

Abiding in Christ:
A Dispensational Theology of the Spiritual Life
(Part 3 of 3)

by
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In part two of this series, key elements for a dispensational system of sanctification were developed. An analysis of John 15 along with other key passages (fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:16–25; fruit of righteousness; Ephesians 5:9) revealed that abiding in Christ is synonymous with fellowship with Christ and that fellowship or abiding is both necessary and indispensable for spiritual growth and fruit production. Part two also demonstrated that the apostle John’s exhortations in 1 John 1:1–10, to walk by means of the Spirit, walk as children of light, and walk in the light are complementary descriptions of the Christian way of life and active responsibilities of the believer who has fellowship with God. Early dispensationalist Arno C. Gaebelein (1861–1945) noted:

The walk in the Spirit is to live and walk in Christ, to have Him always before the heart in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit, who is in us to make Christ a blessed reality. In such a walk, abiding in Christ, the lusts of the flesh have no place.¹

Only when the believer ceases to walk by the Spirit or abide in Christ does sin ensue, breaking fellowship.

At any given instant the believer lives his life in one of two mutually exclusive, absolute states by either: walking by the Spirit or the flesh (sin nature); in the light or in the darkness; abiding in Christ or abiding not; being filled by means of the Spirit or not. When the believer abides in Christ (walks by means of the Spirit

¹ Arno Clemens Gaebelein, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament: An Exegetical Examination of Every New Testament Reference to the Spirit of God: A Brief Text Book for Seminaries, Bible Institutes and All Christian Workers and Bible Students* (New York: Our Hope, n.d.), 69.

and is being filled by the Spirit), he walks in the light. Conversely, when the believer abides not (lives his life according to the sin nature and operates apart from the Word), he walks in darkness. Only in the former status does God the Holy Spirit experientially sanctify the believer by producing spiritual growth and developing maturity in the believer. When the believer sins, he no longer resides in this state of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, which alone is the environment for spiritual advance.

How then does the believer recover from sin to again advance spiritually? Traditionally, spiritual recovery has been taught using words such as repent, confession, turning from sin. Yet there is much disagreement. Some teach that confession of sin is for the unbeliever at salvation and is part of the requirement for salvation. Others teach that confession of sin after salvation is unnecessary since *the blood of Christ* continually cleanses every believer (1 John 1:7). Still others suggest that confession is a work, while others hold that without confession, there can be no restoration of fellowship and advance in the Christian life.

This third and final article will show that the key doctrinal idea in 1 John 1:7, 9 is cleansing or purification, not confession per se. Moreover, the finished and completed aspect of Christ's atonement does not in itself nullify the necessity of purification for sin in the post-salvation life of the believer. Before the believer can operate within the framework of his royal priesthood and enjoy fellowship with a righteous God, he must first be cleansed or purified from sin. This cleansing takes place positionally at salvation, and experientially each time the believer admits his sin to God the Father. These principles are true in every dispensation, though the particular details of their mechanics vary.

Cleansing and Confession

In his first epistle, the apostle John addresses a congregation of believers who had been seduced and distracted by a false doctrine that rejected the true humanity of Jesus Christ. John is writing to correct this erroneous teaching, affirming that Christ has come in the flesh. By following his correction, his readers might *have fellowship with us* (John and his fellow apostles); *and indeed our fellowship is with the Father*. In 1:5–10 the apostle addresses false claims to fellowship. He describes walking in the light and walking in darkness as mutually exclusive spheres of the believer's life. Walking in the light is synonymous with having fellowship with God. John then states that while thus walking in the light and in fellowship *the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin*.

