



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Holy Spirit in the Age of the Incarnation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Now, tonight our subject is The Holy Spirit in the Age of the Incarnation, and we're going to turn to a number of verses -- individual verses and read them as a Scripture reading for our study tonight. And the first verse is one that we read last Monday night and that I referred to Sunday morning in the message on the virgin birth. It's Luke chapter 1 in verse 15. It's the verse in which the Angel Gabriel gives description of the ministry -- the person and ministry of John the Baptist. And in Luke chapter 1 in verse 15, we read:

“And he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.”

Now, will you turn to verse 41 of this chapter.

“And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Now, verse 67:

“And his father, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying”

--

Chapter 2, verse 25 and verse 26, this occurred some time later, and we read verse 25:

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” [And, you will remember that this expression “to be upon him” is an expression for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Verse 26:] “And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.”

Now, let’s turn over to chapter 11 and read one verse there. Chapter 11 in verse 13. In 11:13, we read:

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

And chapter 12 verse 12 for our last verse. Chapter 12, verse 12, and here we read -- I’ll read verse 11, too.

“And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”

Now, remember, in our last study we studied the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ. We looked at the work of the Spirit in the Son, his birth, his baptism. We noticed that at his baptism he was anointed for Messianic office. And I made the comment that Jesus wrought no miracle before his baptism. And so it seems evident, not only from that fact but from others, that our Lord performed his miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit, not that he could not have as the God-man performed a miracle by virtue of his divine personality. But while he was here he subjected himself to the Father and wrought his miracles, carried out his life, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This, of course, is related to his high priesthood and, ultimately, we shall be studying that and we need not get into it at the moment.

We saw how, in the temptation, he was guided by the Holy Spirit. We looked at the ministry of the Holy Spirit in his overall ministry; that is, in his teaching, which we saw was through the Spirit, his miracles, we referred to them; and in his personal life, he was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We made reference to the ministry of the Spirit in our Lord’s death and commented upon the fact that in the New Testament very little, if anything, is said about the power of the Holy Spirit in the death of Jesus Christ. The reason being that the New Testament intends, apparently, to emphasize that his death was a voluntary death.

We also pointed out that there is very little in the New Testament about the ministry of the Spirit in his resurrection because it is the intent, apparently, of the New Testament to stress that the resurrection is the work of the Father. And then we made reference to his post-resurrection ministry and pointed out that in Acts chapter 1 in verse 2 it is stated that again some of the ministry of our Lord was done in the power of the Spirit.

Now, in this study, we want to look at the work of the Spirit in the life of others during the time of our Lord’s incarnation. Also, we will specifically refer to one of the

texts that is a problem text in our Lord’s post-resurrection ministry. So we’re not going to look at the ministry of the Spirit in our Lord’s life, but the ministry of the Spirit outside of our Lord’s life, in the life of others during the time of his earthly life.

In using the concordance -- and I took the concordance down and looked at every reference to the Holy Spirit again in the Gospels. I noticed a couple of things that I think are worthy of mention.

In the first place, there are remarkably few references to the Spirit during this time, outside of two types of passages. In other words, during the time of the incarnation of our Lord, there is very little ministry of the Spirit if we exclude the passages that refer to the Spirit in our Lord’s life and the passages which are prophecies of the ministry of the Spirit that is to come in the new age.

I also noticed that in the Gospel of Mark, there is practically nothing said about the ministry of the Spirit outside of references to Jesus Christ. So that this confirms what we have been saying and that is that from the time of the Creation to the time of the first Advent of our Lord, we have the age of the Father. And then, from the time of the incarnation to the death of our Lord -- perhaps we could even say the resurrection, we have the age of the Son. And then, from Pentecost on to the Second Advent, we have the age of the Holy Spirit.

So it is not surprising then that we should have very little mention of the Spirit in this age except in references to our Lord’s own life and ministry. And, secondly -- what was it secondly -- prophecies of the ministry of the Spirit to come. I’d forgotten myself for a minute -- you know, I’m getting to that age.

Now, there is one passage upon which we have not commented and I think that it needs some comment because it is directly related to the ministry of the spirit. And I’m sure that someone would say if we don’t consider this passage, we are dodging something that is difficult. And so I want you now, for a few moments, before we look at the Spirit’s

work of regeneration, to take a look at a problem passage, which has to do with the ministry of the Spirit during our Lord’s life.

