

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

“For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” —I Timothy 2:5,6

ALL are born with an inherent tendency to worship a higher power—a Supreme Being. Humanity, in its desire to worship, has formulated all sorts of crude and misleading conceptions concerning deity. Some, even whole nations at times, have tried to dismiss the idea of God, and to get along without religion, but sooner or later come back to the worship of some kind of a higher power. Others, in their anxiety not to overlook any advantage that might accrue to them from allegiance to deity, have had a multiplicity of gods. The Athenians of old even went so far as to erect an idol to the “unknown God.”—Acts 17:23

The true Deity of the Bible has been an “unknown God” to most people in all ages, and is even today. At this time in the world’s history when powerful forces are attempting to push aside the God of the Bible and set up, instead, worship of a pagan god, what could be more appropriate than to re-examine the scriptural testimony concerning the God of Christianity so that we who insist on continuing to worship this true God may be able to do so understandingly, and “in spirit and in truth.”—John 4:23,24; Jer. 9:24; John 17:3; Neh. 8:8,12

That more or less confusion exists relative to the God of the Bible is apparent from the many conflicting ideas extant concerning him. However, it is not necessary that we examine the merits of these conflicting theories in order to know what the Bible really teaches on the subject. It is better, rather, to go direct to the Bible itself; and when we do, there comes to light the fact that there is but one God, whose name is Jehovah; and that Christians of this age are entitled to think of him and address him as their Heavenly Father.

The Bible also tells us of the “Son of God,” who is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Savior of the world. The first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John states that Jesus, in his prehuman existence was known as the “*Logos*,” that is, the “Word,” or mouthpiece of Jehovah, the Creator. In his relationship to mankind, as Savior and Redeemer, Jesus is prophetically spoken of as the “Prince of Peace”; the “Mighty God”; “Emmanuel”; “Michael”; “King of kings”; “Mediator”; etc. These various titles do not describe different gods, but various characteristics of this one Son of God, whom the Father has commanded shall be honored even as he himself is honored.—Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23; Dan. 12:1; Rev. 19:16; I Tim. 2:5

The Bible also speaks of the “Holy Spirit.” Through a misunderstanding the Holy Spirit has been construed to be a personality, a third mighty being, equal in power and glory to the Father and Son, yet in some mysterious way, one in substance with them. But this view is not scriptural, as we shall see. Rather, the Holy Spirit mentioned so prominently in the Scriptures is the holy power or influence of God—a power which operates for the accomplishment of the divine purposes wherever and whatever they may be. This fact will become readily apparent as we examine the scriptural testimony appertaining thereto.

Jehovah, a God of Love

In a more or less widespread misconception of Jehovah, he is thought of as being austere and unsympathetic, demanding cruel punishment for all who deviate from the doing of his will. In

this view, Jesus is looked upon as the loving God of the Bible, the One who stepped between the stern Creator and man as a Redeemer and Savior of the human race. This viewpoint is well illustrated by a story that is told of a little girl who was asked what would be the first thing she would do when she got to heaven, and her reply was that she would hide behind Jesus so God would not see her.

In our search of the Scriptures to find what they say about the “God of love and mercy,” it is important, first of all, to note that Jehovah himself, as well as Jesus, is clearly shown to possess the quality of love. In Titus 3:4, in fact, he is spoken of as our “Savior,” and is there said to be kind and loving. This, the scriptural view of Jehovah, reveals him as being the Author of the plan of salvation, and Jesus as heartily co-operating. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16; I John 4:9,10; Hebrews 10:5-7

The name Jehovah means the Self-existent, or Eternal One. (*Dr. James Strong*) In the Bible it is applied exclusively to the Creator, the great First Cause of everything. “From everlasting to everlasting,” is one of the scriptural expressions used by the Holy Spirit to emphasize that Jehovah is not a created being, but the Creator of all things. (Ps. 90:2) The name Jehovah is never applied to Jesus.

