

The Holy Spirit in the New Testament¹

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Introduction

Some time ago a challenging event occurs in our family. The problem is this: It is an invisible event. We need to know what has happened and what to do about it. However, we have no way to access that information since it is hidden from sight.

The incident occurs as my daughter is playing in the park. Not being adept at soccer, she steps up on a soccer ball in a clumsy way and falls awkwardly on her right arm. The arm immediately becomes extremely painful, limp, and useless. A most significant event has just occurred. Hidden behind skin, tendon and muscle, though, that event is not open to view. Thankfully, her friends take her to a local emergency room where the physician does the wise and predictable thing—he orders an X-ray.

That which has been invisible now becomes visible. Her mother and I arrive in time to see the picture. And what a picture it is! My daughter's arm has experienced a classic, extreme dislocation at the elbow. With the help of the X-ray, what has occurred is now plainly observable. The humerus and its socket lie distinctly separate from the ulna. Since we can now observe what occurred outside of human view, the physician knows

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just what to do about it. In short order—and with the help of anesthetic—he “reduces” the dislocation. Though the elbow remains tender and sore for a time, our daughter progresses rapidly toward healing.

Important passages in the NT tell us that the Holy Spirit serves as the X-ray for a most important event in salvation history—the exaltation-coronation of Jesus. The event occurs well outside the capacity of human beings to observe it. Yet it is crucial for us to know of this central, cosmos-shifting event. It is the Holy Spirit who offers access to the distant celebration of the Lordship of Jesus. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, what is invisible and inaccessible becomes as obvious as a dislocated elbow in an X-ray. Human eyewitnesses could offer their reports of the crucifixion and burial of Jesus (e.g., Matt 27:32-61). They could testify to their encounters with Jesus after His resurrection (e.g., 1 Cor 15:3-8). They could even give accounts of the departure of Jesus to heaven, His ascension (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11). What they could not do was share the narrative of what happened next. That had to await the witness of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

In studying the NT materials about the Holy Spirit for this essay, I experienced an insightful moment of self-knowledge. The story of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the early Christian community at the time of the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-42) is a singular narrative. Nowhere else in the NT is the story told. I came to realize that I had compartmentalized this unique story, separating the Pentecost narrative about the descent of the Spirit from the rest of the NT with its instruction about the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers and in the lives of individual Christians. Should we unite that which I, and perhaps others, have divided? What would be the result if we read the NT evidence about the Holy Spirit from the vantage point of Acts 2 and its narrative of the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost? Could the central themes and ideas of the Acts 2 story be employed to structure a review of the expansive NT materials relating to the Holy Spirit?

This effort is founded on an important conclusion about early Christian believers and the NT documents they write. What fired the imaginations of those early believers was their belief that Jesus, who had walked the dusty trails of Judea with them, was now not only resurrected and ascended but was also exalted at the right hand of God. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, they had heard the distant echoes of Jesus’s coronation and those

echoes resounded in their hearts and minds and ignited the zeal of their witness. The NT documents which they composed bear evidence everywhere to this central, compelling conviction of Christian faith.²

I propose, then, to read the NT evidence about the Holy Spirit in the light of the theme of the Holy Spirit as Revealer and Proclaimer of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus. In the process, I pray that we may catch a little of that early, Christian zeal.

Part 1: The Holy Spirit and the Exaltation-Coronation of Jesus

I begin a thematically-driven review of NT materials about the Holy Spirit by surveying four passages where the exaltation-coronation of Jesus is twinned in important ways with the outpouring of the Spirit or the giving of spiritual gifts. The obvious place to begin is Acts 2, which I supplement with a review of selections from three additional NT documents: John 6, 7, 14-16; Rev 4-5; Eph 4:1-16.³

The Spirit as Witness to Christ's Exaltation-Coronation (Acts 2)

On that first Pentecost after Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, the early followers of Jesus "were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability" (Acts 2:4).⁴ This phenomenon presents a conundrum, a riddle, to the "devout

² Cf. Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (2d ed.; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 205-6, 214-15. "The exaltation of Christ onto the throne at the Father's right hand was the core belief for early Christians (Acts 2:33-36; Heb. 8:1)." "The preaching of the gospel began with the central message about Jesus who had been enthroned as Lord on the heavenly throne. This was the core of early Christian belief (Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 8:1) and the cornerstone of their preaching (Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22). The fact that the glorified Lord was in control, ruling on the throne of the universe, motivated their actions and was the source of their faith and courage in the face of persecution and difficult life situations (Acts 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34)."

³ I order these three based on the narrative time of the exaltation of Christ understood or implied in each of them. From the standpoint of the narrative time of John's Gospel, the exaltation of Christ is a future event. In the narrative time of Rev 4-5, understood as narrating the coronation ceremony of Jesus, the exaltation of Jesus occurs in present time. In Ephesians, Paul looks back to the exaltation of Christ as a past event.

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989).

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Jews from every nation under heaven” who are in Jerusalem (v. 5) since they hear those followers of Jesus in their own languages. Peter, discounting the scornful explanation of drunkenness (v. 13), provides a preliminary answer to their riddle. The phenomenon represents the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy:

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (vv.17-18).

Before Peter offers a more definitive answer to the conundrum troubling his hearers, he continues by reviewing the career of Jesus, culminating in His resurrection: “But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power” (v. 24). Offering quotations from David as psalmist in support of this point, he again asserts, “This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses” (v. 32).

Only then does Peter come to the real answer to the questions in the minds of his hearers: “How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” and “What does this mean?” (vv. 8, 12):

“Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (vv. 33-36).

The phenomenon they have experienced, says Peter, is due to a set of most significant, salvation history events that have occurred at the throne of God, out of sight of humankind: 1) The exaltation of Jesus at the right hand of God; 2) God giving to His newly exalted Son “the promise of the Holy Spirit”; and 3) Jesus, from His newly exalted position of power, pouring out the Holy Spirit (v. 33).

The NT often refers to a complex of related events in the life of Jesus,

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mentioning various events and differentiating them or melding them to different degrees. For example, in the introduction to Romans (1:1-7), Paul refers to two events, the incarnation (v. 3, “descended from David according to the flesh”) and the resurrection (v. 4, “resurrection from the dead”). Luke’s report of Peter’s Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:14-42) offers an extended set of such events. Peter refers to Jesus’s healing ministry (v. 22, “a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you . . .”), betrayal (v. 23, “handed over to you”), crucifixion (v. 23), death (v. 23), burial (mentioned obliquely through the parallel with David, v. 29), resurrection (vv. 24, 31-32) and exaltation-coronation (v. 33-36, “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God,” etc.). As part of this series of unfolding salvation-history events, which Peter argues were prophesied in the Scriptures, he includes Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit from the Father (v. 33, “. . . and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit”) and Jesus “pouring out” the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (v. 33, “he has poured out this that you both see and hear”).

In experiencing the Spirit-inspired, multi-lingual communication at Pentecost, Peter’s auditors have had access to this final salvation-history event (“. . . he has poured out this that you both see and hear,” v. 33). Peter seems especially interested that they understand that this visible and observable event, the outpouring of the Spirit, signals an event that is invisible and unobservable: “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified” (v. 36). The culminating point of Peter’s sermon is to underline the link between what the crowd has seen—the manifestations of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—and what has occurred in heaven—the exaltation-coronation of Jesus at the right hand of God. The descent of the Spirit “upon all flesh” (v. 17) as prophesied by Joel is the signal that Jesus is “both Lord and Messiah” (v. 36).

When the listeners respond to the sermon, “Brothers, what should we do?” (v. 37), Peter responds along the same lines:

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (vv. 38-39).

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To be baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ” means, in the light of vv. 33, 36, to be baptized in the knowledge that Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God and is the Messiah (the Anointed One or the Christ) and Lord. Peter asserts that Pentecost, as a moment when the exalted Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit upon believers, is a repeatable experience. Returning to the themes of Joel 2, he argues that whoever is baptized in the knowledge that the exalted Jesus is the Messiah “will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). The “promise of the Holy Spirit” (v. 33) is for “everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him” (v. 39).

The link between the exaltation-coronation of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and beyond seems incontestable within the context of Acts 2. Should we, though, export it as a framework to understand the wider teaching about the Holy Spirit in the rest of the NT? Can it serve as a central, organizing theme in this way?

