

God with Us

In the May newsletter, I had an article about reading the Bible with some suggestions on how we might approach this most important volume of hope and promise. Perhaps there is another piece of information we need to consider about the Bible. It needs to be viewed as one entire unit concerning God's interaction with His creation.

If we view it as fragmented stories or myths, we miss the full meaning that is unfolded for us in this narrative. The Bible lights our pathway and allows us to see God, not only as a historical person but find our place in the beautiful unfolding truth that God is with us. God is with us is the heart of the message of Pentecost. The times when God was physically present in the affairs of His creation are recorded for us in the Bible. In reality, there are not that many times when God moved directly to touch the earth and the humans He created. We will consider some of them this morning.

If we open our Bibles to the first book, we find the very familiar events surrounding the creation. It is obvious that God is directly involved with the very formation of the earth and all living matter. In the first chapter, we read about the creation of the human race.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 NASB)

We could spend time discussing the phrase **Let Us make man in Our image**; this we have mentioned before and will again. Today, we note that God, the triune God, made a choice to make man (in the generic sense). **He created him; male and female He created them.**

We don't know how much time transpired between the creation on man and the creation of woman. We do know that there was some time between the two events. We also know that God took an interest in the affairs of His creation. He (God) did not want man to be alone or incomplete. So, in the second chapter we read: **"It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable (Lit. *corresponding to*) for him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So, the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:18-22 NASB)**

The third chapter of Genesis brings a somber ending to the personal interactions between God and man. For me, the scene that is painted is a bitter sweet scene. Bitter in the it marks the fear of the sinner man to face the nurturing and loving God. Sweet because it shows a side of God that enjoys the close personal relationship with man.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool (Lit. *breeze*) of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8 NASB)

From the time when Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, God, on occasion, spoke to and worked with various people on an individual basis. Some of the notables are Job and Noah. Then

in the 12th chapter of Genesis, God speaks to Abram (later called Abraham). God establishes a covenant with Abram that extends to his family and beyond.

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3 NASB)

God enters into a covenant with Abram that extended to Isaac, Jacob, and the sons of Jacob or the children of Israel. This covenant spans the time from when God spoke to Abram through the resurrection of Jesus. There are several markers that indicate the presence of God in this covenant relationship. We reflect on the burning bush, when God spoke to Moses. We remember that cloud that descended on the mountain when God gave Moses the laws and commandment. We know about the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that led the children of Israel through the wilderness. Perhaps one of the greatest demonstrations of God’s presence came when Moses completed the tabernacle or tent of meeting for God’s dwelling. Let’s look at the scene described in Exodus 40:34-38.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel. (Exodus 40:34-38 NASB)

When the children of Israel reach their Promised Land, Solomon builds a more permanent structure to be a place of worship. Upon completion of the temple, we see the image of God entering this temple as we read 2 Chronicles 7:1-3.

Now when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. The priests could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’S house. All the sons of Israel, seeing the fire come down and the glory of the LORD upon the house, bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave praise to the LORD, saying, “Truly He is good, truly His lovingkindness is everlasting.” (2 Chronicles 7:1-3 NASB)

We may remember the history of the children of Israel. They frequently drifted into idol worship and failed to stay true to God and His laws. Ultimately God allowed them to be captured and taken into exile. First the northern kingdom and then the kingdom of Judah. In Ezekiel the 10th chapter, we see the image of God leaving the temple 440 years after His glory filled the temple. Some of us may be sitting here this morning and question God’s presence relative to the covenant made with Abram. If God left the temple, where does that leave us in our relationship with God? Let me assure you, just as Peter said in his second letter, **The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9 NASB)** God still cares and is still committed to His covenant.

Isaiah looked to the time when God would return to an active presence in the affairs of humans. In Isaiah the 9th chapter we read: **For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful**

Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB)

This child born to us who is called Mighty God is Jesus. John, in his gospel account, ties the idea of God with us together in the first chapter.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1 NASB)

Notice here, it is clearly stated that **the Word was God**. Then dropping down to the 14th verse we find: **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 NASB)**

God in the flesh, live on this earth for approximately 33 years. When He returned to heaven, He promised to send a helper. (Read John 14:26, John 16:7-15, Luke 24:49, and others.) So, we come to today some 2000 plus years ago. In the city of Jerusalem, a large crowd of Jews were gathered to celebrate the early harvest. This is called the Feast of Weeks. The celebration come seven weeks and one day after the Passover Sabbath. It was one of the mandatory celebrations so there were many people in the city. Some had come for the Passover Feast and stayed on for the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (50 days).

Luke tells us in the second chapter of Acts, **now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. (Acts 2:5 NASB)**

The Holy Spirit had been poured out on the apostles and they began to speak to the crowd of people gathered in Jerusalem. Each one heard the apostle's message in their own native language.

And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our *own* tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:6-12 NASB)

Indeed, what does this mean? Peter answers with a quote from a minor prophet named Joel:

**'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says,
'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;
AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS,
AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;
EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN,
I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT
And they shall prophesy.
'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE
AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW,
BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.
'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,**

BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

**‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’
(Acts 2:17-21 NASB)**

Compare this passage with Joel 2: 28-32. The spirit of God has descended into humans. Acts 2:38 tells us this is the gift we receive with our salvation. Paul tells us in Ephesians the spirit of God is given as a seal and a pledge of our salvation.

**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, 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. (Ephesians 1:13-14 NASB)**

Pentecost is a celebration that God is once more with His people. He lives within us. Just as His spirit lived in the tabernacle, just as His spirit lived in Solomon’s temple, His spirit live in us today as a seal and a pledge that God is with us. He will always be with us now and in the world to come.