

THE HOLY SPIRIT

“Conclusion: The Language of Symbol”

John 3:1-8

- 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council.
- 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."
- 3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."
- 4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"
- 5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.
- 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.
- 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'
- 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." NIV

Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night and essentially pays him a compliment. Jesus begins another one of those marvelous discourses that has been taught to millions but was originally spoken to only one man. Verse 3 says that “in reply Jesus declared.” Not waiting for a question, Jesus launches Nicodemus in uncharted territory and leaves him plucking for straws. He tells him of seeing and entering the kingdom of God; of being born again by the Spirit; and the children of the Spirit being like the wind. We examined this narrative when we talked about the Spirit of God being like the wind. But then Jesus moves on to make an even more startling statement.

John 3:9-12

- 9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.
- 10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?"
- 11 I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.
- 12 **I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe;** how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? NIV

“I have spoken to you of earthly things,” Jesus said. Did you hear that? Entering the kingdom of God, being born again by the Spirit of God, moving with the wind of God – earthly things! That should give us pause. “How can this be?” How is it that these marvelous realities are “earthly things?”

It is because Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about the work of the Spirit of God on earth and in man. They happen here and Jesus expressed their realities in condescending, earthly comparisons such as wind and new birth. “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe,” Jesus declared, “how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” Herein lies the importance of symbol.

In the language of symbol, God gives us a means by which to grab a hold of otherwise abstract, heavenly ideals and realities. If we cannot believe the symbol, how shall we ever have faith to believe in the heavenly reality?

Rom 1:20

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, **being understood from what has been made**, so that men are without excuse. NIV

*God speaks to us through the creation. This is the whole crux of symbolism. "A symbol [in Scripture] . . . is designed to represent certain characteristics or qualities in that which it represents. To be interpreted, it requires a pointing out of the characteristics, qualities, marks or features **common** to both the symbol and that which it symbolizes."*¹

*For nearly five months now, we have been examining different symbols used of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. I think it necessary in this concluding teaching to clarify a certain point. Most of the teachings in the series have a beginning section entitled "Establishing the Symbol." But while teaching, I have used symbol and type interchangeably. Though the two terms have similar meaning in everyday usage, when it comes to Scripture interpretation, they are quite distinct. Specifically speaking, a symbol is a representation, one thing standing for another, with no particular reference to time. A type is a prophetic representation, one thing prefiguring another. For instance, in Scripture, the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit and Abraham's servant sent to find a bride for Isaac is a type of the Holy Spirit.*²

*"God, in authoring the Bible, dealt with both creation and redemption. The first two chapters of Genesis contain the record of creation of the natural realm [earthly things]: the rest of the Bible contains God's plan of redemption. In Scripture God uses the natural things He created to become symbols (Rom 1:19-20). In other words, **the language of creation becomes the language of symbol which in turn becomes the language of redemption.**"*³

The Language of Symbol in Creation-

As a means of review and also of possibly gaining some new insights, I thought it would be good to examine the symbols we have looked at in light of when they were created.

1. Wind – is present in the word "Spirit" prior to the creation of the firmament (atmosphere and space) thus it is uncreated and eternal. The firmament was created on the 2nd day.
 - Two is the number of testimony and witness (Deut. 19:15). The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8:16).
 - Two is the number of separation and division. The firmament separated the waters above from the waters below. It is the wind of the Spirit that brings the waters together,

¹ Kevin Connor, *Interpreting the Symbols and Types*, BT Publishing, Portland, OR, 1992, p. 85

² Kevin Connor, Ken Malmin, *Interpreting the Scriptures*, BT Publishing, Portland, OR, 1983, p. 135

³ *ibid.*, p. 125, emphasis added.

connecting heaven and earth. (Wind also separates the wheat from the chaff – Matt 3:12.)

2. Water – is present in Gen 1:2 in the words “deep” and “waters.” Narratively, it thus stands as uncreated and eternal.
3. Fire – present on the 1st day, “let there be light” and created on the 4th day, “let there be lights in the firmament of heaven.”
 - One is the number of God.
 - Light parted the darkness and stood separate from it.
 - The stars, sun, and moon were to give light on the earth and be signs to mark seasons, days, and years.
 - Four is the number of the earth. The Holy Spirit brings light to the world and lets us know the times we are living in (1 Chr. 12:32).
4. Oil – Fruit trees were created on the 3rd day.
 - Three is the number of the Godhead and Divine completeness. We need the anointing of the Holy Spirit to walk in Divine completeness.
5. Golden Lampstand – Dry ground appeared on the 3rd day. Gold was in the land of Havilah and it was called good (Gen 2:12).
 - The Holy Spirit completes the testimony of God (2 Cor 13:1; John 10:25; Acts 1:8).
6. Dove – Birds were created on the 5th day.
 - Five is the number of grace.
 - Doves were sacrificial birds. In the Old Testament, there were five primary offerings (Lev 1-5) and in the New Testament there are five ascension ministries (Eph 4:11).

OFFERING	MINISTRY
Burnt	Apostle
Grain	Teacher
Fellowship (peace)	Pastor
Sin	Evangelist
Guilt (trespass)	Prophet

- In the Spirit of the dove, we offer our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1).

7. Eagle – Birds were created on the 5th day.
 - The eagle is a bird of war.
 - By grace, we are soldiers of Christ.

Ex 13:18

So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt **armed for battle**. NIV

Brown-Driver-Briggs' definition-

OT:2571 - **chamush** -- in battle array, **arrayed for battle by fives**, armed

2 Tim 2:1-3

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. NIV

8. Cloud – The cloud is a visible presence of water in the air. It is part of the “waters that are above.” As with wind and water, we get the sense of that which is uncreated (though it is first mentioned in Gen 9:13) and thus eternal.

So, these are the earthly things. But Jesus didn't stay there with Nicodemus. He began to proclaim to Him the heavenly things.

John 3:12-13 NIV

12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?

13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.

Jesus, the one who came from heaven, is uniquely qualified to speak of heavenly things. This is the same testimony that John gave of him.

John 3:31-36

31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all.

32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony.

33 The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful.

34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.

35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.

36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." NIV

If we want the Holy Spirit, we must come to the Son. And he does not give us the Spirit without purpose. He wants us to know the heavenly things, the deep things of God.

1 Cor 2:9-16

9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-

- 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
- 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.
- 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.
- 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.
- 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:
- 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. NIV

The above is quoted for reference – for teaching, we read out of the Message.

Christ knows and we have Christ's Spirit, amen? Let us share the grace.

2 Cor 13:14; Ps 23:6 – Corporately personalized

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, and we will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”