Summaries of the teaching about the Holy Spirit in the NT tend to be arranged either canonically or topically or in some combination of both. Such summaries often produce a list of functions or roles of the Holy Spirit such as Keith Warrington’s list for “The Holy Spirit in the Epistles”:

The Holy Spirit opposes the flesh and affirms believers (Romans 8:1-13, 14-23, 26-27)

The Holy Spirit provides gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Romans 12:6-8)

The Holy Spirit and transformation (Galatians 5:16-6:2)

The Holy Spirit seals and guarantees believers (Ephesians 1:3-14)

The Holy Spirit provides access to God (Ephesians 2:11-22)

The Holy Spirit and unity (Ephesians 4:1-16, 25-32)

Be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-6:18)⁵

⁵ Keith Warrington, *The Message of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit of Encounter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 6.

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While such lists are informative in their own right, they tend to make each theme as important as the next. Such a lack of priority is problematic because some ideas about the Holy Spirit hold priority over others. While each concept is inspired and significant, not every idea about the Holy Spirit in the NT is of equal importance. In this essay, I am not attempting to create a systematic or logical arrangement of various roles assumed by the Holy Spirit. I am seeking, rather, the heart or center of the NT teaching about the Holy Spirit and am testing the idea that Acts 2, with its linking of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, identifies that center.

In seeking to establish clearly the link that Luke makes in the Acts 2 narrative between the exaltation-coronation of Jesus and the descent or outpouring of the Holy Spirit, two aspects of Luke's presentation should be noted. The first is an aspect of the sign event, the descent of the Holy Spirit. As highlighted in Joel's prophecy, the Holy Spirit is poured out "upon all flesh" (v. 17). The Spirit is no respecter of the boundaries of gender ("your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," v. 17; cf. "both men and women," v. 18), age ("your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams," v. 17), or social class ("Even upon my slaves . . . in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy," v. 18).

This Christian perspective contrasts with that of the ancient world. It was understood that a divine spirit could take possession of worshipers but the general belief was that "the divine spirit would come on only a few outstanding people. It would be a most unusual experience, reserved for those who were especially close to the deity."⁶ From the standpoint of the NT, though, "It is nonsense to talk about a Christian who does not have the Spirit."⁷ Luke has taken care in his Gospel to establish the credentials of Jesus as Savior of all, especially of the usually forgotten and marginalized. So, it is apropos that the outpouring of the Spirit upon all is an essential element of the sign nature of the event. It reflects the extent of both Christ's salvation, which is offered to all ("Then everyone who calls on the name

⁶ Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 76. Morris cites Rom 8:9, 14 in support of the presence of the Spirit in the lives of all believers.

⁷ *Ibid.* "A distinguishing feature of the Spirit of the new age is that he is experienced by all and works through all . . . (e.g., Acts 2:17f.; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Heb. 6:4; 1 Jn. 2:20)." J. D. G. Dunn, "Spirit, Holy Spirit," *NBD* 3, 1129.

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of the Lord shall be saved,” v. 21), and His dominion, which is over all. The extent of the outpouring of the Spirit—upon all flesh—reflects the unlimited parameters of Christ’s domain. The Spirit falls upon all because Jesus is ““Lord of all”” (Acts 10:36). The sign event of the descent of the Holy Spirit, then, mirrors in this important way the prior, heavenly event of Christ’s exaltation. There is alignment between the sign and the event it signifies.

A second aspect of Luke’s presentation has to do with the titles accorded to Jesus in the culminating assertion of Peter’s sermon at Pentecost: ““Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord (Greek: *kurios*) and Messiah (Greek: *christos*) this Jesus whom you crucified”” (2:36; cf. 2:11). The use here of *kurios* designates Jesus as “one who is in a position of authority, *lord, master,*” a use that “raises Jesus above the human level.”⁸ It is a distilled affirmation of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus, as is the case when the term is used as part of the early Christian confession, “Jesus is Lord” (cf. Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11).⁹

Christos may serve as “the personal name ascribed to Jesus, *Christ*” and thus may not always carry the sense of “fulfiller of Israelite expectation of a deliverer, *the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ.*”¹⁰ Here in Acts 2:36 it clearly carries the full connotation (as it frequently does in the Gospels and especially in Luke-Acts). To acknowledge that, though, raises questions: In this context, when and how does Jesus become the Anointed One? In Matthew and Mark, John the Baptist describes the role of the “more powerful” one: ““He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”” (Matt 3:11; cf. Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16). The story of Jesus’s baptism follows in which the Spirit of God “like a dove” descends upon Jesus (Matt 3:16; cf. Mark 1:10). One way, then, to answer these questions is to say that Jesus becomes the Anointed One at His baptism when He is “anointed” by

⁸ BGAD 577-78.

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 68.

¹⁰ BDAG 1091. Paul uses the term frequently and almost always in the nontitular form. See Donald Juel, “Christ,” *EDB* 237.

the Holy Spirit.¹¹

However, the occurrence of the term in contexts where the exaltation-coronation of Jesus is discussed suggests additional answers, especially since *Christos* brings to view “the ancient (biblical) practice of anointing with oil as part of ritual installation to office . . .”¹² In Heb 1 the context is the exaltation-coronation of Jesus (“When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs,” vv. 3-4; “But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom,’” v. 8; “But to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’,” v. 13).¹³ So when the apostle cites Ps 45:7, “. . . God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions,” an anointing that occurs at the time of Jesus’s exaltation-coronation seems in view.

Recalling the three salvation-history events mentioned in the verse, something similar seems active in Acts 2:33. Exalted at the right hand of God, Jesus “received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,” the Spirit He then pours out upon believers. Given the frequent associations of the Spirit with “anointing” in the Gospels and the association of “anointing” with the exaltation-coronation of Jesus in Hebrews, it is justifiable to view God’s giving of “the promise of the Holy Spirit” to His Son as an “anointing” of the Spirit.

With this evidence in view, Jesus’s identity as “the Anointed One” may be seen as unfolding through His incarnation, ministry, and resurrection (along the lines of Rom 1:4), while culminating in His ascension and exaltation-coronation (Heb. 1; Acts 2). The anointing of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus and His outpouring of the Spirit upon believers mark Jesus as “both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36).

¹¹ Similarly, Jesus, near the beginning of His ministry, applies the words of Isa 61:1 (“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor . . .”) to Himself (Luke 4:18). Note that, again, the Spirit is involved in the “anointing.”

¹² Juel, 237.

¹³ I note that in the succeeding warning the apostle states that, in disclosing the salvation offered in Jesus, “God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will” (Heb 2:4).

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As he develops his story in Acts, Luke reminds his readers with specificity and regularity of the centrality of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus to Christian faith *and* of the Holy Spirit's witness to that great, salvation-history event. When, following the healing of the crippled beggar at the Temple, Peter and John appear before the Council, it is the Holy Spirit who inspires Peter's fresh testimony to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus under the figure of Jesus becoming the cornerstone (4:8-12). After the apostles are arrested and imprisoned by the High Priest, they are freed by an angel and continue teaching in the Temple (5:17-21). Made to appear before the Council, they bear witness to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus and the Holy Spirit as witness to it: "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior . . . And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him" (5:31-32). At the end of his own speech to the Council, Stephen accuses his hearers of "opposing the Holy Spirit" (7:51). While they become enraged by the accusation, Stephen experiences a Spirit-inspired vision: "But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!'" (7:55-56). The point is this: At the heart of the Christian message as it extends from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (1:8) is the exaltation-coronation of Jesus. And it is the Holy Spirit who everywhere bears witness to that great event.

The Spirit as Witness to the Glorified Jesus
(John 6:60-71; 7:32-39; 14-16)

John's Gospel exhibits thoroughgoing interest in the Holy Spirit from John the Baptist's testimony to the Spirit's descent upon Jesus (1:32-34) to Jesus's post-resurrection giving of the Spirit to His disciples (20:19-23). In the Farewell Discourse (John 14-16), accents the role of the Holy Spirit as the "Advocate" or "Comforter" (Greek: *ho paracletos*) who extends the presence of Jesus in the experience of His disciples (14:15-31; 15:26-27; 16:4b-15). To what extent is this wealth of material about the Holy Spirit informed by the meta-narrative so central to the Pentecost story in Acts, with Jesus ascending to heaven and bequeathing the Holy Spirit to His followers as signal and Messenger of His exaltation? Specifically, how are we to understand the "job description" of the Holy Spirit which Jesus

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provides, “And when he [the Advocate] comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (16:8)? Does this description offer a competing view of the central function of the Spirit or does it echo the themes of the Pentecost story?