And it’s Matthew chapter 12, verse 31 and verse 32. Matthew chapter 12, verse 31 and verse 32. And this is the interesting passage that has to do with the Unpardonable Sin. And we read:

“Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

Now, just to read both of the passages that refer to this, let’s turn over to Mark chapter 3 and read there so that we can put the two passages together. Here we read in Mark, chapter 3 in verse 29 and 30:

“But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.”

Now, this passage is a very solemn passage. It has to do with the rejection of the Spirit’s ministry in our Lord’s life. It is very necessary for us to realize the context in which this incident took place and the statements by our Lord were made.

Remember, he has just healed the dumb demoniac and, as a result of this healing, he has been accused by the Scribes, who are the accredited teachers in Israel, of casting out demons by Beelzebub. Verse 22, we read:

“And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils.”

And so, the Scribes, who are the duly accredited teachers and leaders in Israel, have accused our Lord of black magic when he heals the dumb demoniac.

Now, this is a very serious charge, and our Lord considers this seriously, because the Scribes, being the duly accredited teachers of Israel, possess an authority that pertain to the nation.

Now, three questions come before us when we think about this passage. You know, I --Whenever I think about this passage, I think about evangelists, because there is, so far as I know, no evangelist who does not have within his barrel of sermons a sermon on the Unpardonable Sin. It is obvious that this kind of sermon is designed to create interest and stir up the fear and trepidation of any who might be in the church. And whenever the subject is announced, you can usually expect the pews to be filled. The Unpardonable Sin -- who has not at one time or another wondered if, perhaps, he has been guilty of committing the Unpardonable Sin. But I think, if we will just consider the context and three questions, we’ll be able to settle this question.

First of all, what is the Unpardonable Sin? Well, now, in Matthew, chapter 12 in verse 31, we read that it was blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or slander. Slander against the Spirit. Notice the 29th verse of Mark 3. “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost.” So the Unpardonable Sin is slander against the Holy Spirit.

Now, you will notice also, that there is great guilt in the commission of sin against the Holy Spirit than in sin against the Son of Man. Our Lord had said, verse 28,

“All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men; and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness.”

And in Matthew, he says that:

“sin against the Son of Man shall be forgiven [but] the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.”

What is it that makes sin against the Holy Spirit more unpardonable -- or unpardonable -- more blamable than sin against the Son of Man? That might seem to suggest to us that the Holy Spirit is more of -- is more divine in his nature than our Lord; a higher person --

Well, I think, the answer to it, obviously, is found in another line, because surely as we have been studying in our Systematic Theology classes, we know by now that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. And the Son is just as much God as the Spirit is God. And so sin against the Holy Spirit considered just as sin against one of the members of the Trinity, cannot possibly be a greater sin than sin against the Son, considered as a member of the Trinity.

The answer or the reason for the greater guilt than sin against the Son of Man must lie in the fact of our Lord’s voluntary self-emptying which took place when he was here upon the earth. In other words, sin against our Lord was blamable, but it was pardonable. Why? Well, because our Lord was here as a man. He had taken to himself human nature. It was possible for men to look at the Son of Man and to be confused about the character of his persons. But when our Lord performed a mighty miracle, which only God could do, when he healed the dumb demoniac right before their eyes, that was such an obvious evidence of the working of God, that to reject that was to reject divine testimony without question.

And so, undoubtedly, the Unpardonable Sin then is sin against the Holy Spirit’s clear manifestation of the power of God. And that is why it is a more blamable sin than

sin against the Son of Man. You will notice he does not say “sin against the Son of God.” But it’s sin against the Son of Man, when he was here in his human nature, when he had, in a sense, hidden the glory that he had with the Father before the world was.

Now, in Matthew chapter 12 in verse 30, we have some evidence of this, because we read in the immediately preceding verses,

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

And so, what this is, in their accusation, is a sin against the person of the king.

Now, the second question is, why is this sin unpardonable? Well, this sin precludes pardon because it precludes repentance. It evidences a hardened, impenitent heart because the fact that Jesus was able to heal that dumb demoniac showed, without question, that God had operated in his ministry. No man could do that. And so when the dumb demoniac was healed, to deny -- to say that he had done that by Beelzebub, to deny what the Holy Spirit had done was just to show that their heart was hardened against God.

Now, it was not an isolated thing either, because in Mark chapter 3, Mark uses a tense which suggests that this was something that they had been saying. Notice verse 22,

“And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem were saying He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of devils casteth he out devils.”

In other words, this is not something that occurred her for the first time. It wasn’t just a chance remark when Jesus performed this miracle, these men did not just say for the first time, He’s casting out demons by Beelzebub. This is what they were saying as he was performing other miracles. This was the climax.

