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The Role of the Holy Spirit in Pentecostal Worship in the Light of John 4:20-26 and Ephesians 5:18-20

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Abstract

The importance of worship for the Pentecostal church can hardly be overstated, and the worship practices of the global church have been altered significantly by the influence of the Pentecostal movement. This article will address the biblical and theological foundations of Spirit-filled worship, focusing particularly on the role of the Holy Spirit in worship, through a literary-theological interpretation of two key biblical texts—John 4:20-26 and Ephesians 5:18-20. The study finds that from the viewpoint of these texts, the Holy Spirit is an indispensable element in Christian worship and is deeply active in the practices of worship.

Keywords: Christian formation; music; praise; Spirit and Truth; Spirit baptism; Spirit-filled; spirituality; worship

INTRODUCTION

For more than one hundred years, Pentecostal pastors and evangelists produced popular level tracts, pamphlets, and books on the subject of worship; but only recently have Pentecostal scholars begun to study worship as an academic discipline.¹ In addition to numerous journal articles and books that address elements of Pentecostal worship, several important monograph-length studies have appeared within the last eight years. These include two volumes of collected essays that survey the global landscape. The first is “The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal–Charismatic Christianity,” edited by Monique Ingalls and Amos Yong.² Their work is a multi-disciplinary study of the wide variety of Pentecostal worship practices around the world. The second is “Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship, and Li-

turgy,” edited by Mark Cartledge and A.J. Swoboda, which also advances our understanding of global Pentecostalism.³ Cartledge and Swoboda assemble essays that address historical, theological, and ethnographic concerns with emphasis on empirical research. Taking a more systematic theological approach to the study of worship, Steven Félix-Jäger brings recent Pentecostal scholarship into dialogue with worship studies and with contemporary worship practices. Félix-Jäger brilliantly and carefully constructs a distinctive Pentecostal theology of worship.⁴

Each of these major works offer significant contributions to the study of Pentecostal worship. What is missing from them all, however, is sustained attention to the biblical text. The Pentecostal movement values Scripture as the highest authority in matters of faith and practice. As good as

¹ Cf. Martin Lindhardt, *Practicing the Faith: The Ritual Life of Pentecostal–Charismatic Christians* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 1. Many of the Pentecostal published works on worship can be found in the footnotes of Lindhardt’s volume.

² Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal–Charismatic Christianity* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015).

³ Mark J. Cartledge and A.J. Swoboda, *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship, and Liturgy (Explorations in Practical, Pastoral, and Empirical Theology)* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

⁴ Steven Félix-Jäger, *Renewal Worship: A Theology of Pentecostal Doxology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022). Other recent works that address elements of worship include Melissa L. Archer, “I

Was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”: A Pentecostal Engagement with Worship in the Apocalypse (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2015).; Josh P.S. Samuel, *The Holy Spirit in Worship Music, Preaching and the Altar: Renewing Pentecostal Corporate Worship* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2018).; Daniel Tomberlin, *Pentecostal Sacraments: Encountering God at the Altar*, Revised (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2022).; Chris E.W. Green, *Toward a Pentecostal Theology of the Lord’s Supper: Foretasting the Kingdom* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2012).; Andrew Ray Williams, *Washed in the Spirit: Toward a Pentecostal Theology of Water Baptism* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2021).; John Christopher Thomas, *Footwashing in John 13 and the Johannine Community*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2013).

they are, the books cited above do not engage in any significant way with John 4:20-26 or with Ephesians 5:8-20, two biblical texts that are foundational for a Pentecostal theology of worship. This article seeks to supplement the aforementioned historical and theological approaches by offering an exegetical study of these two texts.

