

Faith -N- Focus

Adult Bible Studies

April 2018

“Pneumatology: The Nature of God”

Writer: Todd D. McDonald

**Zion Assembly Church of God
- Sunday School Services -
International Ministries Center
Cleveland, TN**

Subscription Information:

To receive your free monthly email subscription to Faith-N-Focus curriculum, please send your request to sundayschoolservices@zionassemblychurchofgod.com. In addition to the Adult Bible Studies, you will also receive Faith-N-Focus for Teens and for Young Disciples. For more information about Zion Assembly Church of God, please visit our website at www.zionassemblychurchofgod.com.

“Pneumatology: The Nature of God”

Monthly Summary

In this month of Faith-N-Focus, we begin a new unit studying the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology). What is the nature of God? How should we describe God to sinners and unbelievers? In the first lesson, we will consider the nature of God – God is Spirit. Because we live in a fallen, sinful world, people often fail to recognize and accept the work of God’s Spirit among mankind. The Holy Spirit permeates the entire world in which we live (Ac. 17:27-28), for he is omnipresent. His presence fills up his creation. “For in him we live, and move, and have our being” (v. 28).

Although God is invisible, he has shown forth his glorious presence with physical manifestations of his Spirit. His works among men come with power and demonstration of the Spirit. Today, his glorious presence resides within the heart of every believer who follows Jesus Christ by faith and obedience. As children of God, we embody the glory of God through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Through regeneration and the baptism with the Holy Ghost, the manifestations of the Spirit in the church produce visible demonstrations of God’s glory. When the saints and members of God’s church are filled with the Holy Ghost, they manifest the glorious presence of Christ. God’s Spirit is life-giving. As each member of the church is baptized with the Holy Ghost and then is continually filled with the Spirit, the church is itself a living-giving force in the world embodying the Spirit of Christ and manifesting the invisible God. Thus, the saints in whom the Spirit dwells are the proof of a risen, living Savior.

April 8, 2018

“Holy Spirit”

Main Point

God is spirit, and the Spirit is holy.

Introduction

If someone asked, “What is God like?” how should we answer them? Of course, we should point them to the Son of God, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh (Jn. 1:1, 14; 14:9). Additionally, throughout the Scriptures, many words and ideas describe and define “who” God is and “what” God is like. In fact, God even revealed himself through a variety of names, like *Jehovah-jireh* (“the Lord sees/provides,” Ge. 22:14) and *Jehovah-shalom* (“the Lord is peace,” Jud. 6:24). But perhaps one of the most definitive words to describe the nature of God is “spirit.” Then one might ask, “What is the Spirit of God like?” The Bible describes the Spirit of God as *holy* Spirit. In today’s lesson, we will study the nature of God: he is spirit, and he is holy.

Key Verse

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24).

Lesson Summary

When Jesus talked with the woman of Samaria, he challenged her thinking about God explaining that worship has little to do with physical dimensions, like where we worship. Instead, real worship depends on “spirit” and “truth.” However, to the worldly mindset both spirit and truth are intangible and remarkably strange. When Jesus was on trial, Pilate scoffed at him, asking, “What is truth?” (Jn. 18:38). Regarding the Spirit of truth, Jesus declared, “Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not” (Jn. 14:17). Because “God is a Spirit,” we worship him accordingly, yet our worship is strange to the world (Jn. 4:23-24). Though God has certainly revealed himself to us in human terms and forms, especially in the revelation of his only begotten Son so that we can comprehend who he is, we nevertheless cannot confine him to human limitations (1 Jn. 1:1-3). Since the nature of God is eternal spirit (Ps. 93:2), we know him not in forms and rituals, but spiritually (Jn. 4:24; 1 Co. 2:9-12). Though

the Bible ascribes to God man-like characteristics, (for example, hands, arms, face, and eyes), he is actually Spirit. The apostle John further emphasized the spiritual nature of God when he wrote, “No man hath seen God at any time” (Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:20). When Moses went to meet with God, he did not see God, per se, but rather he saw the glory of God’s Spirit and presence (Ex. 33:7-11; 34:5-8, 28-35). As Christians, we therefore know God by the Word and the witness of his Spirit within us. Again, Jesus said that “the world cannot receive” the Spirit, because he cannot be seen, for he dwells within believers (Jn. 14:17). What is the Spirit of God like? When the psalmist wrote about worshiping God, he explained, “it [his name] is holy” (Ps. 99:3), “God is holy” (vv. 5, 9), and “worship at his holy hill” (v. 9), a reference to the temple (tabernacle) of the Lord. The psalmist’s emphasis is: “God is holy.” The apostle Paul wrote about the temple of the Lord. Although we may worship God in physical buildings, we ourselves are actually the temple of God. Through faith in Christ, we are transformed into the temple of the Lord (1 Co. 3:16; 2 Co. 6:16). As such, God indwells us by his Spirit. Paul went on to say that the temple of God is holy (1 Co. 3:17), and that’s why our body is holy? It is holy because the holy Spirit of God dwells there (Ep. 4:30). We should, therefore, reverence God’s Spirit and our body as holy, being God’s special dwelling place (Ep. 2:21-22). Note: We will study more about the indwelling Spirit in lesson four.