Several possible options exist for understanding 1 John 1:7. First, one may understand the present tense verb to be a continuous present. This would mean that the blood of Jesus continuously and automatically cleanses the believer of sin. According to this view, the purification of all sin, pre- and post-salvation, occurs at salvation, therefore, no accompanying condition is requisite to receive purification from post-salvation sin. From the instant a person believes in Christ onward, he is automatically cleansed of all personal sins, thus no confession, repentance, remorse *et al.*, are necessary. Two problems exist with this interpretation. First, it renders the condition expressed in 1 John 1:9 unnecessary. If the believer is automatically and continuously cleansed from all post-salvation sin, then confession is superfluous if not wrong. Second, since John addresses those who have sinned subsequent to their salvation by adopting this false teaching, the cleansing he has in mind in this verse is a post-salvation purification rather than the cleansing which occurs at initial faith in Christ.

A second approach is to understand this as a gnomic principle: as long as the believer is in the light he will be cleansed of unknown or unintentional sins. Only when the believer refuses to

acknowledge these as sins, does he quit walking in the light.² The problem with this approach, we addressed in the second article in this series. This view understands light only in its revelational aspect, but not as a metaphor of God's perfect righteousness. This assertion assumes that sin only violates the righteous standard of God if it is known or intentional, or the Lord revealed it to the believer to be sin. Yet any sin, no matter how apparently inconsequential or unintended, violates the righteous standard of God and thus would grieve the Holy Spirit.

He is the Holy Spirit and all which is unholy must be avoided so as not to displease the guest who dwells in the heart. Every sin is a sin against Him, who is in us. Especially is He grieved when the Lord Jesus Christ is not honored and given the pre-eminent place. Confession and self-judgment will end the grieving of the Spirit. He himself leads to this through the Word of God.³

Ignorance of the law is never an excuse for disobedience to the law.

A third approach understands the principle of 1 John 1:7 to be the basis for the efficacy of confession. The present tense of the verb expresses a present tense reality true for every believer that is actuated only when the condition of confession is met (1 John 1:9). Whenever the believer sins, he violates the righteous standard of God. The sin, whether overt or mental, relatively minor or heinous, has already been paid for by the substitutionary death of Christ. The term *blood of Christ* (1 John 1:7) identifies the redemptive penalty paid for by Christ on the cross (1 Peter 1:18–19). Because Christ paid the penalty in full, post-salvation forgiveness of sin is available. We find the condition in 1:9, confession, which means to acknowledge, admit, sin.

Often confession is focused on as the key element of 1 John 1:9. If confession is so crucial, why is this verse the only place it

² Zane C. Hodges, *The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God's Love* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 60–62.

³ Gaebelein, *Holy Spirit*, 76.

is mentioned. Although the concept of confession is alluded to in other contexts, focusing on confession in 1 John 1:9 too often obscures the larger and more significant concept of cleansing. The verb *katharizō*, “to cleanse, purify, to be ritually or morally pure” (see 1:7 and 1:9) is, by virtue of repetition the crucial element. Confession is merely the means by which cleansing takes place. Once the focus has shifted from confession to cleansing, it will be evident that the doctrine of cleansing from post salvation sin to recover fellowship with God, scripture affirms repeatedly, though nuanced for each dispensation.

Four times the adjective *katharos*, “clean, pure, morally or ritually pure,” is used in a context in the Gospel of John (John 13:10, 11; 15:3) similar to that of 1 John.⁴ The use of this predicate adjective in those passages describes the positional cleansing from sin that occurs for every believer at salvation. An examination of Jesus’ teaching about cleansing in the upper room is crucial for understanding the doctrine so vital to the believer’s experiential sanctification.

In The Upper Room

The night before He went to the cross, our Lord celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples. In preparation for Passover, or any other formal meal, the conscientious Jew would first bathe and anoint himself with the culturally prescribed unguents. Etiquette dictated that the servants of the host would wash the feet of the guests upon their arrival. Unexpectedly, our Lord awaited arrival of all twelve disciples and the beginning of the meal before He arose to fulfill this menial task.

Our Lord was not performing a merely domestic task or perfunctory ritual. Each word and action was calculated to provide an object lesson to the disciples to illustrate for them principles He would soon elucidate in the Upper Room discourse and the lessons

⁴ See part 1, Robert Dean, Jr., “Abiding in Christ,” *CTS Journal* 7 (January–March 2001): 43.

on the vine. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostle John carefully selects vocabulary laden with significance from Old Testament ritual. His vocabulary describing the partial and complete washings enables us to understand the way in which he used *katharos*.