The name Jehovah is, of course, an Old Testament word. It is not used by the New Testament writers, evidently for the reason that they considered it too sacred a name to translate into another language, or, perhaps because there was no suitable Greek word to use in translating it. But this does not mean that Jehovah is merely a tribal god of the Jews, as some would try to make us believe. He is the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and the one in whom all animate creation lives and moves and has its being.—Acts 17:24-28

In the King James Version of the Old Testament the name Lord is often used to translate the word Jehovah. When this is done, the word Lord appears in large and small capital letters, so the student has no difficulty in identifying it. By noting this, it will be found that the name Jehovah is used a great deal in the Old Testament, but is applied exclusively to the Creator—never to other gods, whether good or evil.

Other Gods in the Old Testament

However, there are other Hebrew words in the Old Testament translated Lord and God. These, while sometimes applied to Jehovah, are also sometimes prophetically applied to Jesus; sometimes to one or more of the angels; and sometimes even to heathen rulers, and heathen gods. There are three of these Hebrew words—*adon*, *Adonai*, and *elohim*. The most frequent application of *adon* is to great and mighty ones of the earth. *Adonai* is always applied to deity, but not always to Jehovah. For example in Psalms 110:5, we read, “the Lord at thy right hand **shall strike through kings** in the day of his wrath.” Here the name Lord is a translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*, and refers to Christ, while the pronoun “thy” refers to Jehovah.

The Hebrew word *elohim* in the Old Testament is a plural form most frequently translated “God” and “Gods,” and is sometimes used with reference to Jehovah, sometimes prophetically of Christ, occasionally, by way of deference, to magistrates, sometimes to angels, and sometimes to false gods. We mention the use of these various Hebrew words translated Lord and God in order to emphasize the fact that Jehovah is the one and only **Almighty God**, who is “from everlasting to everlasting.” There are other lords and other gods referred to in the Scriptures, but Jehovah, even when mentioned as *Adonai*, or *Elohim*, is **The Adonai**, and **The Elohim**.

Attributes of Jehovah's Character

Jehovah has been belittled in the minds of many by a traditional misconception of his personality that has been handed down to us from the Dark Ages, in which he was depicted as an old man with a beard. The Bible does not attempt to give us a description of the bodily appearance of the great Eternal One, because our finite minds could not conceive of his glory even though it were described to us.

The Bible does, however, reveal a great deal concerning the outstanding attributes of the divine character. It tells us of his infinite wisdom, justice, love, and power. These attributes of Jehovah's character are in perfect balance; and by their manifestation through his dealings with the human race, his glory is revealed. However, it is largely to the degree that we understand the divine plan for the human race, that we can appreciate the beauty of the divine character.

While the Bible, of course, does say that God is love, that he is just, and wise and powerful, yet it is only as we see the outworking of these glorious attributes in the Creator's designs toward the children of men that they become truly meaningful to us. While we can, it is true, behold the power of Jehovah in the works of creation with which we are surrounded, yet God's plan for a resurrection of the dead; and especially his resurrection of Jesus, is a display of his power surpassing even that of his creative work.—Eph. 1:19,20

Without a knowledge of God's plan as a whole, one might wonder why he does not use his power to put an immediate stop to human suffering, especially in view of the fact that he is reputed to be loving as well as powerful. But we must remember that God is just and wise, as well as powerful and loving. Everything he does must be fully in harmony with all these attributes of his character.—Ps. 89:14

Had God been merely loving and merciful he would not have condemned our first parents to death, although he had told them if they sinned they would die. One of the fundamentals of God's law is that the "wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6:23) His justice, therefore, demanded that our first parents pay the penalty of their sin. Some may argue that God's plan to raise the dead is, in effect, a setting aside of God's justice in demanding the death sentence for the violation of his law.

