**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The Incarnation – Part X**

***Jesus’ Spirit-Baptism Saves***

 **February 4th, In the Year of Our Lord 2024**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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In our Incarnation sermon series, we are focusing on major events in the life of Jesus. We will not cover every event recorded in the New Testament. Most people are familiar with Jesus’ birth account. After the nativity story, and the narrative surrounding celebrating Christmas, there is a need to be more forthtelling of what took place next and the order things took place. The chronology is important.

In reality, we only have a few Scriptures detailing Jesus’ childhood which places Joseph and Mary returning from Egypt, where they had gone to escape King Herod, to finding their way to Nazareth (Matthew 2:14,21-23). From the Gospel narrative, we see that Jesus grew-up in Nazareth and experienced a common childhood being born into a working-class family. We then have the story of Jesus’ family going to Passover in Jerusalem, which, being faithful Jews, they went every year. This is where Jesus strayed into the Temple, becoming separated from his parents, and impressed the men there with His understanding of the Jewish Scriptures (Luke 2:42-52). In reality, we do not have many stories of Jesus’ childhood life.

With the few stories we have. . . we see that the Gospel writers made some observations revealing that Jesus was not a normal child. At the same time, the Gospel narrative lends to characterizing Jesus’ childhood to be average, in that there was not any private prep-school or Ivy League education. Due to the Synagogue’s system emphasis on reading the Hebrew Scripture, children were taught to read. Within Judaism, they were a literate society as compared to others around them. Israel being one of the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa in the 1st c., people were conversant in more than one language. Similar to countries in Europe where children grow-up and learn multiple languages. We know the common languages spoken in Israel were Aramaic, Greek and Hebrew. Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire. It is revealing that Pilate had written a public notice in languages the majority of people could read to be placed on Jesus’ Cross. . . "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." . . .Therefore, many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in **Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek**. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." (John 19:19-22)

**After Jesus’ Childhood**

**Within the account of Jesus’s water-baptism and Test in the Wilderness. . . we see the major goals and lessons of the Incarnation. God does not delay in presenting why life with Him is victorious over sin and death.**

 After the stories surrounding the birth of Jesus and His childhood are told, all four Gospels start the account of Jesus’ adult life with the introduction of the ministry of John the Baptist. God’s main mission for John the Baptist was to identify the Suffering Messiah of Isaiah 53. Isaiah prophesied about John the Baptist, that God would send a messenger and there would be a voice crying in the wilderness (Isaiah 40:3-5. Malachi 3:1, 4:5). I see Jesus’ water-baptism to be one of the greatest object lessons given by God. God’s Spirit coming to identify Himself in the flesh (Jesus) enabled John the Baptist to recognize the prophesied Messiah (John 1:32-33).

In addition, to identifying the Messiah, Jesus’ water-baptism fulfilled one of the major lessons of the Incarnation, in that God’s Spirit can be with a person. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26) for this specific purpose in order to have a spiritual relationship with Him. It is not emphasized that we have a physical image of God but a spiritual image. God, our Creator, wants to and can have a spiritual relationship with all of humanity, each individual, if we humbly ask Him.

King David had this Spirit-indwelling relationship with God (Psalm 51:11). David was fearful that God would pull His Spirit from him after his sin with Bathsheba. This fear stemmed from David, not God.

**Psalm 51:10-12**

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.

The fact that David confessed his sin and repented (Psalms 51) . . . demonstrated God’s Spirit working in David’s heart. God does not give-up on Believers. Believers, like David, go to God for confession of sin **(1 John 1:5-10).**

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

God’s desire for His Spirit to indwell every person is seen at Jesus’ water-baptism and early in Jesus’ ministry when He teaches Nicodemus (John 3). We see this again demonstrated at the end of Jesus’ Resurrection ministry time, when He demonstrates that His Spirit. . . the Holy Spirit’s ability to indwell a person. The Resurrected Jesus breathes His Spirit into the disciples empowering them to carry-out the Great Commission (John 20:19ff) to bring peace to people. This is the demarcation point for a person to become a Believer. Baptism by the Holy Spirit is being born again of Spirit. This is what Jesus told Nicodemus, recorded in the Gospel of John 3:3-5.

