

J D Greear – Jesus, Continued

Why the Spirit inside you is better than Jesus beside you

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Baptist pastor in N Carolina, with PhD in Systematic Theology. Writing for hard working evangelicals who are trying to do too much in their own strength, living an intellectual faith with no dimension of relational experience. This was him.

The HS shows up 59 times in Acts, more than twice per chapter, and in nearly 40 of those he is speaking. *The HS tends to be the forgotten member of the Trinity. Most Christians know he's there, but they are unclear about exactly what he does or how to interact with him – or if that's even possible.* Yet he is so important that Jesus told his disciples to do nothing till he came, and that it was to our advantage he went away; the Spirit's presence inside them would be better than his presence inside them. Is your connection to the HS so strong that you can say this? *Is Christianity a set of beliefs to which you adhere and a lifestyle to which you conform, or is it a dynamic relationship in which you walk with the Spirit and move in his power?*

I : THE MISSING SPIRIT

John 16.7 – it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. 'Religion is what happens when the Spirit has left the building' – Bono

In scripture, Word & Spirit always go together – it is the Spirit who helps us to understand and obey the Word

- Jn 15.26 – the Advocate will testify about me
- Jn 16.24 – he will receive from me what he will make known to you
- Jn 14.26 – he will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you
- Jn 16.8 – he will prove the world to be wrong about sin, righteousness, judgment
- Jn 15.5 – apart from me you can do nothing

The Spirit brings the Word alive in us.

Eph 3.18-19 – Paul prays that they will grasp how wide, long, high, deep is the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. He uses the vb *ginosko*, which refers to an internalized knowledge gained through experience. There's another word in Gk, *oida*, which refers to facts, data and cognitive pieces. Paul wants us to have a knowledge of the love of God that we *experience* deep within our soul, not just know about. When we do, we will be *filled with all the fullness of God*.

Christians tend to focus either on the Word – they know the Spirit is there, but have no real interaction with him. Like me and my pituitary gland – I know its in there somewhere, and that it's necessary for bodily growth and life, but I have no real interaction with it. Its work remains invisible and undetected...

Or on the Spirit – looking for signs, stirrings, circumstances through which God 'speaks' to them.

But Word & Spirit work inseparably. *Biblical knowledge apart from the Spirit is impotent* – like a toaster without a plug.

Why is it to our advantage that Jesus went so the Spirit could come?

1. The Spirit can speak the Word more powerfully than Jesus, because he can speak it into our hearts at just the right moment (Jn 14.25-26; 16.5-14; 1 Jn 27-28)
2. The Spirit enables us to live victoriously over sin (Rom 7.24, 8.37).
3. The Spirit gives us the words to speak on mission (1k 12.12).

Instead of Jesus beside us, coaching us, we have the Spirit within us, working in and through us. The Spirit makes the Word personal to us.

Dangers of superstitious reliance on coincidences as guidance. We don't know how the apostles sensed the guidance of the Spirit in Acts – no standard mechanism. Luke doesn't tell us how the Spirit spoke; just that he did. It's a mystery; we are given a model, not a formula. The Bible, by contrast, is clear and reliable (2 Pet 1.16-19).

I've heard the average church in our day described like a football game: 22 people in desperate need of rest surrounded by 22,000 in desperate need of exercise.

1. Spiritual gifts are given for mission – in Acts 2 the Spirit spoke in all languages, ie to reach all peoples. This is what Jesus had said – Acts 1.8, you will receive power when the HS has come on you, and you will be my witnesses...’. So spiritual gifts serve the larger purpose of getting the gospel to the ends of the earth.
2. The Spirit gives power to prophesy – Acts 2.7 (quoting Joel). Every time the Spirit fills people in Luke/Acts, they proclaim the Word of God to others (regardless of their personality type!). Eg John Baptist (Lk 1.15-17); Elizabeth (1.41); Xechariah (1.7); disciples (Acts 2.4); Peter (4.8); disciples (4.31); Paul (9.17-20). The Spirit of God in the heart produces the Word of God on the tongue.

Witnessing with our lives? Trying to share the gospel without using words is like watching a newscast with the sound turned off. I may realise that the newscaster looks excited, but I don't know why. And if he's telling me about danger headed my direction, I'd like to know specifically what he is saying. It's like, 'tell me your phone number. If necessary, use digits.' A generous, humble gracious, sacrificial, holy life can wonderfully complement the proclaimed gospel, but it can never substitute for it.

No time? Nope – the idea is not that you add a program of evangelism to your busy schedule, but that you do normal life with gospel intentionality. Spurgeon: 'every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor. You either try to spread abroad the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all.'

Doing greater works?

Matt 11.11 – whoever is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist. Who's the least gifted Christian on the planet? Me, perhaps? And yet that still puts me above John... Because I have the Spirit of God permanently fused to my soul.

John 14.12 greater works than these. Leon Morris suggests he means through the adding of believers – for more even on the day of Pentecost alone than in the whole of Jesus's earthly ministry; and through working in a much wider geographical area.

Healing – Luke points out even Jesus only healed through the power of the Spirit, not through any power of his own (eg 5.17). We have the same power he had. In Acts Luke gives many examples of parallels between the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of the early church.