Two narratives in John offer important framing for the discussions of the Holy Spirit in the Farewell Discourse (John 14-16). The first of these is John 6:60-71. In the knowledge that His disciples were “grumbling” (v. 61) about His statements concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood (vv. 52-58), Jesus asks, “Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life” (vv. 61b-63, ESV). How are we to understand the juxtaposition of Jesus’s ascent “to where he was before” with the mention of Spirit as Lifegiver? Jesus’s cryptic statement is to be understood along these lines: If the idea of Jesus as the Bread of life who descends from heaven confuses his disciples, how will they make any sense of the more challenging concept of His ascent to heaven (especially since it comes through the cross)?¹⁴ Left to themselves they will never grasp such a profound truth (“the flesh is useless”). It is only the Spirit who can help them understand it (“It is the Spirit who gives life”), vivifying the words Jesus has already spoken to them (v. 63). Jesus’s statement accents an important element echoed in the Pentecost story of Acts: The Spirit is the One who discloses the meaning of His ascent-exaltation. The Spirit is the Revealer of the exalted Jesus.

The second narrative that helps to frame later discussions of the Holy Spirit is John 7:32-39. In John 7, Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. With officers from the Pharisees standing by with the intent of arresting Him, Jesus announces, “I am going to him who sent me,” specifying that his destination is inaccessible to his hearers, a statement that mystifies them (vv. 32-36). The notice of His departure sets up the next scene of the story, which occurs “on the last day of the festival, the great day” (v. 37). In this culminating scene, Jesus stands up and cries out, “Let

¹⁴ “Their taking umbrage over him would only be exacerbated, not quelled, if they saw him ascending to the Father, for he would go to the Father via the cross” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010], 141).

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anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,” (vv. 37-38, NRSV margin).¹⁵ The evangelist then comments, underlining the role of Jesus as the Supplier of the Spirit and linking the two scenes (vv. 32-26 and vv. 37-38) by asserting that the departure of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit are inextricably connected: “Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (v. 39).

In the narrative time of the story, the “glorification” of Jesus has not yet occurred. The “glorification” of Jesus refers to the sequence of coming events, the death-resurrection-ascension-exaltation of Jesus, with an accent on the culmination of the sequence in the exaltation of Jesus.¹⁶ While John 6:60-71 has already suggested an answer, the story in John 7:32-39 leaves an obvious question open: In what way are the coming of the Spirit and the departure and “glorification” of Jesus linked? Is this simply a matter of chronology? Or is there a deeper connection between the two? Why must the coming of the Spirit await the glorification of Jesus?

The answer to that question comes in the Farewell Discourse (chapters 14-16), after a long silence concerning the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ The Discourse begins in the worrying context of a fresh announcement by Jesus of His departure, one directed to His disciples: “Little Children, I am with you

¹⁵ On the relative merits of the “Eastern Interpretation” in which the “rivers of living water” flow from the believer and the “Western Interpretation” in which they flow from Christ, see Gary M. Burge, *The Anointed Community: The Holy Spirit in the Johannine Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 88-93. Burge argues for the Western or “Christological” view. Carson, who prefers the “Eastern Interpretation,” clarifies that in both views it is Jesus who supplies the water, the Spirit (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* [PNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], 321-29).

¹⁶ Cf. John 12:20-36. “Glorification means primarily God’s restoration of Jesus to glory in heaven, the glory which belongs to God himself and which he shared with the Father before the world began, an event which paradoxically begins with his death” (William Loader, *Jesus in John’s Gospel: Structure and Issues in Johannine Christology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017], 223-24).

¹⁷ Brown attributes this long silence to a “shift from Jesus’ proclamation of the new reality he makes possible to his fate at the hands of those hostile to the realm of God.” The Spirit comes back into view “when the narrative advances to focus directly on Jesus and his followers in the Farewell Discourses . . .” (Tricia Gates Brown, *Spirit in the Writings of John: Johannine Pneumatology in Social-Scientific Perspective* [JSNTSS 253; London: T & T Clark, 2003], 167).

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only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, Where I am going, you cannot come” (13:33). Jesus attempts to reassure His disciples that the purpose of His departure is so that He may “prepare a place” for them and return to take them to that place (John 14:1-3), but his disciples remain focused on His departure (John 14:5). In the context of a restatement of His departure (John 14:12), Jesus again offers a rationale: He, from His position with the Father, will enable them to do “greater works” than He Himself has done and will respond to their every request (14:12-13). Jesus then offers extended comment on the coming and work of “the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name” (14:26). Jesus will not leave them orphaned but will come to them in the Spirit as Comforter-Helper-Advocate (Greek: *paracletos*; 14:16-18). While His departure will mean “the world will no longer see me,” His disciples “will see me,” presumably through the ministry of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who gives them access to Him as the exalted One (14:19-20).

The definitive response to the open question of why the coming of the Holy Spirit is so closely linked to the glorification of Jesus comes in His final statements about the Holy Spirit in the Farewell Discourse. In the context of the guilt of the world for rejecting Him (15:18-24), Jesus offers a fresh summary of the work of the Holy Spirit: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning” (15:26-27). Following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will come to “testify” to Him, bearing witness to events to which the disciples have had no access—the exaltation-coronation of Jesus. They will then extend that testimony to others as ones who now know the story from start to finish (15:27).

On the heels of predictions about future persecution and a fresh announcement of His departure (16:1-6), Jesus argues that His absence will be of benefit to His followers because it will trigger the presence of the Advocate, who will not come to them until Jesus departs and sends Him (16:7; cf. 7:39). It is just here that Jesus offers a classic statement about the work of the Spirit: “And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment” (16:8). On the surface, the statement might be understood to describe the broad, general work of the

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Holy Spirit in the hearts of humankind, bringing moral and ethical insight. Jesus, though, offers three explanatory phrases, commenting on each of the three terms He has just employed, “sin and righteousness and judgment.” What these explanatory phrases make clear is that this description of the Spirit’s work highlights the relationship of that work to Jesus Himself. In other words, the work of the Holy Spirit is more about Christology than ethics (or about ethics as understood Christologically).

In the context of the guilt of the world (15:18, 22-25), Jesus’s description of the Holy Spirit’s work (16:8-11) is set in a juridical context, reversing the situation of persecuted followers before earthbound tribunals (15:18-21; 16:1-4). “The picture is clearly one of a trial, in which the Paraclete has the role of prosecuting attorney and the world is the defendant, standing before the believing community.”¹⁸ The Spirit will “prove the world wrong . . . about sin, because they do not believe in me” (16:8-9). The focus is on the future, post-exaltation work of the Spirit when the scope of the world’s guilt will have expanded. Not only have they incurred guilt by rejecting the person and work of Jesus during His earthly ministry (8:24; 15:22-24), they will add to that guilt by rejecting the future testimony of both the Spirit and the disciples to the exalted Jesus (15:26-27).

The Spirit will also “prove the world wrong . . . about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer” (16:8, 10). How is it that “righteousness” (Greek: *dikaiosunē*) is connected to the departure of Jesus and to the Spirit’s witness to the exalted Jesus? In this juridical context, the term should be understood as “vindication” and refers to the great reversal of human judgments concerning Jesus represented by His resurrection-ascension-exaltation.¹⁹ This great reversal, stated in the context of its emotional and spiritual impact on the disciples, becomes the subject of John 16:16-24, where Jesus’s absence “is offered as

¹⁸ Gail R. O’Day, “The Gospel of John: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” *NIB* 12:771.

¹⁹ The translation as “vindication” is borrowed from O’Day “The Gospel of John,” 772. Alternatively, “righteousness” may be understood as used in a negative sense (along the lines of Isa 64:6; Dan 9:18) for the deceptive, false “righteousness” displayed by the world in its rejection of Jesus. So Edward W. Klink III, *John* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 680.