Verse 30, “Because they said” is again the imperfect tense, referring to action that is durative in past time. Because they were saying he hath an unclean spirit. This was their attitude toward him. And so it is unpardonable, then, because he precludes repentance. It shows that their own hearts had reached a fixed attitude of enmity against the Lord.

You know, it is a very serious thing to reject the teaching of the word of God. I do not think it is possible for a preacher to impress on any congregation how solemn it is. But it is tremendously solemn to reject the word of God and to think that there may come a time when we can -- after having rejected the word of God for months and years, that we may then turn and receive the word of God -- that is wishful thinking.

I remember reading a story a long time ago, which I think is a true account of what happens in a man’s heart. This man had, for many years, lived in rejection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and had many an opportunity to turn to the Lord. He knew as he had heard men say from the pulpit that it was possible for a person to turn to the Lord at any time and receive him as Savior. But he had rested in that possibility and finally, on his death bed, in the presence of friends, he uttered these words. “I said I would repent before I died -- But it won’t come. It won’t come. I can’t repent.”

Now, I think that is – if it’s not a true statement – it does reveal the character of the heart that consistently says no to God, because there may well come a time when the heart is hardened and the person cannot respond because he would not respond. That is what happened to the Jews. And right after this incident, remember, in both Matthew chapter 12 and Mark chapter 3, we have our Lord beginning to speak in parables to them. And he says, in the 4th chapter in the 12th verse,

“That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”

And so there comes a time when our Lord hides the truth from men who have persistently rejected it.

Now, one last question about this Unpardonable Sin: When is this sin committed? Can it be committed now? I do not think this sin can be committed unless the King is here in person. In other words, it is a sin that by its very nature demands the presence of our Lord in his humiliation. I think in confirmation of this is the fact that only once did Jesus ever speak of the Unpardonable Sin. It is never referred to anywhere else in the entire New Testament. The Apostles never refer to it again because it was related to the historical ministry of the Son of God who took to himself human nature, in its humiliated state, not glorified, lived among men for thirty years, and during that time, he spoke about the Unpardonable Sin. When our Lord was glorified, there’s no speaking about it further. So as far as I can tell, from the teaching of the word of God, this was a specific sin of slander against the Holy Spirit who worked plainly in the life of the Lord, Jesus Christ. And it could be committed when the king was here personally present.

Now, of course, there is an unpardonable sin today. The Unpardonable Sin today is to refuse the offer of the pardon that is contained in the good news concerning Jesus Christ, but that is the only unpardonable sin today.

Bishop Ryle once said something, which I think should comfort anyone who worries about whether they have committed this sin. There are people that do, you know, over the past five or six years, I’ve had someone call me over the telephone at intervals and ask me about this, this very thing. I cannot seem to get through to them that the very fact that they are concerned about this is some evidence that they have not committed the Unpardonable Sin. But Bishop Ryle said, there is a thing as sin which is never forgiven. But, those who are most troubled about it are most unlikely ever to have committed it.

The very fact that a person should be deeply concerned about it is an evidence that his heart has not reach the stage where he has committed Unpardonable Sin. And so if you ever worry about it, you can be sure that the very fact that you are disturbed about it is good evidence that you have never committed it.

Now, we want to talk tonight about the work of the Spirit in others in the time of our Lord, and so we’ll come to our outline now. Roman I, the Spirit’s Work of Regeneration.

Now, let us not forget this basic work of the Holy Spirit. It is common to both the Old and New Testaments, and we are dealing with his work under the old covenant. People often do not read the New Testament, as they should. I don’t want to make the statement Dr. Chaffer used to make because it can be misunderstood. He used to tell us at Dallas Seminary that the New Testament begins with the Gospel of John, and he was trying to get over a truth, which, I think, is important. And that is this: that our Lord did not live under the New Covenant. Our Lord lived under the Old Covenant. He lived under the Mosaic economy. He kept the Law of Moses. And you will notice that in his ministry, when he healed the leper. What did he say? Well, he said, go offer the things that Moses commanded, because he lived in the age of the Law.

The Old Covenant came to an end when our Lord died upon the Cross. And so the great mass of material in the four gospels is concerned with the Old Covenant and the Old Covenant ministry.

Now, for example, John chapter 3, in which our Lord spoke to Nicodemus and said, “Ye must be born again.” His teaching that is given within the Old Covenant, not the New Covenant. We live in the age of the New Covenant. But Jesus lived in the age of the Old Covenant. And so we need to remember that.