Both John 4:20-26 and Ephesians 5:18-20 have implications regarding the role of the Holy Spirit in worship. Therefore, this article will examine these texts, as well as other key biblical texts that speak to the role of the Spirit in worship. The study finds that from the viewpoint of these texts, the Holy Spirit is an indispensable element in Christian worship and is deeply active in the practices of worship

RESEARCH METHOD

This article is an exegetical interpretation of John 4:20-26 and Ephesians 5:18-20, with special attention to how these texts describe the Holy Spirit's role in worship. The research utilizes the method of James D.G. Dunn as described in his "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament." Dunn argues that a biblical-theological study should begin by allowing the individual texts to

speak for themselves before bringing them together to shape and create a theological interpretation of a given subject.⁵ The examination of the primary biblical texts is conducted by means of grammatical exegesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Significance of Worship in the Pentecostal Tradition

It has been argued that worship is the highest occupation of the church, and that worship fulfills the ultimate purpose for which the people of God are redeemed. Karl Barth insists that corporate worship "is the most important, momentous and majestic thing which can possibly take place on earth."⁶ The Lord declares to his people Israel, "This people that I have formed for myself shall recount my praise" (Isa. 43:21).⁷

The New Testament (NT) states a similar sentiment: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's possession; that ye should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). The writer of Hebrews insists that Christians must "offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of [their] lips giving thanks to his name"

⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1990).

⁶ Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation: Recalling the Scottish Confession of*

1560 (Gifford Lectures 1937 and 1938) (Wipf and Stock, 2005), 198.

⁷ Biblical quotations are the author's translation unless noted otherwise.

(Heb. 13:15). In his vision of God's throne, John the Revelator sees the great multitude of those who had been redeemed by the "blood of the Lamb," and their constant activity is to be "before the throne of God, and worship (λατρεύω) him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:14-15). Mark Cartledge insists that worship "is the place where the glory of the Lord is revealed in power and where people are transformed for the sake of the kingdom of God."⁸

The Impact of Pentecostal Worship on the Global Church

The Pentecostal movement has radically transformed Christianity in the last 100+ years. Walter Hollenweger has argued that Pentecostalism's "most important contribution" to the larger Christian tradition has been in the "sphere of liturgy and preaching," that is, in the practice of worship.⁹ Explaining the phenomenal growth of Pentecostalism, Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori write, "The engine of Pentecostalism is its worship."¹⁰

It is unfortunate, however, that although Pentecostals have influenced Christian worship practices, they have been slow to develop a theological foundation for their worship. The scholarly study of worship is a vital theological task that affects the understanding of the nature and attributes of God, anthropology, soteriology, pneumatology, and eschatology.

Pentecostals have described their movement as a restoration that continues the work of the Reformation, the Wesleyan revival, and the healing movement. Luther restored the doctrine of justification by faith; Wesley restored the doctrine of sanctification; and the healing movement restored the doctrine of healing in atonement. Finally, the Pentecostal revival restored the doctrine of Spirit baptism and spiritual gifts.¹¹ Pentecostal scholars, therefore, have expended considerable energy in articulating their theology of the full gospel, or fivefold gospel—that Jesus is savior, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer, healer, and soon-coming king. However, Pentecostal theologians have focused

⁸ Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition (Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series)* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 51.

⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals: The Charismatic Movement in the Churches*, 1st U.S. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. House, 1972), 466. Cf. Harvey G. Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century* (London: Cassell, 1996), 139-57.

¹⁰ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 23.

¹¹ Regarding Pentecostalism's inclusion of the charismata in worship, see French L. Arrington, "Spiritual Gifts as Normative for Public Worship," in *Issues in Contemporary Pentecostalism*, ed. R. Keith Whitt and French L. Arrington (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2012), 211-22.

upon the doctrines themselves while, for the most part, taking for granted the context of Pentecostal theology and experience, which is worship.