In the familiar scene, Jesus arose, arranged his garments, picked up a washbasin, and knelt at each disciple's feet and began to wash their feet. When he came to Peter, this outspoken disciple objected. The ensuing conversation illuminates Jesus' point of teaching. Our Lord's response, *What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter* (John 13:7) informs John's readers that Jesus is illustrating a doctrinal principle through action. The future tense locates the application in the approaching, but still unannounced Church Age. Peter's familiar objection and our Lord's response turn on the use of two Greek words for washing, *nīptō* and *louō*.⁵ The first refers to the washing or cleansing with water of a portion of the body, the hands, the feet, the face. The second describes the complete washing of the entire body. The Septuagint⁶ uses both terms to describe key events in the career of the High Priest. Understanding this Old Testament background illuminates the meaning any first century Jew would associate with Jesus' teaching.

The Levitical Priesthood

In Exodus 29:4 and 40:12 (cf., Leviticus 8:6) the inauguration ceremony of the High Priest is prescribed. At his anointing the High Priest was first to be completely bathed. The translators of

⁵ Friedrich Hauck, *Nīptō*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–74), 4:946–47.

⁶ The Septuagint (LXX), the translation of the Old Testament Hebrew Bible into Greek, was the Bible most familiar to the first century Jew. The disciples were intimately familiar with this version and frequently cite the LXX rather than the Hebrew text, in their writings. Hence, the analysis of the Greek vocabulary translating Hebrew terms frequently clarifies our understanding of New Testament statements.

the LXX rendered the Hebrew word *rāḥaṣ* with the Greek verb *louō*. Hebrew, not as precise in this word group as Greek, had only one word to describe both full bathing as well as partial washing. However, the Jews who translated the Old Testament into Greek were fully cognizant of the different washings and took advantage of the more precise Greek vocabulary to clarify the distinction. Only the initial washing of the High Priest was described by *louō*, subsequent washings that were partial were translated by *nīptō* (Exodus 30:18–21). The Lord designed these ritual purifications to correspond to an inward spiritual reality.

The ceremonial washings of the High Priest illustrate the importance of ritual purification in the life of the priest in his service in the Tabernacle and Temple. When God first created mankind, the man and the woman were sinless. Unhindered fellowship existed between righteous God and the perfect creature until Adam sinned. Subsequently, unrighteous man no longer enjoyed fellowship with a righteous God. However, even under the Mosaic Law, the grace of God provided a solution in the Tabernacle and Temple where God could once again dwell with man, as symbolized by the *Shekinah* Glory.⁷ However, the Mosaic Law established certain safeguards to protect sinful man from intruding on holy ground. The system of ritual established in the Mosaic Code provided a way for man to come before God to serve Him. In addition, these rituals provided instruction concerning the extent of sin and how radically it must be treated in order for man to have access to God.

Throughout Leviticus numerous regulations govern the believer's ceremonial life. Access to the Temple and the presence of God could be thwarted through a wide variety of activities that rendered the supplicant ceremonially or ritually unclean. These

⁷ The Hebrew nomenclature *Shekinah* developed in the Rabbinic period, first used in the Targums. It derived from the Hebrew, *šākan*, "to dwell" it refers to the dwelling of God in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle/ Temple. Robert B. Thieme, III, "The Panorama of the Shekinah Glory," (Th.M. thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1987), 11–15.

prohibitions were not in themselves necessarily sinful or immoral.⁸ It was not a matter of morality or immorality to touch the body of the deceased, or to touch someone who has done so, or to give birth, or to have a skin lesion, or any number of other circumstances. These non-moral actions involved contact with something related to the curse from sin. To violate these standards rendered a person ritually unclean for a specified period of days. To become ritually clean the participant must first offer the prescribed sacrifice to atone for the violation. Significantly, the LXX translators chose the Greek *katharizō* to translate the Hebrew *kipper* (“to atone”).