But that is where God's wisdom and love enter into the arrangement. Had justice alone been considered, no provision would have been made to set aside that original sentence of death; but divine wisdom and love found a way whereby God could be just, yet use his power to restore the dead to life. This way is through Christ, the Redeemer. The first feature of the redemptive work of Christ is referred to in the Bible as a "ransom," which means a corresponding price. It was divine love that made the provision of the ransom, for the Scriptures say that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John 3:16; Heb. 2:9

Nor does this mean that Jehovah has changed his mind concerning the "wages of sin." Divine wisdom also plays an important role in connection with the Creator's attitude toward his human creatures. God saw that it would be highly desirable that man obtain a thorough knowledge of sin and its dire consequences.

The manner in which evil was permitted is a further display of God's infinite wisdom. He could have created enough human beings to fill the whole earth, and thus have the planet populated without the process of procreation. This would have meant that each one would have been individually on trial for life. In this case, if those who transgressed were to be redeemed

from death, it would have required a separate Redeemer for each one of them. Hence, we can see the wisdom in the divine arrangement whereby Adam was held the responsible head of the entire human race. Thus his sin not only brought condemnation upon all, in that from the very start they were born imperfect, but it also made possible the redemption of all through the death of but one Redeemer.—Rom. 5:12

Meanwhile, as each generation of the human race comes upon the scene, it receives an experimental knowledge of sin and its results, and then passes away temporarily in the sleep of death, to be restored during the coming kingdom period when their present experience will be a most valuable asset to them in weighing the advantages of obedience to the divine law then in force.

By this infinitely wise arrangement every child of Adam will be given an experimental knowledge of both good and evil, and thus will be equipped to choose intelligently between the two. Those who choose the good, and accept of God's grace through Christ, the Redeemer, will then live forever.

God's Diversified Wisdom

In Ephesians 3:10, Paul speaks of the "manifold" wisdom of God. The **Emphatic Diaglott** translation of this text uses the word "diversified." The apostle also shows that this "diversified" wisdom of God is being manifested even to the angelic beings in the universe, being revealed to them specially through God's dealings with the church of this age. This means that God's creatures on the other planes of existence are being benefited by observing the outworking of the divine plan for the recovery of the human race from the results of sin.

In the selection and preparation of the church to co-operate with Jesus in the future kingdom work of rehabilitating the lost race, there is a still further manifestation of divine wisdom. How wise that representatives of the fallen race should be chosen, tested, and then equipped to deal with and bless their fellows in the mediatorial arrangements of the new age.

And the qualification test placed upon these is so wise; namely, that they love God's will supremely and their fellow men so unselfishly that they gladly lay down their lives in service now—imperfect though that service may be—in order that they may be exalted to a glorious future service which will actually give life to all mankind. It is this that Paul refers to as a baptism for the dead.—I Cor. 15:29

Yes, those who will follow in Jesus' footsteps now, will reign with him in his thousand-year kingdom. The purpose of that kingdom is the restoration of the entire human race to the lost earthly paradise. During those thousand years Christ and the church will serve as a mediatorial board to instruct and bless the world; and finally, to restore the people to atonement with the Creator.—Rev. 20:4; Acts 3:20,21; Acts 15:16,17

Thus we see that God's plan displays his love, his justice, his power, and his wisdom. The more we learn about that plan the better we can see God's glorious character revealed therein. In the light of God's plan even the present severe experiences through which the human race is passing, are understandable, because we can view them from the standpoint of the wonderful future provision God has made for the blessing of all the people.