The Holy Spirit in Pentecostal Worship

Central to Pentecostal worship is the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. Writing in the first issue of *PNEUMA*, William MacDonald argues, “Unless we dare claim that Christianity was fossilized in the first century, we must contend that the Spirit is still speaking to the churches.”¹² In agreement with MacDonald, Johnathan Alvarado elaborates on the role of the Spirit in Pentecostal worship. He writes, “Spirit-filled worship is marked and characterized by a vivid awareness of the presence of God and the activity of the Holy Spirit within the lives of the saints and within the context of the worship experience.”¹³ Jerome Boone, in his article on “Community and Worship,” observes that the “single most important

goal of any Pentecostal worship service is a personal encounter with the Spirit of God.”¹⁴

This encounter will often include the manifestation of spiritual gifts, and the worshipers will experience “the Spirit as transformational power.”¹⁵

A Biblical Perspective on the Holy Spirit in Worship

In Spirit and Truth (Jn. 4:20-26)

Pentecostals look to a number of NT texts to shape their theology of Spirit-filled worship. Perhaps the most important biblical text for understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in worship is John 4:20-26, which reports Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well. Jesus and the woman engaged in a conversation about “living water” and “eternal life.” Then, Jesus revealed his knowledge of her personal life; at which point, the woman, perceiving that Jesus was a prophet, ventured a theological observation:¹⁶ “Our fathers worshiped on

¹² William MacDonald, “Temple Theology,” *Pneuma* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 1979): 39–48, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157007479X00055>.

¹³ Johnathan E. Alvarado, “Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on Liturgical Theology and Praxis,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 135–51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/174552512X633330>.

¹⁴ R. Jerome Boone, “Community and Worship: The Key Components of Pentecostal Christian Formation,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 4, no. 8 (January 1, 1996): 129–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/096673699600400810>.

¹⁵ Boone.

¹⁶ For a fuller exposition of the entire encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, see John Christopher Thomas, “According to John: Christology and the Great Commission,” in *The Great Commission Connection*, ed. Raymond F. Culpepper and Bill George (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2011), 53–76 (60–63). Cf. Gail R. O’Day, “Gospel of John,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, and Sharon H. Ringe, revised and updated ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 522, who offers a helpful note regarding the Samaritan woman: “Commentators doubt whether this woman would have been able to understand the substance of Jesus’ words to her. Once again we see

this mountain; and as for you, you say (ὁμεῖς λέγετε) that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary (δεῖ) to worship” (v. 20).¹⁷ Her comment, which implies that God requires worshipers to meet at a single authorized location, leads to a revealing conversation about the nature of true worship:

Jesus said to her, “Woman,¹⁸ believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem you will worship the Father. As for you, you worship what you do not know; as for us, we worship what we know, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth; because the Father is seeking such ones worshipping him. God is Spirit, and it is necessary for those worshipping to worship in Spirit and Truth.” The woman said to him, “I know

that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When that one comes, he will declare to us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I am—who is speaking to you” (Jn 4:21-26).¹⁹

Regarding the place of worship, Jesus declares that the long-held traditions of the Samaritans and the Jews are about to be overturned—things are about to change. “The hour is coming,” Jesus says, “when worshipers will gather anywhere and everywhere to worship God.” In fact, the hour “is now” (νῦν ἐστίν). Jesus can make this prophetic declaration (as he does in Jn. 20:22) because of his close identification with the Father (Jn. 8:19; 10:30; 14:9; 17:21) and because his presence makes real the kingdom of God.²⁰ In Jesus, states George Beasley-Murray, “that future ‘hour’ had already begun to dawn.”²¹ Colin Kruse agrees: “This time could be said loosely to have ‘now come’

presuppositions about women (women’s intellect and interests) skewing a faithful reading of the text.”

¹⁷ “This mountain” refers to Mt. Gerizim, the location of the Samaritan temple that had been destroyed in 128 BCE. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John (WBC 36)* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1999), 61, explains the Samaritans’ attachment to Mt. Gerizim: “The command in Deuteronomy 12:1–14 to worship God in the place that he will show follows the command to pronounce a blessing from Mt. Gerizim ... In the Samaritan Pentateuch of Deuteronomy 27:3 the place where an altar is to be built on arrival in the promised land is Gerizim, not Ebal as in the MT.” The Samaritans continue to gather and worship on Mt. Gerizim, even without the temple. Regarding God’s choice of Jerusalem, see 2 Chronicles 6:6, etc.