In Leviticus chapter five prescriptions for the sin or trespass offering dictated the offering of a lamb or kid (Leviticus 5:6) as a sin offering, or two turtledoves or young pigeons (one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering): *So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.* First, the supplicant confessed his sin, and then brought the appropriate sacrifice. The author uses the piel perfect of *kipper* in this verse for atonement. In recent years much debate has surfaced regarding the meaning of *kipper*, older lexicons have the root meaning as “to cover.”⁹ But recent lexicography suggests that the meaning is more consistent with the Akkadian cognate in the D-stem which is closer to the Hebrew piel and means to “rub out, blot out, or to cleanse.”¹⁰ In the Pentateuch, this conclusion seems to be supported by the consistent way in which the translators of the LXX rendered the piel of *kipper* with the Greek *katharizō*. In the Mosaic economy, each believer had to be cleansed ritually from sin by confession and sin offering.

⁸ The NET Bible clarifies this distinction between acts of moral turpitude (Leviticus 5:1) and acts rendering the person ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 5:2).

⁹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 497.

¹⁰ Richard E. Averbeck, “*kpr*,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:689–710.

Jesus answers Peter

Peter's refusal to allow our Lord to wash his feet elicited a remarkable rebuke from Jesus: *If I do not wash you, you have no part with me* (John 13:8b). Traditionally the word *part* (*meros*), commentators have understood to denote a role or participant in Jesus' future ministry. However, the Greek *meros*, had a technical sense in both Jewish and Greco-Roman testamentary literature that better fits the context (Luke 15:12; 22:29–30; Matthew 24:51; Revelation 20:6).¹¹ This term described the inheritance share or portion dedicated to the heir. As such, Jesus is not merely informing Peter that he will not have a future role in ministry, but that Peter would not have an inheritance portion in the coming Messianic kingdom. In the same way, the apostle Paul later warned the Ephesian believers that continued walking in darkness would also nullify inheritance, but not salvation. That Peter understood the seriousness of the penalty is indicated by his response: Peter immediately reversed himself and demanded a complete bath. By implication failure to be cleansed from post-salvation sin threatens the believer's rewards and inheritance in the coming Millennial Kingdom.

Positional and Experiential Perfection

Peter's response enabled our Lord to continue to explain in greater depth the distinction between the complete bath, *louō*, and the partial, *nīptō*. His statement to Peter that *He who has bathed [louō] needs only to wash [nīptō] his feet and is completely clean [katharos]* clarifies the principles of sanctification. By using the articular participle of *louō*, Jesus elevates this statement to a universal principle. By extension, anyone who has bathed [washed clean at his first moment of faith in Jesus Christ] need only be partially washed to be completely clean again. Jesus then applies this to the group of disciples, by using a plural *you*. You all are clean, he said, but not all of you all. This last statement clarified

¹¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, ed. Ralph P. Martin, WBC, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, vol. 36 (Dallas: Word, 1998), 233.

that Judas Iscariot, soon to betray Jesus, was not justified or positionally cleansed.

That the adjective describes their positional purification is further evidenced by the use of the predicate adjective *katharos* in John 15:3. The disciples, He states, are already clean, i.e., saved, positionally sanctified, but now they must abide in Him (John 13:4). Again, the issue of cleansing in 1 John is tied back to the interpretive grid of John 15 discussed in part one of this series. Though the disciples were positionally clean, they still needed to abide, to have fellowship, in order to grow spiritually and eventually produce fruit. If they sinned, then they would not be abiding and would need to recover fellowship by some means of post-salvation cleansing in order to advance.

Summary

At salvation the believer, like the High Priest in the Old Testament, is completely cleansed. He receives the imputed righteousness of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21) and is thus positionally righteous, positionally purified. Yet, the believer still possesses a sin nature and can choose to sin. When this happens the believer is no longer experientially clean. Once he ceases to walk by the Spirit and lives according to the sin nature, he is no longer being experientially sanctified. In this state the believer continues to operate according to the sin nature thereby disqualifying himself from inheritance.