**John 3:3-5 3** Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

This is the same Word from God that He gave His prophets Moses (15th c. B.C.) and Ezekiel, in the early 6th c. B.C. In Deuteronomy 30:6, we read that God desires for a person’s heart and their descendants to be circumcised.

**Deuteronomy 30:6** "Moreover the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. . . 8 "And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

**Ezekiel 36:26-27 26** "Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 1:19, 11:20; Jeremiah 24:7)

Note (below) in Ezekiel 36:37, the Lord God will allow Israel [people] to ask Him to give them a new heart and place His Spirit within them. Asking God. . . is to humbly surrender to Him.

37 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock.

Again, we see God’s message come through His prophet Jeremiah making the direct correlation of circumcision and a new heart.

**Jeremiah 4:4** "**Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart**, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Or else My wrath will go forth like fire And burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."

Therefore, circumcision of the heart is spiritual rebirth. We see this in Acts 2:37 when the hearts of the Jews were cut/pierced. The Jews that had a hand in crucifying Jesus responded to Peter’s Holy Spirit preaching. . . “Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

 The Apostle Paul held and taught this same truth and writes to the church in Rome. We see here that circumcision of the heart is by the Spirit.

**Romans 2:29** But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

 I hope that everyone can see that God does not expect or require that a person become a Believer, a Christian, on their own. God does not ask a person to live the Christian life solo. No, in fact that is a lie. I see that it is a lie of the devil for a person to believe that God requires them to be alone in the face of the fallen evil world in an attempt to be a Christian. That is a formula for a disastrous defeat. Actually, the best illustration I can think is a Rocketship blasting off to go into outer space and blowing up on the launching pad. It never gets off the ground. . . must have had a faulty system assembly installed in production.

**So, what plan does God have to correctly install a Spiritual assembly in a lost person in order for them to become a Believer and live a victorious life?**

In John 3, Jesus is teaching Nicodemus the same truth Moses and Ezekiel prophesied hundreds of years before. . . that is. . . in order to be regenerated from the spiritually dead, a person has to have a heart-felt surrender to God, a total capitulation, in order to be reborn of spirit.

Many of us have undergone medical surgery. And a lot of us went through these procedures to save our temporal lives. We had no choice if we wanted to live. I compare these experiences to surrendering to God. We submit ourselves to the surgeon by agreeing to go under general anesthesia so they can operate and fix the problem. We are completely knocked-out and totally rely upon the whole surgical team to pull us through.

Once we have surrendered to the doctors, they take complete control so that we may live. The medical problem they fixed stays with us the rest of our lives. . . there is no reversing the surgery. In other words, you cannot go back in time.

Therefore, in God’s regeneration (salvation) life-long plan. . . God’s indwelling Spirit, not only saves. . . He empowers a person to withstand and fight-off the test and schemes of the devil.

The order of events in the Gospel is vitally important. After John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah and possessing God’s Holy Spirit, (because Jesus is God’s Spirit in the flesh – John 1:14), we see that Jesus is led out into the wilderness, by the Spirit, to be tested by the Devil. Again, notice the order of events here in the Gospels. Jesus undergoes water-baptism by John the Baptist, and for human consumption, there is a display of God’s Spirit identified with Jesus. The water-baptism of Jesus was to identify the Suffering Servant Messiah and to display that God’s intent for people is to be Spirit-filled to gain salvation and to have a victorious life over sin and death. Once John the Baptist identified Jesus as the Messiah, at His water-baptism, the emphasis for salvation was on Jesus’ Spirit-baptism for salvation and life empowerment over sin and death. Water-baptism is a temporal statement of faith and Spirit-baptism is the path to eternal life. Jesus, the Messiah, came to baptize people in the Spirit. (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:32). This is the point of regeneration (salvation) not water-baptism.

