

BEING SPIRIT, or the SPIRIT of BEING

To communicate with us, God created words (in the beginning, you recall), and used common figures of speech to help us understand "heavenly things." I would suggest that it would be profitable for us to consider some of the figures, parables, metaphors, etc., which He gave to us - as Father brings life to them within us, and as we share.

We (as well as everything else) existed in God (Who is Spirit) before we (as well as everything else) came forth from out of the midst of Him (Rom. 11:36). Thus, we were spirit. And nothing changed that. And I would add, that nothing changed that fact for anything which came out of God. Thus, on this level of thinking and speaking, everything is spirit. "Within Him all things are held together." "Within Him we may live, and are moved, and exist."

Ok. Is this the end of the story? Is this all there is to see, that we are spirit? So why did he create anything? Why did He form mankind of dust, and tell us (in Adam) that "we are dust"?

Why did He create a worship system revolving around His tent (Tabernacle)? Why does He tell us that WE ARE His tent (Temple; House)? Why did He tell us that He would come and dwell (live in a tent) with us? Why all the words about the soul, that it must be destroyed in order to "find it"? Why, once again, all His concern for the land, animals, His creation being renewed, our bodies being "clothed upon" with the spiritual house from heaven WHICH WE NOW HAVE?

Is this all a part of our being "spirit beings"? Well, yes. But it is also a part of our being a part of the corporate Second Man, the Last Adam. So what about "the flesh"? We are told that it profits nothing. But was this referring to our bodies, or to something else? In Rom. 8:9, Paul tells us, "Yet you folks are not constantly existing within flesh (or: you are not in flesh), but rather within spirit, since indeed God's Spirit is continuously housing Himself (making His abode; residing; dwelling) within you folks. 10. But since Christ [is] within you folks, the body, indeed, is dead (lifeless) because of sin, yet the spirit [is] life because of fair and equitable dealings, right-wised relationships, and justice within the Way pointed out." Now did Paul mean that we are "spirit beings" without bodies? I don't think that our physical body was his subject. I suggest that the "flesh" to which he was referring, was the system of flesh ordinances of the old covenant. The new covenant was a covenant of worship in spirit and truth - and this is the "spirit" that we are now in, since God's spirit is dwelling (as an idiom: living together as husband and wife) within us.

We are called to "stand [our] BODIES alongside (or: place your bodies beside) [the] Well-pleasing, Set-apart, Living Sacrifice by God (in God; for God) [this being] [our] sacred service which pertains to thought, reason and communication (or: [our] logical, rational obedience in worship)." (Rom. 12:1) Now you may say, well, this means to make our "house" a sacrifice.

My concern is that this perspective can lead so much to detachment, that it becomes all too easy to forget the practical imperatives of Jesus (remember the qualifying characteristics for the kingdom and eonian life, in the parable of the sheep and the goats [lit. kids - immature ones], they were not just waking up and remembering who we essentially are - they were aware to serve people and their bodily needs), and of Paul, and of Peter, and of James.

When our body (our tent of flesh) hurts, is sick, is going through surgery, etc., it has a strong and deep effect upon "us." It throws us out of our normal schedule, and sometimes we're unconscious, so as to

be unable to be aware or "awake" to anything. Or, someone says an unkind word (it's happened to and by us all), and our soul reacts. My point is, that we are connected to, associated with, and responsive to our souls and bodies. As a man "THINKS" in his heart (the core of his being), so he is. Thinking can involve our minds (an aspect of the soul?) and our intellect, as well as our spirit (whatever this all is!). Scripture has involved all of us: spirit, soul, and body (to use Paul's phrase), and has a place for all three of these (or, all three aspects of our "one" self) and all of the rest of creation as well.

Do we see creation as a part of us? I do. Does it mean that I focus on the carnal? Not at all. I simply see all as being a part of Him, and thus a part of me - and I a part of Him and His creation.

Christ - including His body - is a manifestation of God within a physical object. Recall 1 Cor. 10, that the ROCK which followed Israel in the wilderness WAS Christ. Now Paul tells us that we now know no one, including Christ, after the flesh. What does this mean? Do I relate to Lynda, my wife, and to my children only as spirit beings? I know that they are, but their souls and bodies are of concern to me, and I both relate to and minister to both of these aspects of their "beings."

I suggest that Paul was referring to the flesh system (including the flesh ordinance of circumcision - which the Judaizers were insisting was necessary for one to relate to the Christ, in effect making it necessary to join the Jewish religion to be saved) that was no longer necessary for us to relate to and intimately know both Christ and each other.

So, yes we are branches of the Vine - and I wholeheartedly concur that the "branch" and the "Vine" are "one plant," one substance - and we need to abide (live in Him as our home, and in relationship with Him) in the Vine, but "leaving this [emphasis] behind, let us move on" to the goal for which Jesus used this illustration: that we bear much fruit (of the Spirit), and that our fruit remain.

Or, to use brother James' thoughts, "be doers of our being, not just hearers (or awakened ones) only." Now I'm not suggesting that anyone has here intimated that this is not what we are to do - I'm just focusing our attention in this discussion toward that goal. We are to BE Christ to creation, wherever He has placed us, and often this ministering in spirit comes in the form of our bodies and souls - even to the point of giving a cup of cold water, food, shelter, visiting the sick or imprisoned, etc. (Matt. 25:34-40) - and realizing that doing these things is spirit ministry, for its source is the love of Christ within us. Like intercession, it can often come in the form of our interceding in a situation with physical relief for the ones in need.

From my spirit to yours -- in all awareness that being joined to Him we are all one spirit -- and from my heart and soul to yours, much shalom.

Jonathan