

Satan knows that if he can get you to fall out of fellowship with other believers-at the very moment when you need fellowship and encouragement the most-then he can probably keep you down and defeated.

Rick Renner

Prayer Study #312

THE MESSIAH AND THE SPIRIT

Dwight A. Pryor

THE ENGLISH WORD *messiah* derives from the Hebrew *mashiach* or “anointed one.” The root, *mashach*, means to smear or spread a substance such as oil or perfume upon someone, to anoint them. In the case of the Messiah of God, the anointing is of the Spirit. To speak of the “Messiah” (“Christ”) is really to refer to the “Spirit-Anointed-One”.

Because Adonai will “*put His Spirit upon*” the Messiah, declares the prophet Isaiah, His chosen servant will “*bring forth justice to the nations*” (42:1). At his inaugural sermon Jesus self-consciously identified with that Messianic agenda when he read from the Isaiah scroll: “*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the humble...*” (61:1).

The inseparability of the Spirit together with the Messiah is not always appreciated in Christian reflections on Jesus. This may be due in part to the fractious debates of the third-to-fifth centuries regarding the full divinity of the Son of God, which subsequently left an indelible inclination upon the Christian mind to emphasize the Divine status of Jesus far more than his gifted humanity. A “God-man” frame of reference can overshadow the “Spirit-Anointed” humanity of Jesus.

JEWISH EXEGESIS LOCATES the first reference to the Messiah and the Spirit at the opening of the Torah. The Spirit that hovered over the chaos and brought order to the creation (Genesis 1:2) was the Spirit of the Messiah. Likewise at the beginning of the New Testament we learn that the birth of the Messiah was also a work of the Spirit. As the Angel of the Lord explained, “*That which is conceived in [Mary] is of the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 1:20). Luke confirms that the Holy Spirit “*came upon*” Mary and the power of the Most High “*overshadowed*” her to produce an anointed child (Luke 1:35), whose name was to be called Yeshua.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus submitted to the immersion that John preached. As he came up out of the water, the anointing “*Spirit of*

God descended upon him” (Luke 3:16) and the Father’s voice from heaven affirmed him, “*Full of the Holy Spirit.*” Jesus then was “*led by the Spirit*” into the wilderness to be tempted by the Adversary (Luke 4:1-2).

He “*returned in the power of the Spirit*” to Galilee (Luke 4:14) to proclaim at the Nazareth synagogue, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...*” (Luke 4:18). Not as God but as the “*Spirit-anointed man*” he healed the diseased and hurting and set free captives to demonic forces. This he did “*By the Spirit of God*” (Matthew 12:28). Seeing the Kingdom advancing in God’s power, he “*rejoiced in the Holy Spirit*” (Luke 10:21).

When Jesus taught, his spoken words were “*spirit and life*” (John 6:63). He taught nothing but his Father’s will and performed no action apart from the Spirit’s leading. Indeed to enter his Kingdom movement-as he challenged the notable teacher of Israel, Nicodemus-one must be “*born of the Spirit*” he said (John 3:5, 8).

Throughout his life, Jesus continually was inspired, informed and empowered by the Holy Spirit. At the end of his life his sacrificial death was atoning because “*through the eternal Spirit [he] offered himself without blemish to God*” (Hebrews 9:14). Further it was the “*Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead*” (Romans 8:11). He was “*exalted at the right hand of God*” where he received from the Father “*the promise of the Holy Spirit*” that he poured out upon his disciples gathered in Jerusalem for Shavu’ot (Acts 2:33).

IN VIEW OF THE Spirit-saturated life and ministry of Messiah Jesus, it is not surprising that he instructed his disciples to tarry until they too were “*clothed with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). The Spirit that had been with them as they walked with Jesus now was to be in them (John 14:17) so that they could continue the redemptive Kingdom work of their Master.

The “*church*” (*ekklesia*) that Jesus promised to build cannot possibly bear adequate witness to him nor represent him without the empowering presence of God’s Holy Spirit. As with the man, Jesus, so with his body, the church. The second appointed Feast of the Lord, Shavu’ot/Pentecost, reminds us of this vital truth.

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