 In all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 4:1:11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 1:1-15), the account tells us that Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit. So, there was a Divine purpose in process here. This was not a situation where the devil caught Jesus at a weak moment and decided it was time to take advantage of Him. No, no, no, . . . it is the other way around. The devil took the bait and was exposed for his inferior powers compared to God; even God’s Spirit residing in a weakened human body (Jesus) after fasting forty days in the wilderness was superior. Here is another example, for our benefit, where God is demonstrating that His Spirit is to lead our lives. . .which will bring us victory over the devil. The whole account of Jesus’ wilderness experience was to demonstrate to all of us that even in our weakest human state. . . with God’s Spirit within us, the devil cannot defeat us. This does not mean we may physically survive, but we will spiritually live forever with the Lord.

 I say this is the “*test*” of Jesus not the “*temptation*” of Jesus. Why? Let’s define the Greek word “peirazo.”

**Strong’s 3985 πειράζω** *peirazo* **Meaning:** to make proof of, to attempt, test, tempt

**Origin:** from *3984* **Usage:** did(1), put(1), put to the test(2), tempt(2), tempted(13), tempter(2), test(6), tested(2), testing(7), tried(2), trying(2). **Notes:** Matthew 4:10

 In today’s culture, if we say that someone was “tempted” . . . this carries the understanding that the person really thought about what they were offered, and it was churning inside their mind and heart, but, in the end of their internal deliberation, they decided not to advance. They salivated but did not bite the apple. This is not what Jesus did. Jesus never mulled over anything in His mind and heart concerning the devil’s offers. We see that the devil *tested* Jesus, but Jesus passed the *test*. Conversely, Adam failed the *test* the devil presented. . . "You surely will not die! 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5)

Remember, God afforded Adam a choice to follow His will and told Adam what would happen if he ate from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17). Adam and Eve succumbed to the devil’s *test* and entered into a heart and mind deliberative process of *temptation* to be like God. . . When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6)

**1 Corinthians 15:21-22**

21 For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

**I Corinthians 15:45-47**

45 So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

Notice, the Greek word *peirazo* (translated by many English Bibles: *tempted*) in Jesus’ *wilderness accounts* has the primary meaning of “*to make proof of*” or “*to attempt”*. It was the devil who *attempted* to defeat Jesus. It was the devil whose goal was to *make proof* that Jesus would crumble to the temporal offers designed to entice Him away from His eternal mission.

We, too, that is Believers, because we are impowered with God’s Holy Spirit, possess the Spiritual power of God that God equipped us to fight off the schemes of the devil. In all three Synoptic Gospels, after John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness.

Let’s read the Apostle John’s Gospel and notice the way God had him detail this spiritual truth in **John 1:29-34.**

29 The next day he saw **Jesus coming to him** and said,

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

 30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said,

'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

 31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel,

I came baptizing in water."

 32 John testified saying,

 "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

 33 "I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me,

'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him,

this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

 34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

 [“Son of God” (Psalm 23:6-7, Isaiah 9:6-7)]

It is of note the way the Apostle John details the main focus concerning Jesus’ water baptism by John the Baptist. It was not the act of going under the water, but the Spirit of God descending as a dove and remaining on Jesus. John’s use of the imagery of a dove coming from heaven is used to highlight the Holy Spirit identifying Jesus as the Son of God, the Suffering Messiah. God’s Spirit was not manifested in a dove. The detail point is in verse 33 when John the Baptist witnesses what God had told him. . . *'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'* Notice here. . . there wasn’t a “dove” mentioned. The Apostle John, the Gospel writer, simply used the common observance that doves gracefully descend from the sky. It is also important to realize that the Spirit of God is seen to have remained upon Jesus just as God’s Spirit remains with Believers throughout our lives. It is up to us (The Believer) to rely upon God’s Spirit.

King Daivd is our example of a person who did not always rely upon God’s spiritual guidance (sin with Bathsheba). But God’s Spirit did not leave David and convicted him of his sin through God’s prophet Nathan, to whom David confessed. Again, David’s sin and confession is a witness to the Apostle John’s words that he wrote for God in **1 John 1:5-10.**

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

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9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

 **AMEN**.