¹⁸ “Woman” is a polite form of address (cf. Jn 2:4; 19:26); cf. B.M. Newman and E.A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John (UBS Handbook*

Series) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 121.

¹⁹ On Jesus’ use of the phrase “I am” to disclose his divine identity, see Gary M. Burge, *John (The NIV Application Commentary)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 148.

²⁰ Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John (WBC 36)*, 62. This is contra Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, ed. R.W. Funk and U. Busse (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 222, who argues that the phrase “νῦν ἐστίν” was inserted by John to reflect his post-resurrection context. Haenchen’s view removes the rhetorical tension from the verse and renders Jesus’ statement less powerful.

²¹ Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts, Revision* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 62.; D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 224, devotes an entire paragraph to explaining Jesus’ prophetic statement.

because Jesus had already set in motion things that would bring in the new worship in Spirit and Truth.”²²

To be clear, worship “in Spirit” refers to the Holy Spirit, not the human spirit.²³ Andrew Lincoln explains:

That the Spirit is the divine Spirit is clear from the comment that precedes the reiteration of the phrase “in Spirit and in truth” in the following verse—*God is Spirit*. The Spirit is the creative life-giving power of God (cf. 6:63), which, like the wind, “blows where it wills” (3:8) and cannot be confined to any one place. True worship corresponds to the God who is worshipped and therefore takes place in and through the divine Spirit.²⁴

Because God is Spirit, true worshipers²⁵ must worship in the Spirit. The Greek phrase “in Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι) can

signify the means of worship or the location of worship, but it is not necessary to choose one meaning over the other. Lincoln is right to state that true worship occurs both “in and through” the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Spirit is both the means and the location of worship. Worship must be in the Spirit, because “Spirit is God’s mode of communication” with humanity.²⁶ Furthermore, worship “in Spirit” implies “charismatic worship.”²⁷

Worship must be “in Spirit” because God is spirit, not confined to one location;²⁸ however, God’s incorporeal freedom does not mean that God is impersonal or unreal. Barth argues,

It does not mean that the divine presence in the world had suddenly become that of a mere undifferentiated ubiquity, and not of definite and distinct places. The opposite of Jerusalem and Gerizim and all temples

²² Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 136. Cf. J. Ramsey Michaels, *John (Understanding the Bible Commentary Series)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 77.

²³ Cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 353. Contra Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (NICNT)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 270. For a more detailed argument that John 4:23-24 refers to the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary. Vol. I* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 615. Quite striking for its theological emptiness is Donald Guthrie’s brief statement explaining the phrase “in Spirit and in Truth.” He says, “God desires worshippers who are

in tune with him (23),” see Donald Guthrie, “John,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D.A. Carson, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1034.

²⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John (Black’s New Testament Commentary)* (London: Continuum, 2005), 177-78 (emphasis original).

²⁵ “True” in the sense of “genuine”; Rudolf Bultmann, “Ἀληθινός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), I: 250 (hereafter *TDNT*).

²⁶ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*, 353.

²⁷ Dunn.

²⁸ Cf. Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 223.

made with hands ... is not the universe at large, which is the superficial interpretation of Liberalism, but Jesus. And the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth is not the undifferentiated worship of a God undifferentiatedly omnipresent. On the contrary, we have only to glance at the way in which the terms “spirit” and “truth” are used elsewhere in St. John’s Gospel and we shall see at once that it is worship of God mediated through Jesus.²⁹