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corroboration of his departure and hence the seal of his vindication.”²⁰ Because “the world” remains convinced of human judgments against Jesus rather than His vindication by God, the Spirit proves them wrong (or convicts them of guilt) in their failure to acknowledge the vindication-exaltation of Jesus.

In the third explanatory phrase, the Spirit will “prove the world wrong . . . about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned” (16:8, 11), a condemnation rooted in Christ’s death on the cross, when “the ruler of this world” is to be judged and “driven out” (12:31-32). In the context of the Spirit’s post-exaltation witness, the ongoing failure of the world “to acknowledge Jesus as the rightful Lord of the world, installed by God, implicates it in the judgment that took place in the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Like the prince of this world, its cause is lost; *it has been judged*.”²¹ “The very fact that Jesus stands justified before the Father means that Satan has been condemned and has lost his power over the world.”²² In rejecting the Spirit’s future testimony to Christ’s resurrection-ascension-exaltation, the culpability of “the world” will be confirmed.

Jesus comments further on the role of the Spirit in 16:12-15. At the heart of the passage, v. 14a defines the Spirit’s work as “glorifying” Jesus. C. K. Barrett points to the use of “glorify” (Greek: *doxazō*) in John 7:39: “*edoxasthē* in that verse refers to a simple fact, the exaltation of Christ before the coming of the Spirit, *doxasei* in this verse [16:14] to the Spirit’s work in bringing home the glory of Christ to the world.”²³ From that vantage point, we are able to see that vv. 14b-15 elaborate the role of the Spirit as announcing the exalted Jesus. Jesus explains His further statement that the Spirit “will take what is mine and declare it to you” by adding “All that the Father has is mine” (vv. 14-15). The Spirit “takes” or “receives” (Greek: *lambanō*) the news of the return of Jesus to His former glory with

²⁰ O’Day “The Gospel of John,” 772.

²¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 282.

²² Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John (XIII-XXI)* (AB 29a; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 713.

²³ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1978), 490. Burge writes of “the pivotal nature of 7:39, not just as a road sign indicating the coming life in the Spirit, but that in this Spirit a new hermeneutical perspective will be born” (Burge, 212).

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the Father (cf. 17:5) and His exaltation, as Co-Regent of the Father, to unbounded sovereignty, and announces it to the disciples.

In reviewing 16:12-15, it is important to recall that, as with the definitions of sin, righteousness and judgment (vv. 8-11), “truth” is not defined as a broad, ethical concept but a Christological one. Jesus has already noted the inability of the disciples to grasp His future ascension (6:61-63), which becomes an important referent of Jesus’s statement that there are “many things” the disciples “cannot bear” in that moment of time (v. 12). The “Spirit of truth” will “guide you into all the truth” (v. 13), the full truth about the exalted Jesus. That the Spirit “will declare to you the things that are to come” (v. 13) refers to the important salvation history events that, from within the narrative time of the story, are about to occur—Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation.²⁴ Understood in this way, vv. 12-15 are an expansion on the central role of the Spirit: “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me” (15:26).

Must the testimony of the Spirit to Jesus await His glorification as a simple matter of chronology? No. The connection between the Spirit’s testimony to Jesus and His exaltation is far more important than mere chronology. It is the divine vindication represented by the resurrection-ascension-exaltation that is the particular focus of the Holy Spirit’s work of convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment in His role as Witness to the exalted Jesus (15:26). The coming of the Spirit must await the glorification of Jesus because it is the glorified-exalted Jesus who bequeaths the Spirit (15:26), His vindication-exaltation is the subject and focus of the Spirit’s testimony to Him (16:8-11), and it is the exalted Jesus who both personifies and defines the content of the Spirit’s witness

²⁴ For various understandings of the role of the Spirit in declaring “the things that are to come” (16:13) see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 vols. (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:1040-41 and Carson, 540-41. Carson argues that the phrase does not point to “what is immediately future to the upper room setting, *i.e.* to Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation” because “by the time he [the Spirit] tells the disciples about it he would be announcing an event already behind them.” However, since the Spirit’s revelation is the only way the disciples will know that Jesus has been exalted and since this understanding is implied by the narrative time of the story, it seems the most defensible view.

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(16:13-14). The rich revelations concerning the Holy Spirit, disclosed in the Gospel of John, are structured and framed by important features that also appear in the Pentecost story: The gift of the Holy Spirit by Jesus to His followers will signal His exaltation in heaven and cue the Spirit's essential task—to bear witness to the exalted Jesus.

*The Spirit as Worldwide Witness to Christ's Exaltation-Coronation
(Rev 4-5)*

Revelation 4-5 contain the transcript of a profound worship event occurring at the throne of God. John, following the invitation to “Come up here” (4:1), sees God's throne and experiences a sound and light display emanating from it—“flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder”—, glistening and echoing off a crystalline sea of glass (4:2-6). Four “living creatures” flank the throne and serve as cantors in this worship service, praising in song the holiness of “the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come” (4:8). Their praise triggers worship by the twenty-four elders, themselves seated on thrones surrounding the throne of God. They fall before the grand, central throne, singing their own hymn of praise, which celebrates the worthiness of God as Creator of all things (4:9-11).

At the opening of the next scene in the worship service, the focus remains on the One seated on the throne, now accompanied by a scroll at His right hand (5:1).²⁵ A most dramatic moment is introduced by the question, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” (5:2). After an apparently futile search, a Candidate is introduced to John as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David,” who “has conquered” (5:5). When this victorious Hero appears amidst the worship tableau, He does so as “a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the world” (5:6). In a moment of high ceremony, He takes the scroll. This significant act triggers ever-expanding, hymnic worship. First, the four creatures living creatures and twenty-four elders sing a hymn praising the worthiness of the

²⁵ Following Ranko Stefanovic who argues that the Greek phrase *epi tēn dexian*, usually translated “in the right hand” (per Ezek. 2:2-10), is better rendered “at the right hand” and “means that the sealed scroll was seen by John as being on the throne at the right hand of God” (Stefanovic, 200).

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Lamb for His victorious death (5:9-10). Then, an innumerable crowd of angels add their praise for the worthiness of the Lamb because of His death (5:11-12). Finally, all creatures everywhere bless “the one seated upon the throne” and “the Lamb” (5:13). The worship event concludes with a resonant “Amen!” spoken by the four living creatures and by renewed, prostrate worship by the twenty-four elders (5:14).

What does this worship service and its central, meaning-laden act of the Lamb taking the scroll signify in this “pivotal section of the whole book”?²⁶ This “special occasion,” it may be argued, is “the exaltation of the glorified Christ, following His ascension to heaven, on the heavenly throne at the right hand of the Father,”²⁷ an event that “took place at a specific point in time.”²⁸ The identification of “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” evokes both the OT promises of a “future messianic king of the Davidic lineage”²⁹ (e.g. Jer 24:5-6; 33:15-22; Ezek 34:23-25; 37:24-28; cf. Luke 1:32-33; Acts 13:22-23) and OT traditions for inaugurating a king. The requirement that a new king possess a copy of the law scroll of Deuteronomy to “remain with him” (Deut. 17:18-20) led quite naturally to the presentation of the scroll as a significant element in the coronation of a new monarch (see the case of Joash in 2 Kings 11:12). So it is that in Rev 5 “the climactic moment of the scene” comes when “the covenant book, which had been sealed and stored for ages, was handed to the triumphant Christ—the long-awaited King from the Davidic lineage and the Lion from

²⁶ Ibid., 164.

²⁷ Ibid. See Stefanovic’s more detailed argument in his published dissertation: Ranko Stefanovic, *The Background and Meaning of the Sealed Book of Revelation 5*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 22 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1996). Hans K. LaRondelle writes: “John sees the crucified and risen Christ being exalted and enthroned in the heavenly throne room as the Ruler of history. The transfer of the sealed scroll from the Father to Christ makes Him the Lord over the developing history of the planet, since it is His task to open the seals of the scroll of man’s destiny. . . . Human history with its final judgment is placed in the hands of the risen Lord. Without Christ, world history is an enigma, and without purpose. All heaven, therefore, burst forth with praise when Christ was declared worthy to receive the divine scroll of destiny” (*How to Understand the End-Time Prophecies of the Bible: The Biblical-Contextual Approach* [Sarasota, FL: First Impressions, 1997], 117).