Historically, I say that does not come to an end until the death of Christ. We’re inclined to think because our Bibles, you know, have Old Testament and New Testament.

And we open up the New Testament, and we read of the birth of Christ, that that means the New Covenant began with the birth of Jesus. It did not. So let’s keep that in mind.

Now, in John chapter 3, Jesus speaking to Nicodemus, gave him some information regarding the new birth. He said in John chapter 3 in verse 5:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, [Nicodemus] Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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.”

And so three years before our Lord’s death, he speaks to Nicodemus of the Spirit as the agent of the New Birth.

Now, if you were to ask me a question then, were men in Old Testament times born again like we are born again? I would say, yes, of course they were born again. They were born again in Old Testament days. They were born again during the days of our Lord’s earthly ministry. They are born again in the New Covenant age. There are certain ministries of the Holy Spirit that are true in every age. In every age, for example, he restrains sin until, finally, that restraining work is stopped in measure. But that is still in the future. And so this ministry of the New Birth characterized the Holy Spirit, during the days of our Lord’s incarnation.

Jesus did not have to be born again; but others did. And the Holy Spirit worked during the age of the incarnation in bringing people into new life. In John chapter 6 in verse 63, our Lord referred again to the Spirit. And he said, “It is the spirit that quickeneth.” So it is the Holy Spirit that gives new life.

Now, that’s the first ministry of the Spirit in the days of the incarnation. He continues his work of regeneration.

Secondly, the Spirit’s work of empowerment. The Spirit’s work of empowerment. The major aspects of the Spirit’s work before Pentecost may be gathered together under the general heading of endowment with power. And, again, as we saw when we studied the work of the Spirit in the Old Testament, perhaps the major work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament was his work of empowerment.

Now, he was involved in the Creation; he was involved in the writing of the Scriptures; he was involved in the preservation of the Creation that he created. We studied these things. But he also empowered the Old Testament saints. And he continues this ministry during the days of our Lord’s life on the earth. And I think it can all be headed up under this -- or the major aspects can be headed up under this general heading of endowment with power.

But let’s look first of all at the work of filling. Now, the expression to be “filled with the spirit” is practically a Lukan expression. By that I mean that, practically, the only one in the New Testament that uses the expression “to be filled with the spirit” is Luke, the Evangelist and historian. That’s an interesting thing, isn’t it? Others don’t seem to use this.

Now, Paul refers to it in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18, and others use the expression “full of the Spirit,” but ordinarily Luke is the one who stresses this expression “the filling of the spirit.” That, in itself, is interesting. It refers, primarily, to divine enablement for divine work. When a person is filled with the Spirit, he is divinely enabled to do a work for God. So the filling of the spirit is the divine enablement, which lays hold of an individual and controls them so that they are able to do a specific task for God. That’s the ordinary meaning of it. So it is a divine enablement for divine work, which results in the Spirit’s control of the person.

Now, let’s look at some of the texts. You know, I had a good time looking these up in the concordance. And so I’m just going to have you look at most of them with me tonight.

Luke chapter 1 in verse 15, and I’ll make a few comments as we look at them. Luke chapter 1 in verse 15. Now, here is the text that has to do with John the Baptist. And we read:

“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink;” [Now, he couldn’t have been relevant in the 20th Century, could he?] “shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.”

Now, John was to be a permanent Nazarite, apparently. The things that are said about him mark him out as a person who, from the time of his mother’s womb, would be a Nazarite. That is, his life would be wholly given to God.

Now, if you turn back to Numbers chapter 6 -- I’m not going to turn back there tonight -- But if you turn back to Numbers chapter 6, you will read in that chapter the requirements for being a Nazarite.

Now, there were two men in the Old Testament who were permanent Nazarites, and I’m going to give a Christmas present to anyone who can name them. Samson -- Samuel -- You lost -- You didn’t get it. [Laughter] I was afraid you would. I didn’t really have a present -- But now, the two were Samson and Samuel. These were the two that were permanent Nazarites. Now, of course, we know that Samson broke his vow; but these were men who were to be permanent Nazarites. That is, from the time that they became a Nazarite, they were to be a Nazarite throughout their life.

Now, John is unusual, because he is to be filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb; and these things that mark him out as a Nazarite are to be true of him for his

whole lifetime. And I’m not going to pass this by without making the obvious comment that John is described as a person who is not going to be under the influence and power of the spirits, like Vat 69, or Fletchers, or whatever it may be, but he is to be under the Spirit.