Scripture Study

God is Spirit – Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Co. 2:9-12; Jn. 1:18; 1 Jn. 4:12; Ex. 33:7-11, 20; Ex. 34:5-8, 28-35; Jn. 14:17

God is Holy – 1 Co. 3:16-17; 2 Co. 6:16; Ep. 4:30; Ps. 99:1-9; Ep. 2:21-22; 1 Co. 2:12-14

Conclusion

The apostles walked with Jesus Christ upon the earth. They knew him face to face. The apostles heard, saw, observed, and touched the Word of God incarnate (1 Jn. 1:1). But today, Jesus resides at the right hand of the Father. Though we do not see God and hear him in the natural, per se, we nevertheless know him personally and discern who he is by his Holy Spirit indwelling us (1 Co. 2:12-14).

April 15, 2018

“Omnipresence”

Main Point

God’s presence is universal but also personal in the life of every believer.

Introduction

We serve an awesome omnipresent God, which means his Spirit permeates the entire world. God’s presence transcends our human limitations. For example, although a man cannot be in two places at once, God’s Spirit is not confined to such physical barriers and constraints. The writers of the Holy Scriptures explain God’s omnipresence both from a cosmic perspective and a personal point-of-view. In today’s lesson, we will see that God’s presence is far beyond mankind, yet at the same time his presence extends to all who call upon his name (Ps. 113:4-6; Ro. 10:13). He is transcendent yet immanent. He “sits upon the circle of the earth” (Is. 40:22), yet he dwells in our hearts.

Key Verse

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence” (Ps. 139:7)?

Lesson Summary

Isaiah prophesied of God’s greatness and vastness in the universe (Is. 40:12; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50). Like the song says, “He’s got the whole world in his hands.” His knowledge and understanding of his creation far surpass our human comprehension. The knowledge of science, though incredibly extensive, is as nothing to the knowledge of God (Is. 40:13-17). While God knows so much about mankind, humanity knows so little about him. This is why fallen man’s attempts to honor God and worship him prove to be vain, for how can lowly, sinful man comprehend a lofty, holy God who inhabits and envelops the vast universe, whose eyes “run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Is. 40:18-22; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28). Certainly, God is present in his creation on a universal, cosmic level – he sees all and knows all (Je. 23:23-24). Although God “inhabits eternity,” he is also omnipresent in a personal sense. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy

place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Is. 57:15). Contrary to Deistic thinking, God did not create and then withdraw his personal presence from his creation, leaving us to our own destiny. Rather, God is currently working in his creation, primarily, to bring salvation and restoration to humanity through Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:8-9). To accomplish this, the Spirit of God is omnipresent and active in the world today. God can personally assist a single individual and meet his need, while at the same time help an unlimited number of others who call upon his name (Ro. 10:13). Being omnipresent, the Holy Spirit is unlimited in his capacity to be present and personal to each and every believer at all times. The psalmist David explained that God searches the believer and knows everything about him (Ps. 139:1-6). God knows our activities, words, and the meditations of our hearts. In fact, his presence in our lives is so invasive that there is no place to escape his Spirit (v. 7). No matter where we go, God is there waiting on our arrival (vv. 8-10). Moreover, as children of God, we have this assurance: when we draw near to God, he also draws near to us (Ja. 4:8). We serve a personal God, who will be with us to the end of the world (Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5).

Scripture Study

His universal presence – Is. 40:12-22; 66:1; Ac. 7:48-50; 2 Ch. 16:9; Ac. 17:24-28; Je. 23:23-24

His personal presence – Is. 57:15; Jn. 16:8-9; Ps. 139:1-10; Ja. 4:8; Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5

Conclusion

God is omnipresent – his presence fills the earth. Understanding the nature of God helps us to trust the Lord more completely. Like the psalmist, when we understand that God’s Spirit is always present to us, no matter what we face, we can have the calm assurance that a loving Father is near, he knows our needs, and he is willing and ready to help us in our time of need. What a comforting thought to know that God is close at hand.

April 22, 2018

“Shekinah”

Main Point

God has placed his glory in the church through his indwelling Spirit.

Introduction

Shekinah refers to the manifest glory of God. God has revealed himself by visible signs and miraculous demonstrations throughout history, even showing his presence with visible glory. In today’s lesson, we will review examples of God’s manifest glory in order to understand the glory that Christ has placed within the church.

Key Verse

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (Jn. 17:22).