²⁸ Ranko Stefanovic, *Plain Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2013), 67.

²⁹ Ibid., 72.

the tribe of Judah.”³⁰

On the assumption that the worship event in Rev 4-5 celebrates the exaltation of Jesus, what role does the Holy Spirit play in relationship to it? First, it is notable that the chapters follow the exhortation of the risen Christ repeated to each of the seven churches, “Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), identifying the letters (2:1-3:22) as joint communiques of Christ and the Spirit.

Second, it is also remarkable that immediately prior to Rev 4-5, the final communique from the risen Christ and the Spirit offers direct announcement of Christ’s ascension-coronation: “To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (3:21-22). Following a repeated literary feature of the Apocalypse, this announcement, concluding the letters to the seven churches, telegraphs the content of the next scene—the exaltation-coronation of Jesus.³¹

Third, John’s access to this “special occasion” comes through the Spirit: “At once I was in the Spirit . . .” (Rev 4:2, ESV; cf. 1:10; 17:3; 21:10, with each instance of being “in the Spirit” introducing a vision of Jesus³²). John sees and shares with his readers that which the Holy Spirit deems important. The scene of Christ’s exaltation-coronation in Rev 5 is the testimony of the Spirit to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus. Given our study of the Holy Spirit in Acts and the Gospel of John, it should come as no surprise that a Spirit-inspired vision focuses on the exalted Jesus.

Fourth, within the framework of the heavenly throne room vision itself, the Holy Spirit is represented with riveting symbolism. John has already twice highlighted “the seven spirits of God,” employing the symbolism of Zech 4:1-6: 1) As part of the Trinitarian formula of 1:4-5; 2) In introducing the message to Sardis where the risen Christ describes Himself as having “the seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (3:1). Now, in the midst of an account of the remarkable sound and light display at the throne of God, the phrase returns: “. . . in front of the throne burn

³⁰ Ibid., 73.

³¹ Ibid., 65-66.

³² See John R. Levison, “Holy Spirit,” in *NIDB* 5:878.

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seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God” (4:5). The description refers “to the work and activity of the Holy Spirit in its fullness.”³³

As the dramatic, heavenly scene unfolds, there is another, related, symbolic presentation of the Holy Spirit. When the Lamb appears, having been introduced as the conquering, warrior-king (“the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” who “has conquered,” 5:5), the Spirit is symbolized with the Lamb himself: “Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (5:6). Again, the symbolism is drawn from Zech 4 (“These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range through the whole earth,” v. 10). With “seven eyes” representing omniscience, Stefanovic elucidates the symbolism further:

... this is a symbolic reference to the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ throughout the world. The Greek word *apostellō* (“to send forth,” “to send out”) was a technical term among the Jews for sending out an official representative with a special task (cf. Matt. 11:10; Acts 10:17; Rev. 1:1; 22:6). The term here refers to the worldwide mission of the Holy Spirit in the full authority of Christ.³⁴

Whereas the symbolism of the seven torches before the throne may be viewed as suggesting the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father, this instance “pictures the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit.”³⁵ And what a close relationship it is! In the context of describing the coming of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, Jesus can say, “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you” (John 14:18). It is that type of collaboration and intimacy which seems symbolized here.

If the Spirit is “sent out into all the earth” with “a special task,” what would that task be? In the context of this vision, what would be the Spirit’s

³³ Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 195.

³⁴ Ibid., 204. Cf. Robert H. Mounce who tentatively identifies the seven spirits as “angelic beings rather than the Holy Spirit” (*The Book of Revelation* [Rev. ed.; NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998], 122).

³⁵ George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 88.

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worldwide role? Informed by our study of Acts and the Gospel of John and by the context of Rev 4-5, I would argue that the “special task” of the Holy Spirit is to testify to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus, to bear witness that it is Jesus Christ who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.³⁶

To think of the Holy Spirit as Witness to the exalted Jesus as the truth presented in the figurative account of Rev 4-5 should not surprise us since we have reviewed Jesus’s own description of the Spirit’s role: “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf” (John 15:26).

The Spirit and the Exalted Christ as Giver of Gifts (Ephesians 4:1-16)

The culminating theme of Acts 2, that manifestations of the Holy Spirit bear witness to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus, is worked out in some detail in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Early in the letter, Paul connects the glorified Jesus with the “the seal of the promised Holy Spirit” in the lives of believers (1:3-14, esp. vv. 3-4, 12-14) and offers one of the most important NT witnesses to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus in 1:15-2:10 (esp. 1:20-23).³⁷ Paul prays for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit in the lives of his addressees (1:17-18). Paul imagines that believers, having experienced such an infusion of the Spirit, will know “the immeasurable greatness” of God’s power for them (1:19). He continues by elaborating the source of that grand power: “God put this power to work in Christ when he

³⁶ Commenting on the phrase, “sent out into all the earth” (5:6), Stefanovic writes: “If Revelation 5 describes the enthronement of Christ which occurred at Pentecost . . . then the significance of this phrase is obvious.” Referring to Peter’s Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:32-36), Stefanovic concludes: “Since Christ is now exalted on the throne of the universe, the work of the Holy Spirit is unlimited in applying Christ’s victorious death on the cross to the lives of human beings and announcing God’s kingdom throughout the earth” (Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 210-11).

³⁷ Zdravko Stefanovic argues that Dan 7, Rev. 5 and Eph 1:19b-22 all allude to the “same event in salvation history,” to “the inauguration of Jesus Christ as King of the universe” (*Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2007], 269-70.) For Erwin Penner, the enthronement of Christ at the Father’s right hand “is the central and determining Christological theme in Ephesians” and is “a unifying thread running throughout the book.” He argues, “All that God has done and will do for the believer rests on the greatness of the power brought to bear when he exalted Christ to ultimate lordship over all things for his body. From this Lord flow all the blessings of salvation” (“The Enthronement of Christ in Ephesians,” *Direction* 12, no. 3 [1983]: 12-19).

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raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” (1:20-21). Paul retells this story of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus as he applies it to believers: “. . . even when we were dead through our trespasses,” God “made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . .” (2:5-6). “These verbs (‘made alive,’ ‘raised,’ and ‘made to sit’) refer to three successive historical events in the saving career of Jesus, the resurrection, the ascension and the session.”³⁸

Having connected poignantly and repeatedly the exaltation of Jesus and the presence of the Spirit among believers, Paul brings together the themes of Christ’s ascension-exaltation-coronation, the Spirit, and spiritual gifts later in the letter, in 4:1-16. In the letter, one can see on display a “virtual interchange” between the roles of Christ and the Spirit.³⁹ Therefore, it is not wholly surprising that in 4:1-16 the exalted Christ becomes the Giver of “spiritual gifts” in the form of gifted individuals (apostles; prophets; evangelists; pastor-teachers). Paul introduces the passage by underlining his purpose in composing it, to encourage his addressees to make “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3). Then he offers a list of seven unifying elements, beginning the list with “There is one body and one Spirit . . .” (v. 4). As Paul develops the body metaphor in the passage, the gifted individuals themselves are the tendons, ligaments or joints (Greek: *haphē*, sing., v. 16; cf. Col 2:19) with which the body is equipped, which bind it together and bring “unity” (vv. 11-13, 16). These gifted individuals, in their role of bringing unity to the body of Christ,

³⁸ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society* (2d ed.; Bible Speaks Today; Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1991), 80-81. “Session” is an aging synonym for the coronation or exaltation of Jesus. Stott’s clear explanation of these verbs is, strangely, uncommon among commentators on the letter.

³⁹ So Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC 42; Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 247. See Eph 3:16-17: “I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.” Compare the roles in 1 Cor 12 where the Spirit and “God” appear variously as the active agent in giving or arranging the gifts in “the body of Christ” (see esp. vv. 3, 6, 12, 18, 27-28) and Rom 12:3-8 where, in another discussion of spiritual gifts in the “one body in Christ” (v. 5), the Spirit is not mentioned explicitly.

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actualize the unifying role of the Spirit.