JESUS

Jehovah of the Old Testament Scriptures is the Heavenly Father of the New Testament. Thus, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven.” Jesus is the Son of God, this being the relationship he has always enjoyed with Jehovah, the Creator. The Scriptures make it plain that Jesus had been actively associated with his Father since the earliest dawn of creation. They tell us, in fact, that he was the “beginning of the creation of God”(Rev. 3:14), and also, “the firstborn of every creature.”—Col. 1:15

These passages indicate that Jesus was the direct creation of the Father, and therefore properly spoken of as his “**only begotten** Son.” The apostle also tells us that Jesus was the active agent of Jehovah in all the creative work. He says: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible, and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him.”—Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; John 1:3; Eph. 3:9

Another interesting passage bearing on this same point is the first chapter of the Gospel according to John. Here, Jesus in his prehuman existence is referred to as the “Word” of God. Verse 14 says that the “Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The term “Word” here used is a translation of the Greek word *Logos*. Ancient kings when addressing their people, customarily sat behind a lattice in front of which stood a representative who proclaimed the king’s message to the people. The representative was styled the *logos*—the king’s word, or mouthpiece.

With this illustration in mind the title *Logos*, when applied to God’s only begotten Son, is seen to be peculiarly fitting. God’s Son, as the *Logos*, has always been the active agent of Jehovah, and the Bible assures us that he always will be. Not only in the work of creation, but in the call and preparation of the church in this age, and also in the gigantic task of restitution scheduled for the millennial age, this beloved Son of God acts for the Father, expressing his will, and doing his work. In the millennial age he will speak peace to all the nations, and they will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.—Micah 4:14; Ps. 46:9

Speaking of that future glorious triumph of the divine cause in the earth, under the leadership of God’s Son, the Apostle Paul says: “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he [Jehovah] hath put all things under his [Jesus’] feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him [Jesus], it is manifest that he [Jehovah] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Jesus]. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him [Jehovah] that put all things under him, that God [Jehovah] may be all in all.—I Cor. 15:25-28

Considerable confusion has resulted from an inaccurate translation of John 1:1,2, where the King James Version makes it appear that the “Word,” or *Logos*, is the same personality as God. The “Word was God,” is the way this faulty translation puts it. But in the original Greek text the matter is made clear. There a distinction is made between the *Logos*, who was “**a**” God, and the Father, who is referred to as “**The**” God. The translation should read, “In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was **a** God. The same was in the beginning with **The** God.”

The Greek word *Theos* is the one in this text that is translated God. *Theos* simply means a mighty one, and it must be determined from the text in which it is used, whether the reference is to Jehovah, the great and Almighty One, or to his Son, Christ Jesus, formerly the *Logos*, who is “**a**” mighty One. As a matter of fact, this same word *Theos* is used in II Corinthians 4:4, where the reference is to Satan, the “god [theos] of this world.” However, in the Greek text, the definite article “**The**,” makes it clear who is meant.

Thus we see that it was the *Logos*, as “a” God, the one who was the active agent of Jehovah in the creative work, who was “made flesh.” It was not Jehovah, the Almighty God. It is interesting to note, in this connection, the form of expression used in the Genesis account of creation, where we read, “Let US make man in OUR image,” etc. Here Jehovah is speaking to the *Logos*, outlining and directing the work in hand.—Gen. 1:26

And, in keeping with this spirit of oneness and co-operation, when the time came for fallen man to be redeemed, the *Logos* “humbled himself,” becoming a servant in lowly form, for the suffering of death upon the cross. (Phil. 2:7,8) During the whole period of his earthly ministry Jesus remained humble, always reminding those to whom he ministered that the words which he spoke, and the works which he did, were not his own, but those of the Heavenly Father. This was in full keeping with his plain assertion, “My Father is greater than I.”—John 14:28

Jesus' Oneness with the Father

Jesus declared to his disciples, “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30) This statement has been misused in an effort to prove that Jesus and his Father were one and the same Person. But all will concede, we believe, that there are forms of oneness other than that of a similarity of being. In the seventeenth chapter of John, Jesus is quoted as praying for the oneness of his church. In this prayer he asks his Father to bring about the same kind of oneness between his church and himself as existed between himself and his Father. This, obviously, is a oneness of will and purpose.