God's greater works are not a thing of the past – God rebukes his people for thinking his acts were only in the past through Amos (5.5-6) – don't seek Bethel (Jacob's encounter with God) or Gilgal (entering into the Promised Land) or Beersheba (God delivers Abraham) – don't go back to places; 'seek the Lord and live.' Whenever people enshrine past events, he destroys them:

- The shrines erected around the bronze serpent he'd used to heal their suffering, 2 Kings 18.4
- Shiloh, where his presence first dwelt in the Promised Land (Ps 78.60, Jer 7.12)
- Ark of the Covenant – he hid it, Jer 3.16
- Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida, in which Jesus did most of his works, no longer exist (Mat 11.21-23)

LUKE	ACTS
Jesus' birth comes through the Holy Spirit "overshadowing" Mary. His ministry begins when the Holy Spirit descends upon him at his baptism (3:22). ⁵	The church in Acts is born through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (2:1-4).
Jesus' first sermon explains how the Spirit had come upon him to set the captives free (4:16-19).	Peter's first sermon explains how the Spirit's power had come upon the church to testify to Jesus (2:14-36).
Immediately after his baptism, Jesus is driven into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Luke notes that he did so "full of the Holy Spirit," which was part of the reason he so successfully resisted the temptations (4:1).	The apostles are baptized in the Spirit and almost immediately get dragged in front of the Sanhedrin, in whom the power of Satan is at work. The Holy Spirit fills them with boldness so that they can respond to their accusers (4:8).
Jesus gets sent out by the Spirit to travel around Israel, preaching the gospel (4:16).	Jesus tells the apostles that the Spirit will take them around the world, preaching the gospel (1:8).
Numerous followers prophesy in the power of the Spirit about Jesus (e.g., 1:39-45; 2:25-35).	Peter tells the first church gathered at Pentecost that the evidence that the Holy Spirit is on them is their prophesying about Jesus by the Holy Spirit (2:17-18). (This happens throughout Acts, e.g., 11:28; 21:11.)
The Spirit of God fills Jesus to preach the gospel (4:14). He tells his disciples to depend on the Spirit for that same filling (12:11-12).	The disciples experience this filling frequently (4:31; 7:55).
The Spirit of God comes upon Jesus to empower him to work justice and mercy on earth, to do things like "set the oppressed free" (4:18).	The apostle Paul frees a girl from material and spiritual bondage by the power of the Spirit (16:16-34).
The Holy Spirit fills Jesus with joy so that he can rejoice in the midst of opposition and persecution (10:21-22).	The Spirit fills the disciples with joy in the face of grave danger (5:42).

God is a God for the present.

God doesn't need you

It's easy to feel guilty over what we are not doing in the kingdom of God. We start off passionate, we end up feeling paralysed by the weight of it all. His own despair (how could he take his wife out to dinner, or go on vacation, or enjoy his nice house, when the needs of the world are so great?) drove him to the scriptures – where he discovered: *God doesn't need you!* He was overestimating what he had to contribute; God is not looking for helpers to assist him in saving the world – he's not looking for people to supply his needs. Which doesn't mean he's not calling us to be sacrificial, it means he's not short on money, talent, time. 'He has never commanded us to go save the world *for* him; he has called us to *follow* him as he saves the world *through* us.' 77. God doesn't call us from a place of need; we call to him. He can make worlds out of words, feed thousands with a few loaves and fish, summon rich enemy kings to pay for his building programs... His first assignment to the disciples was: Do nothing. Wait – Lk 24.49.

God multiplies our efforts – all this started with a bunch of undereducated, poor, powerless workers from the sticks in Judea. Philip was told to leave the revival in Samaria (Acts 8) and go along a desert road – where he met an Ethiopian, who according to Eusebius went home and established the first church in Africa. The key – obedience.

God gives us rest – Ps 127.1-2, unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain. There's no reason to feel guilty about what you are *not* doing if you *are* doing what God has commanded you to do. Not every assignment has your name on it. Faithfulness is our measure of success.

We are called to active waiting – depending on God, looking for his guidance. No use getting burned out taking on burdens that belong only to God. *Constant feelings of guilt, paralysis, and restlessness are dead give-aways of the co-Messiah complex*, 84. You'll never know how to balance rest and labor, enjoyment and sacrifice – and you probably can't sleep either – gods have a universe to run! We offer ourselves, and we wait on God – we are to be grace-driven and gift-driven, not guilt-driven. The keys are sacrifice and surrender.

II : EXPERIENCING THE HOLY SPIRIT

Many Christians equate the presence of God with a mysterious, tingly feeling you get; with a feeling of peace; with a powerful psychosomatic manifestation during a prayer time. In fact we experience the Spirit's presence in 6 ways:

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| 1. The gospel | 3. Our giftings | 5. Our spirit |
| 2. The Word of God | 4. The church | 6. Our circumstances |

GOSPEL: Eph 3 – being filled with the fullness of God = being filled with the Spirit. We receive the Spirit by believing in the gospel; through faith. We grow the fruit of the Spirit not by concentrating on producing those attributes but by becoming aware of God's full acceptance of us in the gospel. The gospel is a relationship.

WORD: The Spirit guides primarily through the Word, not through coincidences or feelings.

GIFTINGS: We discover these as we pursue our responsibilities; they usually appear at the confluence of what we are passionate about, what we are good at, and the affirmation of others. They work in our secular vocations! If you know God has appointed you to do something, anointed you for it, and is working in you to accomplish it, that produces enormous confidence.

CHURCH: Prophecy – through preaching, words of wisdom and knowledge.

OUR SPIRIT: burdens as we pray, insights into people/situations, holy ambitions, dreams/visions.

CIRCUMSTANCES: hold your interpretations loosely; obstacles don't mean a closed door, and an open door doesn't mean guidance. Following the Spirit is more than reacting to circumstances; and God can use even sinful choices to accomplish his will.

III : SEEKING THE HOLY SPIRIT

When you can't feel God

When the HS moves in power – *revival is the intensification of the normal operations of the HS.*

Commands –

- Ps 2.8 I will make the nations your inheritance
- Mt 9.38 for workers in the harvest field
- Acts 1.8 – you will receive power to witness
- Mt 28.18 – make disciples

Pursue the normal means of grace – repentance, faithful preaching, saturating yourself in the gospel continuously, persisting in prayer.