These Old Testament rituals illustrate a key principle of sanctification: Sin, any sin, whether known or unknown, intentional or unintentional, abrogates the believer's access to a holy God. Only by following the designated procedure precisely spelled out in the Levitical system could the Old Testament saint recover his privilege. This principle extended beyond the ritual to the spiritual life and prayer life of the Old Testament saint: *If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear* (Psalm 66:18). Thus ritual cleansing corresponded to the need for spiritual cleansing. In the spiritual life of the Old Testament saint

confession was the means to real, as opposed to ritual cleansing. The penitential Psalms of David best illustrate this (e.g., Psalm 32:5; 38:18). In Psalm 51:2 David prays, *Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.* The text does not state that David has offered the trespass offering making him ceremonially pure, but his confession toward God has rendered him spiritually clean.

Clearly both New and Old Testament texts emphasize the extreme importance of cleansing in relationship to confession. However, some Replacement theologians argue from their theological presuppositions, that what was true regarding cleansing in an Old Testament economy no longer applies following completion of Christ's work on the cross. If their argument is true, specific instructions for cleansing from post-salvation sin should not be found in passages related to the spiritual life of believers in subsequent dispensations. Yet, descriptions for the ritual life of the millennial priesthood continue to emphasize the necessity of a purification for post-salvation sins through sin and guilt offerings in the Millennial Temple.

Cleansing in the Future Temple

The existence of a future, literal Temple in Jerusalem is accepted only by dispensationalists. Regarding the restoration of the Temple, replacement theologians either interpret the restored Temple passages in Ezekiel and other passages in a non-literal way (historic premillennialists), or they completely spiritualize their application (amillennialists and postmillennialists). One basis for opposition to the necessity of restored literal sacrifices is based on a certain understanding of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Reformed Theologian Edmond P. Clowney expresses the dilemma replacement theology imposes on the text:

Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, His blood the final sacrifice. There can be no going back. If there is a way back to the ceremonial law, to the types and shadows of what has now

become the bondage of legalism, then Paul labored and ran in vain—more than that, Christ died in vain.¹²

For the replacement theologian the finished work of Christ on the cross is defined in such a way that any reintroduction of literal animal sacrifices is sacrilege. The root of this discrepancy is found in the replacement theologian's unwillingness to recognize a distinction between God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the church.

The basic error in this question is the assumption, usually unconscious, that the conditions which prevail in this age of grace must necessarily be the same in all future ages, that the relations between God and man which exist now must continue to the end of time ... He will again bring forward His people Israel, the only nation He has ever recognized (Amos 3:2), and deal with them and with the Gentiles on a basis of law, although necessarily modified by grace as in the Mosaic dispensation. This follows for at least three reasons: (1) The age or dispensation of grace ends at the rapture and is never to be repeated. (2) In all other ages God deals with man on a law relationship. (3) All left on earth are God's enemies and must therefore be dealt with by law. Law is, and must be, accompanied by sacrifice. A repentant Israel must join in such sacrifices; and repentant Gentiles must conform and join therein also.¹³

On the contrary dispensationalists consistently interpret Ezekiel in a literal manner. Just as the Shekinah Glory departed a physical Temple, so it will return to a physical Temple. Just as the prophets predict the destruction of a physical Temple so they predict the building of a new physical Temple. If the Millennial Temple is literal and physical, then so too must be the sacrifices offered in that Temple. Old Testament scholar C. F. Keil notes:

¹² Edmond P. Clowney, "The Final Temple," *Prophecy in the Making: Messages Prepared for the Jerusalem Conference on Biblical Prophecy*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971), 181.

¹³ Clive A. Thompson, "The Necessity of Blood Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple," *BSac* 123 (July–September 1966): 238.