It is in this same sense, according to these words of Jesus, that he and the Father are one. This is clearly borne out by many things the Master said. During his ministry he emphasized over and over that he came not to do his own will, but the will of the Heavenly Father who sent him. When Jesus was facing mockery, ignominy, and death, he asked the Father to let this cup pass from him if it were possible. “Nevertheless,” he said, “not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42; Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; 6:38) The Heavenly Father’s will was ever paramount in the Master’s life, hence he could truly say, “I and my Father are one.”

This is also the reason Jesus could truthfully say, “He who hath seen me hath seen the Father.” (John 14:9) That this statement of Jesus does not mean that in seeing him one actually saw Jehovah, is clearly shown by both the Old and the New Testament statements to the effect that no one can look upon God and live. (Exod. 33:20; I Tim. 6:16; 1:17; John 1:18) If those who looked upon Jesus in the flesh thereby actually saw God, it would mean that God, the creator of the universe, is a human being. What Jesus meant was that his life and ministry served to reveal the Father to those who had “eyes to see.”

And besides, it should be remembered that Jesus in the flesh was an exact counterpart of father Adam, of whom it is said, that he was created in the “image of God.” This, of course, refers to a moral image, not a physical likeness. It means that Adam was capable of discerning between right and wrong, as those principles were enunciated in the law of his Creator. This is the reason he was held responsible for his sin.

Jesus, like Adam before the fall, was also in the image of God—a perfect, sinless human being. It was necessary that Jesus be thus, else he could not have redeemed Adam and his race from death. He came to earth as a representative of the Heavenly Father, and everything he did and said was just what the Father would have done and said had he **personally** visited the earth. Thus it was true that, in a very wonderful way, those who saw him saw the Father. It was the only way that a fallen human being could see God and live.

This scriptural understanding of the identity of Jesus as the beloved and only begotten of the Father, should greatly enhance our appreciation of him, and give him the place in our hearts he merits and deserves—second only to Jehovah himself. We should honor the Son **even** as we honor the Father. (John 5:23) God so highly regarded and honored the Son that he even commanded the angels to worship him, (Heb. 1:6,7) If we take the view that Jesus was God himself, then we have the inconsistency of the Master praying to himself, as well as other incongruities in connection with his earthly life and ministry.

Jesus Now Highly Exalted

The Bible shows that in carrying out the divine plan of redemption for the human race, the only begotten Son of God has experienced two changes of nature. Before his human existence, he was a glorious spirit being, next in honor and authority to the Heavenly Father himself. Jesus referred to his prehuman glory, when he prayed, “O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:5) That glory was laid aside when the *Logos* was “made flesh.” Jesus was made flesh, the apostle explains, “for the suffering of death.” (Heb. 2:9,14) As a spirit being he could not give himself as a corresponding price for father Adam and his race, so he humbled himself that he might die as a ransom to save the human race from eternal destruction.—Phil. 2:7, 8; I Tim. 2:5,6

In raising the Master from the dead the Father did more than restore his Son to his former position of glory in the heavenly realm. He highly exalted him to a place next to himself on the throne of the universe. He exalted him to the divine nature, also, so that now he is truly the divine Christ—the “express image of the Father’s person.” (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34,36; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3,13) Hallelujah, what a Savior!

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Through mistranslation and otherwise, many have been led erroneously to believe that the Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of a trinity of God; but the Scriptures, when properly understood, do not warrant this thought. One of the mistranslations contributing to this misunderstanding is where the Greek word *pneuma* is rendered by the English word “ghost.” This makes the Holy Spirit to be a Holy “Ghost.”

But this is a gross mistranslation, and so recognized by the American Revision Committee who translated the Revised Version. In a number of instances, both the British and American Revisers corrected “Ghost” to “Spirit.” The American Revisers use the word “Spirit” where the King James Version reads “Ghost.”

The King James Version was translated at a time when superstition was rife, hence the word “Ghost” would command a great deal more respect and reverence than it does today. In those “good old days (?)” ghosts were very real in the minds of most people, yet very mysterious. They were always associated with the thought of personality, and the translators, believing in a **personal** Holy Spirit, conceived the idea of calling it a Holy “Ghost.”