Paul introduces the exalted Christ as Giver of the gifts (which here are more gifted individuals than spiritual gifts given to individuals) with a quotation from Ps 68:18: “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people” (v. 8). What is intriguing is that whereas in the OT passage it the Lord who receives “gifts from people,” Paul has Christ *giving* gifts. Christ is portrayed “as the triumphant Divine Warrior who, after he has ascended his throne, blesses his people with gifts.”⁴⁰ It is worth noting that the psalm concludes, “Awesome is God in his sanctuary, the God of Israel; he gives power and strength to his people” (v. 35). So God as Giver of gifts to His people is an important thought for this psalm. Paul, then, is not misquoting it but “rather appropriating the narrative movement of the entire psalm.”⁴¹

Modern translations are correct in setting vv. 9-10 apart as a parenthetical statement, which comments on the citation just given (Ps 68:18). In v. 9 Paul asks a question, plying the implications of the passage. That question should be translated as does the NIV: “What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?”⁴²

Paul is interested in two actions that he sees attributed to Yahweh in Ps 68:18: 1) Yahweh’s ascent; 2) Yahweh’s descent to the earth. In the psalm, the context is the familiar OT one of Yahweh, portrayed as a conquering general. Having won a great victory, He “ascends” to His capital city to celebrate. But what is the “descent,” which does not seem to be discussed there? The interpretive comment on Ps 68:18 that Paul now offers helps us with that question. The comment is focused on identifying the One who descends with the One who ascends: “He who descended is the one who

⁴⁰ Timothy G. Gombis, “Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8,” *NovT* 47, no. 4 (2005): 373.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁴² Both the NKJV, with the phrase “first descended,” and the ESV, “had also descended,” are incorrect in specifying that the “descent” occurred before the “ascent.” The word “first” (Greek: *proton*) is included in some later manuscripts but is judged by modern, Greek texts of the NT to be a later addition. The Greek verb is an aorist and should be translated as “he descended” in parallel to the earlier verb, “he ascended.” The NIV is correct in leaving open the order of the “descent” and the “ascent” and the relationship between them, topics which are discussed below.

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also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things” (ESV). Now, though, we gain some access to Paul’s application of Ps 68:18 to Christ because he describes the destination of the ascent (“ascended far above all the heavens”) and its purpose (“that he might fill all things”). The hearers will now know that it is Jesus who is under discussion since Paul has earlier used such language of Him (1:20-23).

To understand the order of ascent and descent, we need to take full account of Paul’s citation of Ps 68:18 and the narrative order assumed there. Paul, in his comment on the passage, is not adjusting but reflecting its narrative order. In the passage, the “ascent on high” or “far above all the heavens” takes place first, followed by the “descent,” an event to be equated with the “giving of gifts to men” in Ps 68:18 (v. 8) and the “filling of all things” (v. 9). The “descent” that Paul is discussing is then the descent of Christ-in-the-Spirit following His exaltation to provision His church with gifted people.⁴³ The “movement in thought from Christ’s ascent to his gifts in the Church requires a descent in the Spirit . . . The one who by his Spirit is active in giving gifts to the Church and equipping it for its role is the same one who by virtue of his ascent became cosmic Lord.”⁴⁴

While the genre, context, and imagery differ significantly from the

⁴³ Among the supporters of this view are George B. Caird, “The Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:7-11,” *Studia Evangelica* 2, (1964): 535-45; Ralph P. Martin, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 49-51; W. Hall III Harris, “The Ascent and Descent of Christ in Ephesians 4:9-10,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151, (1994): 198-214; Stephen E. Fowl, *Ephesians: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 138-39.

⁴⁴ Lincoln, 247. The pattern of movement from ascent to descent is set early in Ephesians where the fascination is with Christ’s resurrection and exaltation-coronation. The incarnation, while assumed, is not drawn into this pattern of movement that is signaled as early as 1:3, which records that believers are blessed by God “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” This upward sweep continues with the thought that God’s “plan for the fullness of time” is “to gather up (Greek: *anakephalaiōsasthai*) all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10) and is expressed fully, including both “ascent” and “descent,” at 1:20-23. As Paul applies this story about Jesus to believers, again the emphasis is on the upward sweep: “. . . even when we were dead through our trespasses,” God “made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . .” (2:5-6). By Eph 4:8, with its citation of Ps 68:18, the pattern of movement is familiar, first the “ascent” (“When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive . . .”); then the “descent” (“ . . . he gave gifts to his people”). It would be only natural for this now long-established pattern of movement in Ephesians to carry into 4:9-10 with a discussion of the same “ascent” and “descent.”

presentation in Acts 2, significant elements of the Pentecost narrative appear in Ephesians. Christ, following His resurrection (1:20; 2:5; cf. Acts 2:24-32), from His newly exalted position on high (4:8-10; cf. Acts 2:33), pours out (noting the use of the liquid metaphor, “fill,” in 4:10; cf. Acts 2:17-18, 33) Spirit-inspired gifts (as gifted people who, among other gifts, exercise the gift of prophesy, 4:11; cf. Acts 2:17) upon His church (4:8, 10-13; cf. Acts 2:17-18). The presence of the Spirit among God’s people signals the exaltation-coronation of Jesus.⁴⁵

Part 2: The Holy Spirit’s Witness to the Exaltation-Coronation of Jesus as Organizing Theme

The detailed development of the idea of the Holy Spirit as Witness to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus in Acts, John, Revelation, and Ephesians suggests that this is the central, defining role of the Holy Spirit. If so, we may look to this theme to help us summarize and integrate the complex, multi-faceted testimony to the Spirit found in the documents of the NT. I turn to four broad NT themes about the Holy Spirit as a way of illustrating the value of doing so: 1) The Spirit and the Life of Jesus; 2) The Spirit and the Disciples of Jesus; 3) The Spirit and the Church of Jesus; 4) The Spirit and the Return of Jesus.

The Spirit and the Life of Jesus

Caught up in the theme of the Spirit’s witness to Christ’s exaltation-coronation, we may forget that the NT portrays the Holy Spirit as deeply involved in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus from the beginning. In fact, reminding ourselves that the Holy Spirit collaborates with Jesus through his life and ministry on earth casts in high relief the culminating nature of the Spirit’s witness to Jesus’s exaltation. Matthew directly credits the conception of Jesus as a human being to the creative work of the Holy Spirit. He reports that Mary “was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit” (Matt 1:18) and an angel, appearing to Joseph in a dream, says to him, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (1:20). In Luke’s birth narrative, an angel responds to Mary’s request for an explanation by saying,

⁴⁵ For more on Eph 4:1-16, see John K. McVay, “Biblical Metaphors for the Church and Adventist Ecclesiology,” *AUSS* 44, no. 2 (2006): 294-96.

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“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God” (1:35). Moreover, a few days after Jesus’s birth, when he is presented in the Temple, Simeon bears Spirit-inspired testimony to His identity (2:25-35).

Judging by the NT record, the Holy Spirit attends Jesus throughout His earthly ministry.⁴⁶ After His baptism, Jesus is driven out into the wilderness (so Mark 1:12) or led into the wilderness by the Spirit (so Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1), where He successfully overcomes temptations from the devil. His Galilean ministry is empowered by the Spirit (Luke 4:14). Still early in His ministry, Jesus Himself uses the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 to announce His anointing by the Holy Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor . . .” (Luke 4:18).⁴⁷ His preaching and teaching ministry is inspired by the Holy Spirit since Jesus, the One God has sent, “speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure” (John 3:34). The Holy Spirit is also involved in the culminating events of Jesus’s earthly ministry. In a reference to the Cross, it is “through the Spirit” that Christ “offered himself without blemish to God” (Heb 9:14).⁴⁸ And Paul associates the Spirit with the resurrection of Christ (Rom 8:9-11).

John the Baptist bore witness to this continuing presence of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. As prophesied in a divine revelation to him, John testifies, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him” (John 1:32-33). Indeed, the Spirit does remain on Jesus. From start to finish the His ministry is accompanied and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

In relationship to the theme of the exalted Jesus giving the Holy Spirit from on high, it is important to note that the Gospels portray Jesus as the

⁴⁶ “The Gospel narratives portray the Spirit as working actively in every phase of Jesus’ life and mission” (Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996], 79).

⁴⁷ The anointing of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is also acknowledged in Acts 4:26-27; 10:38 and the passages in the Gospels about His baptism (see discussion, below).