But the prophets of the Old Testament do not merely predict the return of the Israelites to their own land, and their everlasting abode in that land under the rule of the Messiah; but this prediction of theirs culminates in the promise that Jehovah will establish His sanctuary, i.e., His temple, in the midst of His redeemed people, and dwell there with them above them forever, and that all nations will come to this sanctuary of the Lord upon Zion year by year, to worship before the King Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. If, then, the Jewish people should receive Palestine again for its possession either at or after its conversion to Christ, in accordance with the promise of God, the temple with the levitical sacrificial worship would of necessity be also restored in Jerusalem. But if such a supposition is at variance with the teachings of Christ and apostles, so that this essential feature in the prophetic picture of future of the kingdom of God is not to be understood literally, but spiritually or typically, it is an unjustifiable inconsistency to adhere to the literal interpretation of the prophecy concerning the return of Israel to Canaan, and to look for the return of the Jewish people to Palestine, when it has come to believe in Jesus Christ.

As Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum observes: it is indeed an unjustifiable inconsistency to take the prophecies of Israel's final restoration literally, but then to allegorize away the prophecies of the Ezekiel Temple and sacrifices.¹⁴

Dispensationalists recognize a new physical Millennial Temple as well as a restored literal sacrificial system in the Millennial Temple. Fruchtenbaum points out,

The problem for Dispensationalists has been in the area of what role the Millennial Temple and sacrifices actually play in the Messianic Kingdom and how they do not contradict or demean the final sacrifice of the Messiah on the cross.¹⁵

¹⁴ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, "The Millennial Temple – Literal or Allegorical?" (Paper delivered in Dallas, TX, at The PreTrib Rapture Study Group, December, 2001), 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

According to dispensational scholar, Dr. Randall Price, Replacement theologians fail to note the distinctives in the interregnum of the Church Age, that sets apart the present economy from the past Mosaic and the future kingdom economy. The uniqueness of the present age, where there is no Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ, makes the role of the individual believer-priest unique also. In this age the Gentile is **integrated** into one body with the Jew, but in the Millennium Gentiles are **included** in “an earthly Jewish economy under the theocratic laws of the New Covenant which include physical sacrifices at a physical Temple (Isaiah 66:20–21; Zechariah 14:16–18).”¹⁶ During this present Church Age the believer is a priest (Romans 15:16; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6), his body a spiritual temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 6:19) with spiritual sacrifices (Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15–16) and access to God through Christ our High Priest into the Heavenly Temple (Hebrews 4:14–16; cf., 12:22–24). This spiritual temple of the individual believer in the Church Age, the Lord will remove at the pretribulation rapture of the church when God’s plan returns to Israel.

When the Messiah returns to the earth at the end of the Tribulation to establish the promised earthly kingdom, the worship of God will once again center on a physical Temple with a literal priesthood. In that dispensation, the spiritual life of Israel will be based on the New Covenant established on the cross, but prophesied for Israel (Jeremiah 31:31–34). It is on the basis of the literal interpretation and application of these texts to Israel that regenerate Israel is restored to the land where they will experience the physical and spiritual blessings of the New Covenant. The argument of the Old Testament New Covenant passages as well as the Hebrews passage is that the Old Covenant was inadequate in its requirements, not the ritual. As Price observes:

Israel could not keep its conditional requirements and therefore a superior and unconditional covenant was necessary which could guarantee the fulfillment of its requirements. The New Covenant’s

¹⁶ Price, *Last Days Temple*, 546.

provision of spiritual regeneration will make possible the spiritual obedience of the Nation that was lacking under the Mosaic economy, thereby preventing any further loss of relationship with God, the Land, or the Temple. That certain ritual aspects of the Mosaic Covenant remain under the New Covenant is to be expected, since the divine ideal is for the Creator to dwell with His creatures in an uninterrupted relationship (see Zechariah 2:10–11 and chapter 3). Even so, the significant legal differences in the ritual under the New Covenant confirms it is not a repetition of the Mosaic Covenant. This ritual, the focus of which was the regulation of a relationship between God and man through sacrifice, as already mentioned, was initiated with Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:20; 4:3–7), and continued in the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:1–18), long before the Mosaic legislation was enacted.¹⁷

