

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 335

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 20:19-23

Topic: Receive The Holy Spirit

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Write To The Author: John Edmiston – johned@aibi.ph

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John 20:19-23 MKJV Then the same day at evening, being the first of the sabbaths, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace to you! (20) And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. (21) Then Jesus said to them again, Peace to you. As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you. (22) And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. (23) Of whomever sins you remit, they are remitted to them. Of whomever sins you retain, they are retained.

It is Sunday evening in Jerusalem, the doors are shut for fear of the Jews and Jesus materializes in their midst in solid form, and (in the other gospels) eats some broiled fish and a honeycomb (Luke 24:42). Jesus resurrection body seems to be both solid enough to eat fish and insubstantial enough to pass through walls. It is the same body of Jesus that was on the cross and in the grave, and it still bore the nail marks. It was not a different body but rather was the same body in a changed state.

In His resurrected form Mary was not allowed to touch Him (but Thomas was), He could materialize in a room or suddenly vanish as on the Emmaus Road. It was a spiritually changed body and His breath could even impart the Holy Spirit. For more on the nature of the resurrection body read 1 Corinthians 15.

This is a commissioning service for the Eleven. It involves:

A blessing "Peace be with you" (repeated twice),

A reminder of the Cross and the cost of discipleship "And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.";

A solemn commissioning "As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you."

An empowering for service "And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit."

And a delegated range of authority: "Of whomever sins you remit, they are remitted to them. Of whomever sins you retain, they are retained."

These five things should be present in every sending out of a Christian worker. No one should go out without a blessing, or without being reminded of the cost, or a solemn charge to service, or the power of the Holy Spirit or a clearly delegated range of spiritual authority.

This was not an elaborate ceremony. It was not held in a church or a synagogue and no high-powered religious authority was present. It was just a band of brothers, in the presence of God. The sending of Paul and Barnabas was similarly informal:

Acts 13:1-3 MKJV And in Antioch some among the existing church were prophets and teachers. (such as Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, So, then, separate Barnabas and Saul to Me for the work to which I have called them. (3) Then having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they let them go.

Here also was a band of spiritual brothers, leading a church together, when God said “send these two as missionaries from your church” and they were prayed for, hands were laid on them, and off they went. This is all that is needed in apostolic work.

While all five aspects mentioned above are important, the one I will focus on today is the command “Receive Holy Spirit” (a literal translation). There is an important receiving of the Holy Spirit that allows us to minister in the same manner that Jesus ministered – and all four gospels and Acts testify to this. “As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you.” - requires anointing. Jesus was anointed, so must be His apostles. In addition Luke says they must be “clothed with power from on high” , Mark says they were to do signs and wonders, Matthew says they are to operate in authority and Acts testifies to Pentecost and to the powerful miracles of the early Church.

Because of the Holy Spirit we are to do “greater works”:

John 14:12-13 MKJV Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes on Me, the works that I do he shall do also, and greater *works* than these he shall do, because I go to My Father. (13) And whatever you may ask in My name, that I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

Since Christian workers are sent in the same manner as Jesus is sent, to do His works and even greater works, then we require His anointing – the powerful baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Without the power of the Holy Spirit we are little better than some New Age philosopher in our ability to tangibly transform people’s lives.

Jesus did not send out the apostles to be “nice encouragers” or even to be psycho therapists. Nor did He commission them to pray in solitude and be quietly holy. The apostles were sent to do works of power and spiritual authority that glorify God – and frankly that is quite scary. I do not pretend to have an extraordinarily powerful anointing, - I have had “bursts” of supernatural power, and seen some healed and quite a number delivered. Yet I would much rather study Hebrew and write academic papers. But God calls us to a more strenuous spirituality than that.

We tend to substitute some much more controllable power for the power of the Holy Spirit – such as brain power, personality power, organizational power, political power, even financial and computing power – anything that will “get the job done” without God having to turn up. This is because we are terribly uncertain that God would turn up for us.

We need to look our doubt and unbelief and spiritual nervousness and inferiority in the eye and stare it down and master it. We cannot let these things dictate how we minister; we have to find the courage to rely on God the Holy Spirit. (Now I freely admit that is easier for me to write than for you to do.) Reliance on the Holy Spirit is easier in one on one, or small group situations, where there is less peer pressure and expectation.

Now I am not saying that you have to do lots of “weird” stuff to be truly ministering as Jesus ministered and for you to be sent as He was sent. But you should know that you are anointed of God, even if your anointing is as wobbly as mine is. (Please pray that it gets more powerful). You should have a sense that you are doing what Jesus would do in your situation and that you do it in the power of God.

Blessings,

John Edmiston

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