Lesson Summary

One of the most striking examples of the manifest glory of God occurred at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14). This temple was the house that King David desired to build for the Lord, but God would not permit him to construct it because he had been a man of war and shed excessive blood (1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3). His son, Solomon, fulfilled David’s dream of building a temple, and saw this vision through to its completion. In brief, when the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant to the temple, they offered innumerable sacrifices (1 Ki. 8:5) and worshipped the Lord with music and singing (2 Ch. 5:12-13). Then the glory of the Lord filled the temple as a cloud so that the priests were unable to continue their ministry (1 Ki. 8:11; 2 Ch. 5:14). The dedication reached its climax at the conclusion of Solomon’s prayer when the fire of God consumed their sacrifices and the visible shekinah filled the house of the Lord (2 Ch. 7:1). “And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord’s house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever” (vv. 2-3). In the New Testament, the glory of God was visibly manifested through

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He took Peter, James, and John “up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them” (Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36). His physical appearance was temporarily changed, so that he radiated with a brilliant light. The apostles actually saw the supernatural glory of God in Christ – glory that was veiled by his natural flesh. Moreover, they heard the voice of the Father speaking from the cloud that covered them, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mt. 17:5). Likewise, on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the church, the visible presence and glory of God was manifested in and among the saints (Ac. 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12). Before his ascension, Jesus promised, “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (1:5). The apostles and many disciples “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication,” waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit (vv. 14-15). When the Holy Ghost suddenly descended on the church, the natural atmosphere changed, for a “rushing mighty wind” was heard among them (2:2), and “cloven tongues” like fire appeared and sat on them as a miraculous sign of God’s glorious presence among them (v. 3). When the Holy Ghost filled them, they all “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (v. 4). The saints spoke with a spiritual language inspired by God. These signs and wonders were visible confirmations of God’s glory in the church.

Scripture Study

Solomon’s temple dedication – 1 Ki. 8:1-11; 2 Ch. 5:1-14; 7:1-3; 1 Ch. 22:5-8; 28:1-3

Christ’s transfiguration – Mt. 17:1-9; Mk. 9:1-9; Lu. 9:27-36

Holy Ghost outpouring – Acts 1:4-5, 8; 2:1-12

Conclusion

Whereas in the Old Testament the glory of God was revealed primarily in external manifestations, under the dynamic New Covenant, God desires to manifest his glory in and through man. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost in and among the saints explains how God’s glory is manifested in the church today (Jn. 17:22; Ha. 2:5-9). In the next lesson, we will see that God’s glorious presence indwells the saints of God.

April 29, 2018

“Indwelling Spirit”

Main Point

Christ’s presence fills the church as each member is baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Introduction

The glory of God’s Spirit that was manifested in the temple of Solomon, that was revealed in Jesus Christ, and that was witnessed on the day of Pentecost, still inhabits saints today. Jesus explained that his Spirit would not only dwell with the believer but would actually indwell him (Jn. 14:17). In today’s lesson, we will see that Christ abides in the believer by his indwelling Spirit, and the fullness of Christ’s presence is experienced through being baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Key Verse

“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (Jn. 14:17).

Lesson Summary

God promised to place his law (Word, Truth) within his people (Je. 31:33; He. 8:10; 10:16). But how would God accomplish this? Paul taught that Christ (the Word of God) dwells in our hearts by faith (Ep. 3:16-17), and he abides in us through his Spirit (Ro. 8:9-16). God’s indwelling Spirit assures us that we are indeed the children of God, and teaches us to abide in Christ (Ro. 8:16; 1 Jn. 2:27). The Lord has given us “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” to be an inner witness and assurance of his abiding presence (2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13). Moreover, the prophet Joel declared how God would pour out his Spirit in the last days. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit” (Jl. 2:28-29). On the day of Pentecost, when the saints “were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” Peter identified their experience as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (Ac.

2:4, 14-18). When Jesus promised to send the Holy Ghost, he identified their experience as the baptism with the Holy Ghost (Ac. 1:5). Today, God continues to baptize with the Holy Ghost and to fill with his Spirit. The apostle Peter declared, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Ac. 2:38-39). Moreover, we can be filled with the Holy Ghost at all times, that is, we can be re-filled again and again (Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31). The significance of the indwelling Spirit is evident in the proclamation of Christ at the feast of Tabernacles. Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Jn. 7:37). Then he promised, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of **living water**” (v. 38). Jesus was referring to his life-giving Spirit, the Holy Ghost (v. 39). When he witnessed to the woman of Samaria, Jesus spoke of **living water** that would satisfy the thirsty souls of men (Jn. 4:10, 14). Clearly, Christ places his Spirit within every believer to be “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (v. 14). As faithful followers of Christ, we should, therefore, seek to be filled with the Spirit in our daily walk with God.

Scripture Study

Indwelling Spirit – Ep. 3:16-17; Ro. 8:9-16; 1 Jn. 2:27; 2 Co. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 4:13

Filled with the Spirit – Jl. 2:28-29; Ac. 1:5; 2:4, 14-18, 38-39; Ep. 5:17-18; Ac. 4:8, 31

Living water -- Jn. 7:37-39; 4:1-14

Conclusion

The Spirit of God is given to every believer when we are regenerated and have new life in Christ. Indeed, we are born again of the Spirit of God (Jn. 3:6-7). Being a child of God born of the Spirit, we are called to walk (live) in the Spirit in order to reap eternal life (Ga. 5:16, 25; 6:8). Living in the Spirit necessarily entails being filled with the Spirit of God. As each member of the church is baptized with the Holy Ghost and then is continually filled with the Spirit, the church is itself a living-giving force in the world embodying the Spirit of Christ in and among us.