In the Old Testament the word “spirit” is a translation of the Hebrew word *ruach*. The primary significance of this word is wind. We do not mean to imply by this, however, that the Holy Spirit is a holy wind. This is merely the root meaning of the word. Wind is both invisible and powerful, hence the ancients applied this word to various invisible and powerful influences. Since divine

power is exercised through channels and by agencies beyond human sight and understanding, this word *ruach* came to be applied more and more to all of God's dealings.

The word *ruach*, in addition to being translated "spirit," is also translated in the Old Testament by the English words "blast," "breath," "tempest," "mind," "smell," "wind," and "windy." It will be seen that in each of these translations the thought behind the word is that of invisible power, or influence. There is power in the mind, for example, but it is a power that is invisible, and its operation but little understood.

As already noted, in the New Testament the Greek word translated "Spirit," or "Ghost," in the expressions Holy Spirit or Holy "Ghost," is *pneuma*. The primary meaning of this word is also wind, or air. It is the word from which our English word pneumatic is derived. In addition to being translated Spirit and Ghost, it is also translated in the New Testament by the words "life," "spiritual," and sometimes "wind." In Revelation 13:15 it is translated life, and here the reference is to life that is given to the image of the beast."

The Holy Spirit then is the invisible power of God, a power that is manifested in a great variety of ways. Speaking of God's creative power we read that his "Spirit moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen. 1:2) That was a life-giving Power. The influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as Christians is primarily that of God's mind—the power of his expressed will for us.

It helps in an understanding of what constitutes the Holy Spirit, to contrast what the Scriptures say about it with what they say about the unholy spirit of Satan. Various manifestations of the Holy Spirit are referred to as "The Spirit of Christ," the "Spirit of holiness," the "Spirit of truth," the "Holy Spirit of promise," the "Spirit of meekness," the "Spirit of grace," the "Spirit of prophecy."

The various manifestations of the spirit of Satan are described as the "spirit of fear," the "spirit of bondage," the "spirit of the world," the "spirit of error," the "spirit of divination," the "spirit of antichrist," and the "spirit of slumber." No one would conclude that because the word spirit is thus used to describe the various manifestations of Satan's influence in the world, that there is a personal unholy spirit, that is one in substance with the Devil.

Born of the Spirit

There are a number of expressions used in the Scriptures to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of Christians. One of these is "born." This is a word which suggests the coming into existence of a new life, and this is one of the things accomplished by the Power of the Holy Spirit. This new life, when it comes fully to birth, will be so different from the human life that concerning it Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—John 3:8

The Greek word in the Bible translated "born" is also correctly translated "begotten," and it is necessary to determine from the context which thought is intended by the writer. By observing this distinction we learn that it is not proper to speak of conversion to Christ as being born of the Spirit. When one comes to God in repentance and, through faith in Christ as his Redeemer, surrenders himself in full consecration to do God's will, what occurs is properly described as a "begetting" of the Spirit of God. In other words, a new life is then begun.

But this new life, to continue the symbolism, is merely an embryo. It needs to be nourished by the Word of God, and thus to develop, growing strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. It is not until the resurrection that this new life comes to the birth. Not until then is one truly born

of the Spirit. Not until then are the words of Jesus true that one thus born is able to go and come invisibly as the wind. Thus we see that to note this difference in the use of the words born and begotten gives us a much more comprehensive understanding of what the power of God exercised through his Word accomplishes on behalf of the consecrated followers of the Master.

