (or temple)” in which they can offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” (*I Peter 2:5*). Paul also spoke about this in his letter to the Ephesian Church. He wrote that both Jewish and Gentile believers were “fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” and that, “in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit” (*Ephesians 2:19-22*).

In the Old Testament, the cloud which hovered over the tabernacle assured the Israelites that God was with them. In our time, God has provided us with the same kind of assurance through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. God is now dwelling in the people of His Church, which is the body of Christ.

The Orthodox Jews would like to build another temple some day in the hopes that God would again dwell among them. Of course, they don't realize that Jesus has already opened the way for God to dwell in His people through the Holy Spirit. Neither do they realize that some day there will be new heavens and a new earth, and a new temple in which God will, transparently and in the fullness of His glory, dwell with His people forever (see Revelation 21-22).

I hope this lesson has helped you recognize all that God has done to be "Immanuel" in our lives.