“True worshipers” will worship the Father, not “in (ἐν) this mountain,” nor “in (ἐν) Jerusalem,” but “in (ἐν) Spirit and Truth” (Jn. 4:23). However, the parallelism created by the repetition of the preposition “in” suggests that the location of worship continues to be important, but the authorized location is no longer a physical place. Instead, the proper location for worship is a spiritual location, “in Spirit and Truth.” Worshipers can gather anywhere on earth (or in heaven, for that matter), and their worship will be

acceptable if they are located within the sphere of the Spirit and the Truth.³⁰ The use of “in” as a spiritual sphere appears to be common in the Johannine corpus. For example, Jesus states the following: (1) “If you remain in (μείνητε ἐν) my word, you are truly my disciples” (Jn. 8:31). (2) “I have come as a light into the world, so that all those believing in me may not remain in (ἐν) darkness” (Jn. 12:46). (3) “Remain in (ἐν) me, and I in you” (Jn. 15:4, see also vv. 6, 7). (4) “Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in (ἐν) my love” (Jn. 15:9; cf. v. 10). The Johannine Epistles instruct believers to “remain in” Jesus (1 Jn. 2:27, 28; 4:13) and “in the teaching of Christ” (2 Jn. 1:9). Furthermore, in the Apocalypse, John finds himself “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10).

True worship, however, is not only “in Spirit” but “in Spirit and Truth.” John Christopher Thomas points out that in John’s Gospel, Jesus is the Truth.³¹ He is

²⁹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God, Part 1* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2004), II, 481.

³⁰ Eduard Schweizer, “Πνεῦμα,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), VI, 439, writes, “To worship God in πνεῦμα and ἀλήθεια is ... to worship in the sphere of God and no longer in that of the κόσμος, in reality and no longer in the realm of mere appearance.” Cf. Heinrich Greeven, “Προσκυνέω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids,

MI: Eerdmans, 1964), VI, 764, who states that “in Spirit and Truth” is a “new dimension” into which the act of worship is lifted up.

³¹ John Christopher Thomas, “The Spirit in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Explorations,” in *The Spirit and the Mind: Essays in Informed Pentecostalism*, ed. Terry L. Cross and Emerson B. Powery (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000), 87-104 (92)., which can be found in a later iteration in John Christopher Thomas, *The Spirit of the New Testament* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2005), 157-74. Thomas credits colleague R.H. Gause with the initial insight.

“full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:15, 17). Jesus speaks the truth and testifies to the truth (Jn. 8:40, 45, 46; 18:37). In fact, Jesus Christ is the Truth. He is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (Jn. 14:6). Agreeing with Thomas, Andrew Lincoln states, therefore, that worship also corresponds to what is true and for the evangelist truth is primarily the revelation of God in Jesus (cf. 14:6; 17:17). Since Jesus is the giver of the Spirit and the embodiment of the truth, worship in Spirit and in truth is also worship centred in and mediated by Jesus.³²

Therefore, those who worship in truth are worshipping the Father in the Spirit and in the Truth (Jesus). Thus, Jesus’ statement hints at the fact that true worship involves the entire Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. St. Ambrose write,

Christ is jointly worshiped in the Father when God the Father is worshiped in Christ. In the same way then, by unity of the same power the Spirit is jointly worshiped in God when God is worshiped in the Spirit ... When God is said to be worshiped in truth ... it ought to be understood that the Son too is worshiped. So, in the same way,

the Spirit is also worshiped because God is worshiped in Spirit. Therefore the Father is worshiped both with the Son and with the Spirit, because the Trinity is worshiped.³³

It is no longer necessary (δεῖ) to worship in Jerusalem (Jn. 4:20); rather, it is necessary (δεῖ) to worship “in Spirit and Truth” (v. 24).³⁴ Worshipping God in Spirit and Truth is necessary, because God is Spirit. Earlier in the Gospel of John, we learned that to become children of God we must be “born of the Spirit” (Jn. 3:5-6). Now we discover that the Spirit is necessary not only for the new birth but also for true worship.³⁵ We are born by the Spirit, and we also worship in the Spirit.

True worship “is worship that is dynamically animated by God’s Holy Spirit.”³⁶ Without the Holy Spirit, true worship is impossible to achieve. True worship is initiated by the Holy Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. In effect, the Holy Spirit enables believers to commune with God. Without the Holy Spirit, worshipers do not have the ability to approach God acceptably or freely. The human flesh is weak and incapable of worship.

³² Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John (Black’s New Testament Commentary)*, 178.

³³ St. Ambrose, “On the Holy Spirit,” 3.11.82, 85 (NPNF 2.10), n.d.

³⁴ Just as it was necessary (ἐδεῖ) for Jesus to pass through Samaria (Jn. 4:4). Newman and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of John (UBS Handbook*

Series), 120, write, “As in other passages where the verb ‘it is necessary’ is used, the reference here is to the necessity imposed by the divine will.”

³⁵ See Thomas, *The Spirit of the New Testament*, 161-62.

³⁶ Burge, *John (The NIV Application Commentary)*, 147.

Only “in the Spirit” can anyone truly worship God.

One may be tempted to separate the two terms—“Spirit” and “Truth”—but Jesus makes the point that genuine worship requires a merging of both.³⁷ We know that Jesus is the Truth, but the Spirit is also the Truth. The Spirit and the Truth are intimately connected. D.A. Carson writes,

The worshippers whom God seeks worship him out of the fullness of the supernatural life they enjoy (‘in spirit’), and on the basis of God’s incarnate Self-Expression, Christ Jesus himself, through whom God’s person and will are finally and ultimately disclosed (‘in truth’); and these two characteristics form one matrix, indivisible. Indeed, the association of “word” and “Spirit” is strong in the Old Testament (*e.g.* Ne. 9:20, 30; Ps. 33:6; 147:18; Is. 59:21), and it is just possible that this connection is in the Evangelist’s mind, since Jesus the “Word made flesh” (1:14) and “the truth” (14:6) is also the one to whom God gives the Spirit without limit (3:34).³⁸

Later, in the Gospel of John, Jesus will teach his disciples that the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Truth.” Jesus says, “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper, that he may remain with you

forever—the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive” (Jn. 14:16-17; 15:26). Furthermore, as the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit will guide us into the Truth and teach us all things: “when he, the Spirit of Truth, has come, he will guide you into all Truth” (Jn. 16:13). “But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things” (Jn. 14:26). “In short, *true worship for John is worship in terms of Jesus—inspired by the Spirit of Jesus and according to the truth revealed in Jesus.*”³⁹

Spirit-filled Worship (Eph. 5:18-20)

Another NT text that addresses the role of the Holy Spirit in worship is Ephesians 5:18-20. Regarding the influence of the Spirit, Paul writes,

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:18-20).

A number of important conclusions might be drawn from this text. First, Paul issues an imperative—a command—“be filled (πληροῦσθε) with the Spirit.” The impe-

³⁷ Cf. Burge.

³⁸ Carson, *The Gospel According to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)*, 225-26.

³⁹ Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament*, 354 (emphasis original).

rative suggests that Paul does not view Spirit-filling as optional. The context of vv. 18-20 suggests that the command to be filled with the Spirit broadens “the scope of what it means for believers to live wisely and circumspectly (v. 15).”⁴⁰

Second, the command that believers be filled with the Spirit would seem to indicate that not all believers are filled with the Spirit. Apparently, some believers have yet to enter into the Spirit-filled life. Paul declares that all believers have the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but not all believers are filled with the Spirit. If everyone is already filled, then there is no need for Paul’s command. Similarly, if every Christian is filled with the Spirit, then why was the early church instructed to choose “seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3)? If all are full, then what is the point of the distinction?

Third, the form of Paul’s words (present imperative) reveals not only that all believers should be filled but also that they should continue to be filled.⁴¹ Paul wants his hearers to be filled with the Spirit continually, daily, on an ongoing basis. Paul’s statement is the equivalent of saying, “be filled and stay filled with the Spirit.” How

does one remain under the influence of the Spirit? How does one remain full of God? It is through worship! Believers stay full of God by “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in [their] heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19-20).