Now, it’s very striking that in three places in the New Testament, the filling of the Spirit is contrasted with the filling of the spirits. Here, Acts chapter 2, on the Day of Pentecost, remember, when all of that speaking in tongues and the other things that went on with it took place? Peter stood up and said, these men are not full of new wine as you think. After all, it’s early in the morning. These men are filled with the Holy Spirit. And Paul said, “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Now, you know, when we see somebody who has had a few too many, we say, he’s under the influence of liquor. We mean he’s controlled by it. And when a man has had a few too many drinks, he is controlled by the spirits. He says things he wouldn’t ordinarily say. He does things he would not ordinarily do. Some become violent. Some become maudlin. I think I’d rather have the former than the latter myself. But nevertheless, they come under the influence of the spirits.

And, apparently, there is a similarity between them. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit, there is a kind of influence and control from without that grips him so that he is a different kind of person. He’s Spirit controlled. And if you’ve ever seen the Holy Spirit take hold of a person, bring them into new life by regeneration and then see that person come under the control of the Spirit and see the tremendous transformation that takes place in that person, you will agree that there is really something too this “being filled with the Holy Spirit.” You come under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Now, John is to be endued with power from his mother’s womb, even from his mother’s womb. Now, the evidence of this is found in verse 41 for, remember, after Mary had been given word that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah as a virgin, she was encouraged by the Angel Gabriel who said, And Mary, to give you a little

encouragement, your Cousin Elisabeth -- You know, everybody knows her, she’s barren Elisabeth. Well, she’s conceived a son in her old age and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible.” And Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to thy word.” And the Angel departed from her and the first thing she said was to her maidservant, pack my bags. I’m going to see Elisabeth and see if this is really true.

And you can just see what was going on in her mind. She believed but, nevertheless, the Angel had said, there is Elisabeth, and she’s six months pregnant. That’s the proof of what I can do. And so she said, pack my bags, I’m going down to the hill country and see Elisabeth.

And so, she went and we read in verse 41,

“It came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb.”

And so, the very contact of the one who is now “with child” of the Holy Ghost causes a response in the infant in the womb of Elisabeth. And so even from the mother’s womb, John the Baptist is under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit.

So it’s no wonder then that Jesus spoke of John the Baptist as he did in Matthew chapter 11 in verse 11. Think of that, a man filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. I’m not surprised then, when I hear Jesus say,

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist:” [Why, of course, who has been “filled with the Spirit” from his mother’s womb. But then notice, he says,] “notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

In other words, it is possible for people to be greater even than John in their spiritual blessings. We’ll talk about that later on.

Now, to be filled with the Spirit then, what does it mean? Well, it means to so be endowed with power by the Holy Spirit that we come under his influence in order that we may perform divine works, to be filled with the Spirit then is to be divinely empowered to do divine works. That’s what it means to be filled with the Spirit. It does not mean that you’ve had some experience on your knees, which causes icicles to run down your back or that causes you to fall on the floor and roll on the floor and shout hallelujahs. That’s not being filled with the Spirit. The person who is filled with the Spirit is one who has come under the influence and power of the Spirit; that he is controlled by that Spirit in order that he may do a divine work. It’s not something for us to enjoy. It’s in order that some specific task for God may be carried out, as a rule.

Now, we looked at that passage, Luke chapter 1, verse 15. Let’s look at Luke chapter 1, verse 41. Now, we’ve looked at this but I want to look at the other part of it. We read:

“Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:” [And what did she do? Well,] “she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Now, what was the filling of the Spirit in Elisabeth’s case? Well, it was nothing more than that she came under the power of the Holy Spirit and uttered these words from God. That’s all it was. That’s the filling of the Spirit. She was controlled by the Spirit and she gave utterance to the message that God gave her.

Now, let’s look at verse 67. Let’s see what happens when Zechariah is filled with the Spirit, and John’s father -- You see, this is the birth of John the Baptist, and we read verse 67:

“And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost” [And he flopped on the floor and shouted hallelujahs -- Laughter It doesn’t say that, does it? Notice,] “His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied.”

You see, the filling of the Holy Spirit is enduement with power by the Spirit so that the person comes under the control of the Spirit to perform a divine work. And what did he do? Well, he prophesied. He gave a message that God the Spirit gave him. So he was filled with Spirit.