The Jewish Tribulation saints who survive the Tribulation will enter the Messianic Kingdom as mortals, still possessing their sin natures. Among these will be the new Temple priests. As fallen creatures with sin natures these priests will still sin, will still become ceremonially defiled and will thus require ceremonial cleansing before entering the presence of God in the Temple. Among the offerings listed in Ezekiel for the Millennial Temple are:

- The *burnt-offering* (Ezekiel 40:38–39; 42; 43:18, 24, 27; 44:11; 45:15, 17, 23, 25; 46:2, 4, 12–13, 15),
- The *sin offering* (Ezekiel 40:39; 42:13, 19, 21–22, 25; 44:27, 29; 45:17, 19, 22–23, 25; 46:20),
- The *guilt offering* (Ezekiel 40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20), the *grain offering* (Ezekiel 42:13; 44:29; 45:15, 17, 24–25; 46:5, 7, 11, 14–15, 20),
- And the *peace offering* (Ezekiel 43:27; 45:15, 17; 46:2, 12).

¹⁷ Ibid., 547–48. It is beyond the scope of this article to survey the current discussions on the meaning of *kipper*, but this writer agrees with the conclusions that the primary sense of atonement is the removal of ritual impurity so the priest or worshipper could have access to God.

The purpose of the burnt offering is *to make atonement* (Ezekiel 45:15, 16) and the purpose for the sin offering is *cleanse it and make atonement for it* (Ezekiel 43:20–26). Ezekiel does not designate a purpose for the latter three offerings, but they are often linked together with the first three in Levitical ritual.

In summary, these five offerings in the Millennial Temple ritual system are offered by millennial saints for the recovery and maintenance of ceremonial or ritual cleansing so that fellowship with God might be restored or continue. This cleansing was not for personal salvation or for personal sanctification, but ceremonial purification. This ceremonial purification corresponds to and teaches through a training aid the necessity for personal salvation and cleansing from post-salvation sin.

In the millennial period, the presence of God will once again dwell with His people in a physical Temple on the earth. As part of the ritual service of a fallen priesthood, there will be the necessity for ongoing cleansing designated as atonement.¹⁸ Again, after insightful analysis of the meaning of sacrifice and substitution Price concludes:

Therefore, according to this view, what sacrifice accomplished was the removal of ritual impurity in order to restore the ability of worshippers to approach God. This concept understands that ritual violations (such as those specified in Leviticus), result in a ceremonial condition of uncleanness which not only interrupts and restricts the worship of the one who has committed an offense, but by its contagious nature is able to contaminate other people and objects, disrupting the required service of God. The possibility then exists that not only could the entire Nation suffer uncleanness, but that also the Temple itself could be defiled.¹⁹

The reality of an ongoing ritual teaching the need for post-salvation cleansing from sin subsequent to the completed work of Christ on the cross has crucial implications for the Church Age.

¹⁸ Averbek, *kpr*, 692.

¹⁹ Price, *Last Days Temple*, 548.

Replacement theologians frequently interpret the confession of sin in 1 John 1:9 to be related to admission of sin at the moment of salvation. This belongs to the “tests of life” school of interpreting 1 John that understands the connection between confession and forgiveness to be descriptive of the genuine believer.

In contrast, the “tests of fellowship” view, which is argued in this series to be more consistent with the dispensational *sine qua non*, interprets the conditional clause of 1 John 1:9, *if we confess our sin*, to have a prescriptive force. Confession of sin is mandatory for the believer to be purified of post-salvation sin. Like Peter whose feet needed washing, the royal believer-priest of the Church age who is a “spiritual Temple” may become defiled by sin, whether mental, emotional, or overt, and thus require post-salvation purification. At salvation the believer is completely cleansed of all sin. This is pictured by the complete washing of the High Priest. Nevertheless, subsequent to salvation the High Priest would go places and do things which would render him ceremonially unclean and unworthy to go into the presence of a righteous God. According to the standard of His grace, God provided a way for ceremonial purification to take place. In the ministry of the priest, his ablutions at the laver picture cleansing.

