

Holy Spirit Part 4 : The Spirit creates Community

1 Kings 8 : 10-11

- God's *shekinah* glory / the full extent of His presence descended on Solomon's temple and filled it.
- But Israel was disobedient to God and He removed His presence from the temple (Ezekiel 10).

John 2 : 19 - 22

- Jesus embodied the temple of God, the place of his full presence.
- The glory of God was manifested once again on earth, not in a building, but in the person of Jesus, the perfect embodiment of God's presence amongst men (John 1 : 14).

1 Corinthians 3 : 16

- Once baptised into the life of Christ, each Christian individually is a temple of God – the place of His presence through the indwelling Spirit.
- But the “you” here is a plural you – the church / family of God is His collective temple, in whom the Spirit dwells.

Ephesians 2 : 19 – 23

- This passage speaks of God creating a new people / family for Himself with Christ as the reference point.
- This family is built on the teachings of the apostles (the scriptures) and rises to be a temple, the place of God's presence on earth.
- The Holy Spirit lives in this temple / the family of God / the church.

The Spirit functions in four main ways to help us live as the new covenant family of God.

1. The Spirit creates unity

Ephesians 4 : 3 – 4

- Paul refers to the “unity of the Spirit” and how important this is.
- Just as there is one church / body there is one Spirit - the Spirit creates unity in the body of Christ.
- The appeal from Paul for the church to be completely united (1 Corinthians 1 : 10) is possible only through being led by the Spirit.

The concern to preserve unity in the church accounts for much of the life and teachings of the early church. A few examples :

- Acts 8 : the Jerusalem leaders were determined that there should be no independent church growing up without the age-old split from Judaism being healed.
- Acts 15 : the Council of Jerusalem decided that the issue of circumcision should not split the church.
- Acts 18 : 21, 20 : 16, etc : Paul constantly returned to Jerusalem after his visits to the gentile churches.

2. The Spirit brings reconciliation

Ephesians 2 : 14-18

- A great wall separated Jews and gentiles in the ancient world – the Law.
- Jews despised gentiles, considering them unclean, and gentiles returned the feeling with interest.
- But in Christ that barrier is broken down, along with the far bigger wall separating both Jew and gentile from God.
- Through incorporation into Christ, the two become one new humanity, having the same access to the Father through the Spirit.

3. The Spirit makes fellowship

2 Corinthians 13 : 14

- The Spirit creates Christian fellowship – He gives a share of himself to all disciples so all alike are partakers of the Spirit.
- The quality of the fellowship in the early church is clear in the early chapters of Acts - early believers were devoted to the fellowship (Acts 2 : 42), and this resulted in communal living and willing sharing of possessions (Acts 2 : 44).
- This level of fellowship is completely foreign in the culture in which we live, and is not possible without the Spirit.

4. The Spirit enables worship

John 4 : 23 - 24

- Earlier on in the passage (vs 10-15) Jesus speaks of the “living water” that he is able to give, referring to the Spirit (John 7 : 37 – 39).
- He then goes on to explain that a time will come when worship of God will not be limited to a physical place, but people will be able to worship wherever they are. How ? Because the Spirit will dwell in God’s people and they will be His “mobile” temple.
- True worship is worship in spirit and truth. The opposite of the “spirit” is the human nature or what the Bible often refers to as “the flesh”. We cannot worship God driven by our fallen human nature – we need to be led by the Spirit.
- Worship in the Spirit happens when we engage with God at the a deep and free level, “through the eyes of our heart” (Ephesians 1 : 18), when “deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42 : 7).
- Worship in truth refers to worship grounded in the teachings of Jesus who is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14 : 6). It involves engaging our mind.
- In other words, Jesus speaks of a time (which arrived at Pentecost) when God will be worshipped in the freedom of the Spirit, based on an accurate knowledge of who He is. The balance is important.
- Worshipping in spirit and truth can also be understood as worshipping God the father through Jesus (the truth) in the Holy Spirit. This brings together all three persons of the Trinity in true worship.