Let’s turn over to chapter 2, verse 25 -- verse 26 --

“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” [Now, remember, we pointed out that this was one of those Old Testament expressions that seems to be parallel with filled with the Spirit, clothed with the Spirit, the Spirit was upon them, and we read that he flopped on the floor and shouted hallelujahs -- No, it says:] “And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost,” [He was filled with the Holy Ghost and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost] that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple.”

So, again, what is the filling of the Spirit? Well, it is the enduement by God of that individual with power so that he comes under the influence of the Spirit to do some specific divine work. In the case of Elisabeth, it was to prophesy. In the case of

Zechariah it was to prophesy. In the case of Simeon it was to have revealed unto him a certain fact from God and then to be led by the Spirit into the temple so that he may have a particular experience.

And each case then, the filling ministry is involved and the stress is upon empowerment. So when we talk about the filling of the Holy Spirit, we should think about empowerment for a particular task. Now, if we will think about that; we will not be misled by teachers who have not bothered to look at the concordance.

Capital B, the Work of Teaching. Now, the work of teaching appears to me to be practically the same as the preceding. But I’m going to single it out because it is referred to, specifically. And let’s turn to chapter 12, verse 12 of the Gospel of Luke. Chapter 12, verse 12 -- by the way, we’re going to talk about the filling of the Spirit later on and talk about how to be filled with the Spirit and things like that when we come into the discussion of the Spirit’s ministry in the New Age -- the age of the New Covenant.

But we will, I hope, remember, some of these things -- Verse 12 of Luke chapter 12:

“For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” We should read verse 11 to get the context. “And when they bring you unto the synagogues, [Jesus said --] and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say” --

By the way, this is no word addressed to preachers. This does not mean that all you have to do is stand in the pulpit and just open your mouth and the Lord will then fill it with wonderful things. If you stand in the pulpit with nothing in your head at all and open your mouth; nothing will come out. [Laughter] Words may come out, but they will be meaningless and certainly not worth listening to.

Let me tell you something that happened to me -- This really happened to me at theological seminary, about six or eight years ago. I don’t know how he got in Dallas Seminary. I still puzzle about this, but he actually got to the Seminary, and it was during the first week of school. And we were having the ordinary things that you do the first week of school, and he came up to me and he said, “Dr. Johnson, I have a question to ask you.”

And I said, “Well, go ahead. Ask me.”

And he said, “What does a preacher do throughout the week?”

Well, I looked at him [Laughter] a little startled -- And I said, “What did you say?”

And he said, “What does a preacher do throughout the week?”

I said, “You cannot be serious.”

He said, “Oh, yes, I’m serious. What does he do?” He said, “After all, on Sunday morning, he has one hour before the congregation and perhaps one hour Sunday night, And perhaps an hour on Wednesday night, what does he do with all of his spare time?”

Now, I tried to answer him, thinking he was some little soul who had drifted into Dallas Seminary with no background whatsoever, and I didn’t want to shock him and scare him. So I answered him very nicely and said, “I think you will discover that it will take a little more time than you think to be prepared for that one hour on Sunday morning.” Well, I answered him real nice because I did not want to offend him, but then I noticed by about two weeks later that he was no longer around. And I still wonder how he managed to get to Dallas Seminary.

But there have been people who have believed that these words were addressed to preachers. They are not. This is -- this is what a Christian should be prepared to do when he is persecuted and when he doesn’t have time to prepare. This is when you are taken by one of Hitler’s men and brought before the Magistrates in a Hitler kind of Germany or in Moscow, or wherever it may be that any Christian may be persecuted. He

can trust the Lord to say the things that should be said at that point when he has need for some word for God. Verse 12 says,

“For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”

Now, it seems to me that this is a statement in which our Lord is saying that on a special occasion when you have need for some word from God for the proper word to say, the Holy Spirit will be able to teach you precisely what you should say. So it would seem to me to teach nothing more than filling but, nevertheless, it is called teaching and he will teach you what you should say in a moment of stress or in a moment of temptation or trial.

So the Holy Spirit’s work then in the days of our Lord was not only to empower for filling but empower for teaching. But, as I say, I do not see a great deal of difference between this and the preceding.

Now, capital C, the work of guidance. And, let’s turn back to Luke chapter 2 in verse 27, guidance. We referred to this -- and I’ll just refer quickly to it now. Simeon, we read in verse 27, “Came by the Spirit into the temple.” I think that means that he was guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit came upon him, filled him, and then led him to go into the temple. And so in the days of our Lord, the Holy Spirit empowered for the work of filling; he empowered for the work of teaching; he empowered for guidance, and he guided those who need guidance.