Cleansing in the New Testament

Confession *per se* might be mentioned once in the New Testament, but the necessity of cleansing is mentioned several times other than 1 John. In 2 Corinthians 7:1 the apostle Paul warns the Corinthian believers to cleanse themselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Likewise James admonishes his readers to *draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded* (James 4:7). James addresses believers who have fallen into various mental and emotional sins leading to division in the congregation. Before these believer-priests can advance, they must first be purified before God.

The Sanctifying Ministry of the Holy Spirit

As seen in part two of this series the believer is to abide in Christ and walk by means of the Holy Spirit as the sole and necessary condition for spiritual growth. This growth is the ongoing experience of sanctification. At the instant of faith alone in Christ alone the believer is not only positionally sanctified by virtue of his identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3–4), but also *is* [positionally and experientially] *clean*. Nevertheless, as the believer advances through life he quits walking by the Holy Spirit and lives according to the sin nature. At this point he becomes defiled. The ongoing sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit ceases, though other ministries of the Holy Spirit toward the believer continue: He is still indwelt by the Holy Spirit, still sealed by the Holy Spirit, still possesses spiritual gifts, and the Holy Spirit still convicts the believer by means of the Word of God to recover from sin (2 Timothy 3:16–17). It is not that all ministries of the Holy Spirit stop, but only that the positive ministries directly producing growth cease. Since the believer is neither abiding nor walking, growth and fruit production are stifled. The Holy Spirit is *grieved* (Ephesians 4:30).

If we neglect to be thankful and do not praise Him for everything, then we quench the Spirit, He is in us as the Spirit of praise and worship.²⁰

Once the believer admits and acknowledges sin, then experiential purification takes place. The believer is restored to fellowship and resumes his walk by means of the Holy Spirit. Now walking by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit works His sanctifying, growth and fruit-producing ministry in the life. The walk by the Spirit is characterized by ongoing filling of the believer's soul with the Word of Christ (Ephesians 5:18 with Colossians 3:16). The Spirit again teaches and guides. Under this dynamic the believer continues to grow. However, once he stops walking, sin again

²⁰ Gaebelien, *Holy Spirit*, 87.

disrupts this sanctifying process and the believer-priest fails to function as a spiritual Temple performing spiritual service (Romans 12:1).

As the believer obeys the Word of God, is yielded to the Lord, is occupied with Christ, walking in the Spirit, the Spirit of God fills his heart. If we sin and have been disobedient, the Spirit is still in us, but instead of filling us and leading us deeper into the things of Christ, he will direct our attention to our failures, so that we may judge ourselves and confess our sins to God our Father. If the believer walks in self-judgment before God, walking in the light as He is in the light, obedient to His Word, the Holy Spirit is well pleased and then fills him. A believer may begin the day filled with the Spirit, but at night the filling may no longer be enjoyed, because there was disobedience to the Word of God. The filling returns as we retrace our steps and bring our sin into the light.²¹

Conclusion

This three part series has demonstrated that the theological presuppositions of Replacement theology have affected not only the interpretation of soteriological passages, but also passages on the Christian life. Since these presuppositions are antithetical to the dispensational *sine qua non* of a consistent distinction between God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the church, we must articulate a theology of the spiritual life consistent with dispensational distinctives. As part of this, it is clear that the believer must be in right relationship with the Holy Spirit who produces experiential sanctification. Sin interrupts this relationship and confession for purification is necessary for recovery. Apart from this, obedience to Scriptural mandates becomes nothing more than simple morality that any unbeliever can emulate. Only when a believer is in right relationship with the Spirit, and abiding in Christ, will the Holy Spirit work to bring about maturity and the production of the character of Christ in the believer.

—End—

²¹ Ibid., 77.

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