⁴⁸ So William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13* (WBC 47a; Dallas: Word, 1991), 240. Harold W. Attridge argues instead that “spirit” here “most likely refers to Christ and to the interior or spiritual quality of his sacrificial act.” (*Hebrews* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989], 251).

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Giver of the Holy Spirit and this role is characterized as central to His identity. Among Jews at the time of Jesus, God was thought of as increasingly distant and transcendent. In line with this thinking, the Spirit, who had been active in the past through inspiring prophets and would be poured out afresh in the age to come, was regarded as dormant. So John the Baptist, widely recognized as a prophet, became the focus of great excitement. He announced that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was imminent and that One was coming who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, a point made in all four of the Gospels.⁴⁹ It is helpful to review that fourfold witness in Matt 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:15-17; and John 1:32-34 (emphasis added):

Matthew 3:11-12

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Mark 1:7-8

He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but *he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*”

Luke 3:15-17

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

John 1:32-34

And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is *the*

⁴⁹ For the thoughts of this paragraph, I am indebted to Dunn, 1127.

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one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

What can be said about this fourfold Gospel affirmation in relationship to the Lukan account of Jesus, the exalted One, pouring out the Holy Spirit as confirmation of His new status (Acts 2:33-36)? In company with the other Evangelists, Luke designates Jesus as the One who will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 3:16). In addition, he echoes that idea in Acts 2:33-36 where the exalted Jesus “pours out” the Holy Spirit. In addition, in his introduction to Acts (1:1-5), Luke reports that Jesus, during the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, orders “the apostles” to stay in Jerusalem and “wait there for the promise of the Father” (v. 4). He completes his introduction with these words from Jesus: “This . . . is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (v. 5). The repetition of the theme of Jesus as the One who gives the Holy Spirit and its prominence at the beginning of Acts offers evidence of its importance for Luke.

It is also of interest that both contexts, Acts 2 and the four Gospels, use OT “liquid metaphors” to describe Jesus’s role as Giver of the Holy Spirit (see Isa 32:15; Ezek 39:29; Joel 2:28; Zech 12:10). In the Gospels, Jesus will “baptize” (Greek: *baptizō*) with or in the Holy Spirit. The term offers an inspiring portrait of the Holy Spirit’s presence in the lives of believers since it means here “to cause someone to have an extraordinary experience akin to an initiatory water-rite, *to plunge, baptize.*”⁵⁰ In the context of the fourfold Gospel witness to the story of John baptizing at the Jordan (see above), it becomes a moving image of intimate and thorough immersion in the Holy Spirit by the coming Messiah. The terminology of Acts 2, “pour out” (Greek: *ekcheō*), is often associated with “what comes from above” and so is appropriate to the context of Jesus as the exalted-crowned One granting the Holy Spirit. It also suggests the abundance of the gift, since “to pour out” means to “cause to be emitted in quantity” and the context of Joel’s prophecy uses the terminology in relationship to a prophecy about rain (Joel 2:23, LXX).⁵¹

⁵⁰ BGAD, 165.

⁵¹ BGAD, 312.

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To summarize, early Christians came to understand that Jesus Christ had been exalted at the throne of God and that the presence of the Holy Spirit signaled that event. This conviction of theirs was in line with important affirmations of the NT documents—that the Holy Spirit was powerfully and consistently present throughout Jesus’s earthly ministry and that central to His identity was His role of “baptizing” with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is portrayed as the “receiver, bearer, and giver” of the Holy Spirit.⁵²

The Spirit and the Disciples of Jesus

That the presence of the Holy Spirit marks the life and ministry of Jesus suggests that the same should be true of His disciples. Paul often alludes to the dramatic moment when the Holy Spirit invades the human heart and the unbeliever is transformed into a believer. Having reviewed a list of wrongdoers, Paul says to the Corinthian believers, “And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). The Spirit’s presence at their conversion transformed them “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” actualizing the unseen but effective lordship of the exalted Jesus. At conversion, believers, through the witness of the Spirit (Col 1:18), acknowledge that Jesus is Lord and in so doing are “rescued . . . from the power of darkness” and “transferred . . . into the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13). With eyes now focused on the exalted Christ, their newly-identified Lord who is “seated at the right hand of God” (3:1-4), their citizenship is in heaven and they await His return from heaven as their “Savior, the Lord Jesus” (3:20).

At the end of a lengthy discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers (Rom 8:1-30), Paul proclaims that it is God’s purpose, through the Spirit, for believers “to be conformed to the image of his son” (v. 29). The vision of Jesus Christ seated in power at the right hand of God becomes a controlling one for the believer and life and behavior are

⁵² So Leopoldo A. Sánchez, *Receiver, Bearer, and Giver of God’s Spirit: Jesus’ Life in the Spirit as a Lens for Theology and Life* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015). “In God’s economy of salvation, Jesus of Nazareth receives the Holy Spirit of the Most High at his conception in Bethlehem, at his baptism at the Jordan, and as the risen and ascended Lord seated at God’s right hand. Throughout his life and work as God’s faithful and obedient Son, Jesus bears the Spirit in inexhaustible fullness. In loving freedom, Jesus also pours out this Spirit on us from the time of his glorification onwards . . . ,” 31.

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transformed. When that does not occur as it should, Paul will remind his converts of the role of the Holy Spirit in their conversion and transformation. When believers have fallen into the trap of a loose sexuality, complete with visits to prostitutes supported by a theological/philosophical rationale, Paul reminds, “. . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:19-20). The person who is “led by the Spirit” will not serve “the desires of the flesh” (which include such behaviors as fornication, idolatry, strife and dissensions), but will give expression to “the fruit of the Spirit” exhibited through “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

If an outward transformation of behavior indicates the Holy Spirit’s presence in the life, there is also an inner dimension. A “battle royal rages in the lives of believers; a far greater battle than before their union with Christ. This is because the Spirit is opposed to the fallen nature I am born with (and do not lose after my incorporation into Christ).”⁵³ The motivation for participating in this interior work of discipleship and character formation is, again, a vision of the exalted Jesus. The apostle exhorts:

. . . let us . . . lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb 12:1-2).

The same Spirit who superintended the great events of salvation history, including the resurrection of Jesus, “dwells in you” (Rom 8:9-11; cf. 1 Pet 3:18) and brings important assets to bear on the inner struggle. While the inner struggle has an anguishing aspect to it (“. . . we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, grown inwardly while we wait for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies,” v. 23), the Spirit “helps us in our weakness” (v. 26), reminding us that we are “children of God” who may

⁵³ Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 87. Green is especially referring to the descriptions of the Christian life in Rom 8 and Gal 5.

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cry out “Abba! Father!” in our moment of need (vv. 14-16). When we acknowledge God as Father, the Spirit bears “witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (v. 16). And when we pray, the Spirit “intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (v. 26). The Spirit demonstrates a remarkable durability of commitment to the believer. The Spirit does not just “visit” but “abides” or “dwells” with the disciple (John 14:16-17; cf. 1 Cor 6:19; 1 John 2:27; 3:24). And the Holy Spirit does not depart when the disciple misbehaves. Rather, the Spirit remains and is “grieved” (Eph 4:30). Through the Holy Spirit, we have “access” to the grace offered by “our Lord Jesus Christ” and undertake the hard work of Christian growth motivated by “God’s love” that “has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:1-5; cf. Eph 2:18).

The Spirit and the Church of Jesus

Beyond inspiring individuals, the Holy Spirit creates and fashions Christian community, the church. The Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2) is sometimes thought of as the birth of the church. The Holy Spirit, as announcer of the exaltation-coronation of Jesus, calls and shapes an anointed community to extend the ministry of Jesus. Like the experience at Pentecost, the experience of the Holy Spirit within that community was very real. In those early days, the presence of the Holy Spirit “made a difference to their lives, outwardly and emphatically. It had powerful and palpable effects. The love of God burned in their hearts, people spoke God’s word with boldness, they prophesied and saw visions, they healed the sick. The Spirit was not a theory but altered real-life situations.”⁵⁴ Jesus, raised to life and exalted at the right hand of His Father, identified Himself with His followers (Acts 9:5), and baptized his disciples with the Holy Spirit, just as it had been prophesied about Him (Luke 3:15-16; John 1:33).⁵⁵ The Holy Spirit, by whom believers were “baptized” into “one body” (1 Cor 12:13), and who fostered unity, fellowship, and reconciliation among them (Eph 2:14-16; 4:1-6), bore witness to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus.⁵⁶

As was true at Pentecost, the Spirit continued to signal the Lordship of

⁵⁴ Pinnock, 133.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See Green, 118.