Now, that’s an Old Testament ministry, too. Remember the Psalmist David, said, “He shall guide thee with his eye.” So guidance is something that God has promised throughout all the ages.

I wonder if John chapter 4 in verse 25 is not a text that refers to this. Remember, Jesus said, to the woman of Samaria, in John 4:24,

“God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Now, I wonder if, maybe, to worship him in spirit and in truth or in the Holy Spirit is simply to be guided in ones worship by the Spirit. So our worship is to be in the truth. We should worship God according to the word of God, and we should worship him under the influence of the Holy Spirit. So, again, it would seem to me that that is simply empowerment.

Now, there is a special problem -- I have here the special problem of Luke chapter 11 in verse 13, and let’s turn over there. This text, I think, has been misunderstood. Now, I’ve given you a lot of light tonight. Hope you’ll appreciate it. Luke chapter 11 in verse 13 -- I’m just kidding you, you know. This is the season to be jolly -- Remember -- [Laughter] So Luke chapter 11, verse 11 through verse 13. Now, listen to these words. Remember, this is in the days of our Lord’s incarnate ministry. The Holy Spirit has not yet come to indwell everybody permanently. Jesus said:

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil” --

Now, I want to stop here just a moment. Saturday -- Saturday afternoon, two college students came to see me. They attend Believer’s Chapel. During the course of our conversation they told me some of the things that they were studying at SMU. And in one of the course, one of the men spoke up and was telling me some of the things that one of his professors was saying. I think he was a philosophy professor. He may have been psychology, I’ve forgotten. But in the course of the things that he was saying, he said that this man said that in the Western world we have the idea that man is inherently

good. And we have derived this from the teaching of Jesus and the Bible -- and, he is, apparently, an unusual kind of fellow, because he raised his hand and said he’d like to see his professor justify that from the Bible. And this text did not come up in our discussion, but listen to our Lord’s evaluation of human nature --

“If ye then, being evil” “If ye then, being evil”

By the way, in one of these texts -- In one of the Gospels -- I don’t have time to look it up in my Greek text, I think it’s in the Matthean account of the same thing, the word that Jesus uses for “being” is not the ordinary word but the word that has the idea of being from the beginning. In other words, our Lord refers to original sin. He said that everybody is afflicted by original sin. It’s not something that we have fallen into. It’s something that we were born with.

“If ye then, being evil,” [he said,] “know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Now, a lot of my friends, who are still friends of mine and I hope will be friends with me after I say what I am going to say, understand this verse as a special offer on the part of the Lord for indwelling before he died on the Cross. He said -- they point to this text and Jesus said to them:

“If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

And so they usually say that this offer of our Lord apparently limited only to his immediate followers was an offer to give them the Holy Spirit, if they would just ask. But

then they usually point out, no one asked. There is no record that anyone asked. Nobody took advantage of this blank check which Jesus offered. And, consequently, no one received the Holy Spirit during that time because they did not ask. But Jesus had offered it to them.

Now, that interpretation is also found in some interpretations of the Scofield Bible. I don’t know whether it’s in the new edition or not. But I would like to suggest to you that that is wrong because in John chapter 7 in verse 39, Jesus said in connection with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Verse 39 of John 7:

“But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”

And then, in the second chapter -- first chapter of the Book of Acts, he says -- Luke says that they were “waiting for the promise of the Spirit” and then in Acts, chapter 2, Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost, after the Spirit has come and he has said, “God has given the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

So it was impossible for our Lord to give the Holy Spirit; in the sense of the New Covenant; permanent indwelling of the Spirit because he had not yet been glorified. Well then, what does Luke chapter 11, verse 13, refer to?

Well, the context of that immediate passage and the context of the rest of the Book of Luke would lead us, I am sure, to feel that what he is saying is that, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to --” you who ask for him in your moments of special need. And so, it is an offer for the empowerment ministry of the Holy Spirit; not the indwelling ministry -- the empowerment ministry at times of special need --

Now, we’ve got to finish in three minutes -- The Spirit’s post-resurrection work of empowerment. Let’s turn over to John chapter 20. John chapter 20. Now, this is a very interesting passage. How many Roman Catholics are there in the audience? No one? Now, this is a very important verse to a Roman Catholic priest; because, you see, it is a verse that seems to say to them that we who are priests -- referring to the Roman Catholic priests, we have the power to absolve from sin. Listen. Verse 21, “Then said Jesus to them [again, this is John 20, verse 21]

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: [Now remember, this is before Pentecost. It is after the Cross, after the Resurrection, but before Pentecost] “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Now, this difficult verse may be explained if we remember these things. First, the Holy Spirit can only be given in the sense of permanent indwelling after the glorification of Christ. Secondly, what I should say, whatever this is, it is not a permanent indwelling. Second, “Receive ye” in verse 22, certainly implies that they received something. Contrary to what some claim -- Some have said, in the attempt to get away from the difficulty of these words, he said, “Receive ye” but they wouldn’t do it. And so, they had to wait for the day of Pentecost to receive the permanent indwelling. I don’t agree with that interpretation.