Baptism of the Spirit

The Scriptures also speak of the “baptism” of the Spirit. The word baptize means to bury, and to be baptized by the Spirit of God simply means to be so fully surrendered to the doing of God’s will that one comes fully under its control, having no will of one’s own. However, from God’s standpoint, the entire church of Christ was baptized by the Spirit at Pentecost, hence there is no necessity for a fresh outpouring of his Spirit upon each individual who consecrates to do his will.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized,” and he explains that for the individual this baptism occurs when one comes into the body of Christ. (I Cor. 12:13) It is a burial of our wills into the will of God as expressed through Christ, the Head of the “body.” When we get this proper viewpoint of what is involved in the baptism of the Spirit we will not be looking for repetitions of the spectacular manifestation of the power of God which occurred at Pentecost.

When we understand what to expect as a result of placing ourselves under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we will not be wondering why we cannot speak with tongues as did the disciples at Pentecost and for a short time thereafter. Speaking with tongues as practiced by the Early Church was a necessity at that time. At Pentecost, for example, Jews were gathered at Jerusalem from all parts of the known world. They spoke various languages, yet it was the Lord’s will that they should receive a witness of the truth as proclaimed by the apostles. In order for this to be accomplished, the disciples were miraculously empowered to speak in these various languages. As the church grew, and conversions were made among these various language groups, the need for speaking with tongues no longer existed, for there were disciples among all the various groups capable of witnessing to the Gospel in their native tongues.

Filled with the Spirit

The Scriptures declare, “Be ye filled with the Spirit.” (Eph. 5:18) How void of meaning would this expression be if the Holy Spirit were a person! But when we recognize that it is simply the power, or influence, of God, exercised in the Christian life largely through his written Word, then we can understand how it is possible to have either more or less of the Spirit influencing our lives. To be filled with the Spirit calls for an emptying of self and self-will, and a diligent application of ourselves to the study of God’s Word and to putting into practice all of its righteous precepts.

In the Scriptures, Christians are also said to be “sealed” by the “Holy Spirit of promise.” (Eph. 1:13) God’s Spirit directed the minds of the prophets in writing the Old Testament in which are recorded many promises vouchsafing God’s blessing upon his faithful people. The New Testament was also written under the direct inspiration of the Spirit, or power of God, and it contains additional promises by which God guarantees victory through Christ for every faithful follower of the Master. Thus he “seals” us by his promises; that is, he assures us that if we are faithful to him he will give us grace to help in every time of need, and in the resurrection will give us a crown of life.

The word “witness’ is also used in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. His Spirit bears witness with our spirits, the apostle tells us, “that we are the children of God.” (Rom. 8:16) This too is a very understandable matter. Throughout the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are outlined the various steps and experiences of Christians who are faithful in doing God’s will. Those who find that God is blessing them along the lines outlined by the Spirit through his Word, have thus the witness of the Spirit that they have been accepted into the family of God through the begetting of the Holy Spirit, and thus are sons of God.

All Flesh to be Blessed

God’s Spirit will be poured out in various ways for the blessing of mankind during the Millennium. He will cause the knowledge of his glory to fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9) His power will also operate to restore the dead to life, for the promise is that there “shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.”—Acts 24:15

In a promise of a New Covenant which the Lord will make, first with the house of Israel, and then with the whole world, the statement is made that the Lord will write his law in the hearts of the people. (Jer. 31:31-34) This, too, will result from the operation of his Holy Spirit in the lives of those who obey the laws of Christ’s kingdom.

During the thousand years of Christ’s kingdom Satan will be bound, thus his spirit will not be influencing people to do wrong. Instead, every condition of the new social order will be favorable to the doing of God’s righteous will. Love will take the place of selfishness as a motivating power in all human activity. The people will learn that the greatest and only enduring joy comes from doing good to others rather than from selfishly seeking always to take care of one’s own interests first.

Thus the whole outlook of the human race gradually will be changed as a result of the outpouring of God’s Spirit upon all flesh. How glad we should be that the power of God is thus to be manifested for solving the problems of a distressed and dying race! When the blessings accruing from this outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be recognized as coming from the great and true God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth, the people will be glad to give glory to him, for they will then know that he is truly a God of love.