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Jesus by blessing the believing community with spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 2:14; 12:1-31; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Pet 4:10-11; Heb 2:3-4). In a reflection of the boundless extent of Christ's rule, these gifts are shared with all believers, while the spiritual health of the community depends on their activation and use (1 Cor 12:4-7; Eph 4:7, 15-16). In the distribution and use of these gifts, the sovereignty of the Spirit over the church is expressed. "The Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus, not the Spirit of the church. Any church that denies the Spirit freedom stands in danger of becoming a lifeless and self-glorifying church."⁵⁷ If, for example, the Spirit wishes to anoint a teenage woman with the gift of prophesy as a witness to Christ for a global church, and to give her witness validity until return of Jesus, the Spirit may do so.⁵⁸ The tests of the validity of any gift include the affirmation of Jesus's exaltation (1 Cor 12:3; 1 John 2:18-25) and whether or not the church is built up through the ministry of the gift (1 Cor 12:7).

Similarly, just as the Word of God played such an important role in Peter's preaching at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit affirms the inspiration of the OT (Mk 12:36; Acts 1:16, 4:25; 2 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Pet 1:19-21) and inspires the writers of the NT (1 Cor 2:13, 16; 14:38; 1 Thess 2:13; Col 4:16; 2 Pet 3:15-16), all in the interest of affirming Jesus as Savior and Lord. And the Spirit also gives ministers of the Word to the church, those who preach and teach the Scriptures, so that "the body of Christ" might "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:11-13). Paul, in 2 Cor 3, "the classic chapter for the role of the Spirit as illuminator of the Scriptures," argues that the Spirit inspires appropriate understanding of the OT.⁵⁹ The believer, who allows "the Spirit of the Lord" to make the Word of God clear, beholds "the glory of the Lord" (vv. 17-18). What truths do unbelievers miss who, in reading the Scriptures, resist the enlightening work of the Spirit? They miss "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," the truth of "Jesus Christ as Lord," and "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:3-6).

⁵⁷ Pinnock, 131.

⁵⁸ I allude to the convictions of Seventh-day Adventists that the risen Jesus endowed seventeen-year-old Ellen Harmon (whose married name became Ellen White) with the most authoritative of spiritual gifts, the gift of prophecy (1 Cor 14:1-5).

⁵⁹ Green, 110.

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In these ways and more (one thinks of the ordinances of baptism, footwashing, and Lord's Supper), the Holy Spirit is present within the church to bear witness to the church's exalted Savior and Lord. These Spirit-inspired assets are not intended to create a selfish community, disinterested in the needs of a lost and dying world. Rather, the Spirit's purpose is to ignite bold witness by the church to the exaltation-coronation of Jesus and to His return. The Christian missionary endeavor began when the church, "worshiping the Lord and fasting," heard the Holy Spirit command them to "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul" and obeyed (Acts 13:1-4).⁶⁰ The Spirit still impels believers to go out, energized by the news that though we may not be able to see Him on His throne, "Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). The church succeeds in its Spirit-initiated mission when the world understands that they proclaim "that there is another king named Jesus" (Acts 17:7) whose exaltation-coronation is determinative for the future of the world.

The Spirit and the Return of Jesus

The church, fashioned and inspired by the Spirit, looks toward the return of Jesus. What will be the role of the Spirit in preparing for that great event? In a most vivid picture of Christ's return, Rev 19:11-16, the Revelator portrays Christ astride a white horse and trailed by the armies of heaven, on His way to take vengeance on His enemies. He comes to actualize fully on earth that which has long been true elsewhere in the cosmos, the name inscribed on his thigh, "King of kings and Lord of lords" (v. 16). Refracting the OT tradition of a gathering of the nations to Israel (e.g. Isa 56:6-7; Jer 3:17; Zech 2:11; 8:21-23), worldwide messages of invitation and warning are issued prior to this event (Rev 14:6-12; 18:1-8). Given that God used the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2, it may be assumed that God will again use a special outpouring of the Spirit at the end of time to complete the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and finish the proclamation of the Gospel to all the world (Matt 24:14; 28:18-20).⁶¹ Seventh-day Adventists have

⁶⁰ Pinnock, 134.

⁶¹ Fernando Canale, "Doctrine of God," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (ed. Raoul Dederen; Commentary Reference Series; Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 137.

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frequently used the biblical and agricultural terms “early rain” and “latter rain” to refer to these two outpourings of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:23; James 5:7-8).⁶² Like the outpouring at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will again announce Jesus as “King of kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16) in preparing for His return.

It should come as no surprise that the Holy Spirit is powerfully active at the end of human history. The Spirit has been engaged, with Jesus, at each new salvation history event. So it is entirely consistent that the Spirit would be involved in preparing for the Second Coming. By the time of the NT, the Spirit was thought of “in eschatological terms, as the power of the End, the hallmark of the new age.”⁶³ This point of view is reflected repeatedly in the NT where the Holy Spirit is the down payment or “first installment” of what is to come (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). To share in the Holy Spirit is to taste “the powers of the age to come” (Heb 6:4-5). As such, the Spirit is part of both the “now” of Christian experience and the “not yet” of the Christian hope, pointing in a special way toward the return of Christ and fullness of the kingdom of God initiated by that event. The access to the new era represented by the “first fruits” of the Spirit, causes us to “groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). Believers are “marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit”, which is “the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people . . .” (Eph 1:13-14; cf. 4:30).

During this final era of human history, distinguished by great trauma as well as by the unprecedented proclamation of the Gospel, believers have access to the Holy Spirit, reminding them of the sovereign reign of their Lord. As the great battle of the ages intensifies, Jesus promises to be present with His church “to the end of the age” (Matt 28:20) and strengthens us “to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:8). To be able “to withstand on that evil day, . . . to stand firm,” believers are provisioned as the peace-waging army of

⁶² In a context where she describes the work of the mighty angel of Rev 18:1, Ellen White writes: “The work [in the last days] will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1950], 611).

⁶³ Dunn, 1126.

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Christ with “the whole armor of God” and, specifically, with the culminating provision of “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Equipped in the finest armor, the community of the faithful is exhorted to “Prayer in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication” (Eph 6:10-20). So it is that we await the “revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7; cf. Col 3:1-4; 2 Thess 1:7-8), that day when the now invisible but actual reign of Jesus over all things will become visible to every eye (Rev 1:7).

Conclusion

The narrative of Acts 2, with its scene of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as direct result and signal of the exaltation of Jesus, is a unique story. The rest of the NT, though, offers profound witness to central elements in the great meta-narrative it reflects. John, in his Gospel, places the testimony of the Paraclete to the risen and exalted Jesus at the heart of his expansive teaching about the Spirit. In the worship tableau of Rev 4-5, the Apocalypse provides figurative testimony to the worldwide witness of the Spirit to the coronation of Christ. Paul, in Ephesians, offers in his exposition of Ps 68:18 a view of the conquering, ascended Jesus as the Giver of Spirit-inspired gifts to His church.

When the testimony of Acts 2, confirmed and detailed in the genres of gospel, apocalypse, and letter, is used as a lens through which to view the many NT references to the Holy Spirit and His work, it offers fresh focus and coherence to broad themes of the Spirit’s work in the life of Jesus, in shaping the discipleship of believers, in creating and nourishing the church, and in relationship to Christ’s return. What comes into view is the considerable extent of NT testimony to the link between the Holy Spirit and the exaltation of Jesus, suggesting that His work as Witness to the exalted Jesus is His central, integrating role.

It is understandable when, in the hustle and bustle of life, we lose sight of that which is invisible—the exaltation-coronation of Jesus Christ—and fail to take advantage of the X-ray vision of the Holy Spirit. The everyday realities we confront pummel us with the reality of worldly traumas and earthbound powers. We need the Holy Spirit’s witness still, this One who invites us to join in His testimony that Jesus Christ, already exalted Lord, is returning to claim His own.

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