On the other hand, this is not as it has been put in the Scofield, the New Scofield Bible, by the way, their spiritual quickening in preparation for their full endowment with the Spirit and power at Pentecost for -- Why is it not their spiritual quickening? Well, because they had already been quickened. Those who were there were already disciples

of our Lord; apostles and their friends. They had already been made alive. They didn’t need any quickening.

What they received was a temporary enduement with power. Well, notice, he’s just said in verse 21: “As my Father hath send me, even so send I you.” He’s giving them a commission. Well, what do we need when we have a commission from the Lord? What do we need? Someone? Quickly? Power to carry it out.

Now, since the Holy Spirit was not to come until the Day of Pentecost and there are several weeks to elapse, and he has given this commission, what do they need? Well, they need some temporary enduement. And so that is what they receive. They receive the Holy Spirit as temporary enduement until the Day of Pentecost when they shall receive permanently power in the permanent universal presence of the Holy Spirit.

All right. Now, what about verse 23?

“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Now, this is the foundation of the Roman Catholic Sacrament of Penance. You know that Roman Catholic’s confess, don’t you. You know that they believe in oracular confession; that is, they sit down and pour out their sins into the ear of a priest. And after they have confessed, the priest absolves from sin, and he imposes some penance upon them; usually, in these days, a very mild affair. And that is supposed to be one of the seven sacraments ordained by Jesus Christ himself. And penance is the name of it. This is the text --

“Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

And, you, of course, will probably have run across the Latin expression, “I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Those are the words that the priest says. He says, *ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*. And you who know your Latin know I pronounced that beautifully, didn’t I?

Now, what about this verse? Is it possible for a man to forgive sins of other men? “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Well, remember, others than the Apostles were present. Luke tells us in the parallel passage that there were not just Apostles present. Rome feels the Apostles were present as proto-priests and this was passed down to the priests, special group. But other simple Christians were there, too.

Second, there is no evidence that the Apostles ever forgave anybody’s sins. Just to give you one illustration before we close. Turn over the Acts 8, and this one has to do with the Rock himself.

Now, the Rock, himself, when he was in the presence of Simon Magus, he heard Simon come in, remember, and say to him, now Peter,

“Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.” And the Rock said unto him, Your money perish with you, because you’ve “thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray me, if perchance I may absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.” [You’ll notice that Peter does not do it. He says:] “Pray ye, pray God” And then he adds, “For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.”

And so Peter does not forgive sins. He tells Simon to pray to God for the forgiveness of sins. By the way, the early fathers never quoted this text in the way that the Roman Catholic Church makes use of it. And Augustine, who was one of the greatest of the Catholics must not have been a very good Catholic, according to modern standards for in all of his many writings -- I have about fifteen volumes of Augustine -- never in any of his volumes does he ever say he ever went to confession. Think of that. He never went.

Well, what does this text mean then? ““Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Let me translate those perfect tenses for they are perfects. “Whosoever sins ye remit, they have been remitted. Whosoever sins ye retain, they have been retained.”

All the Apostles were given by the Lord Jesus was the authority to proclaim the conditions under which forgiveness could be granted. And they and all Christians were given that privilege. So, “Whosoever sins you forgive, they have been forgiven.” The point is that you may set forth the terms and when a person says, “I have believed,” You say to that person, “If you believe in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.” They say, “I believe.” You say, “Your sins have been forgiven.”

But you have not pronounced the forgiveness. You have only laid down the terms for it, and then have given a verdict of that which has happened, if the person has truly believed.

Well, our time is up. We’ll have to stop. My goodness, I went overtime. We are not having any questions tonight, by the way. I made this so clear there was no need for any questions [laughter] tonight. No, seriously, we’re not going to have any questions tonight.

“The Holy Spirit in the Age of the Incarnation” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2008 Believer’s Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy word, and we thank Thee for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And as we look forward to the study of the Spirit in this age, as he particularly affects us, help us not only to learn but to become obedient.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.