Fourth, Spirit-filling is connected to worship. Gause explains,

The circumstances of the Spirit’s outpouring were circumstances of worship. The Spirit perpetuates these conditions of communion with God when He baptizes a congregation or an individual. Of the early church newly baptized with the Holy Spirit the Scriptures declare: they were continually in prayer (Acts 2:42); wonders and signs occurred among them (v. 43); they shared their goods (vv. 44, 45); they were daily in the Temple (v. 46); they praised God in their meetings (v. 47), and they were winning others to the faith of Christ (v. 47). These are all aspects of worship.⁴²

In the past, Pentecostals have emphasized Paul’s command to “be filled with the Spirit” as support for the doctrine of Spirit baptism as an experience that comes

⁴⁰ Trevor Grizzle, *Ephesians (Pentecostal Commentary Series)* (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2012), 136.

⁴¹ Grizzle, 138.

⁴² R. Hollis Gause, *Living in the Spirit: The Way of Salvation*, revised and expanded ed. (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2009), 142-43.

after conversion; and rightly so. However, Paul's teaching does not end with the words "be filled with the Spirit." Although Paul challenges all Christians to be continually filled with the Spirit, he goes beyond that challenge and also states some of the results of being Spirit-filled. Apparently, the filling with the Spirit will be followed by an overflow of worship, with the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Simpson observes, "These designations of sacred song differ but little from one another. The first title suggests the Davidic Psalter, the second effusions of praise, the third lyrics of a general description, confined ... to a devotional sphere."⁴³ Furthermore, a Spirit-filled person will give "thanks always." This worship is communal, inasmuch as the Spirit-filled persons are "speaking to one another ..."⁴⁴ People who are filled with the Spirit want to worship God.

A Brief Look at Other NT Texts

The relationship between the Holy Spirit and worship is evident in other NT

texts. The Holy Spirit is given so that believers can glorify Jesus (Jn. 16:14), and Paul insists that "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Examples of Spirit-filled worship in the NT include Elizabeth, who was filled with the Spirit and glorified God (Lk. 1:41-45). Her husband Zechariah also worshiped God when he was filled with the Spirit (Lk. 1:67-79). On the Day of Pentecost, the 120 disciples "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The crowd that was gathered for the Feast of Pentecost heard the Spirit-filled disciples speaking forth "the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:11), which indicates that they were engaging in some form of inspired praise and worship.⁴⁵

The Holy Spirit and the Temple of God

In a transition from the material to the spiritual, similar to that presented by Jesus in John 4,⁴⁶ Paul asserts that the temple of God consists no longer in a humanly

⁴³ E.K. Simpson, "Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians," in *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, ed. E.K. Simpson and F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957), 125, n. 25.

⁴⁴ Cf. Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 159. See also, John Rea, *The Holy Spirit in the Bible: All the Major Passages about the Spirit, A Commentary* (Lake Mary, FL: Creation House, 1990), 295.

⁴⁵ For more on the role of the Holy Spirit in worship, see Ralph Martin, *The Worship of God: Some Theological, Pastoral, and Practical Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 174-86.

⁴⁶ Cf. Craig S. Keener, *The Mind of the Spirit: Paul's Approach to Transformed Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 147, who discerns in Jn 4.23-24 a "spiritual temple" (cf. Jn 1.14; 2.13-22; 7.37-38; and 14.23).

constructed building that is confined to a single location. Instead, the temple is a Spirit-constructed congregation that may be located anywhere on earth (or, again, in heaven as well—Heb. 12:23). As the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Church is a worshiping community. Therefore, Paul refers to the Church as the “temple of God.” He writes, “in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22). Writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul again uses the terms “temple” and “dwelling” as descriptions of the Church: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).⁴⁷ Then, writing to the individual believer, Paul states, “do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” (1 Cor. 6:19). These references to the Church and to the believer as the temple of the Holy Spirit indicate the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit upon worship.

CONCLUSION

According to the teaching of Jesus in John 4:20-26, true worship is impossible to achieve without the Holy Spirit. Worship

is initiated by the Holy Spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. In effect, the Holy Spirit enables believers to commune with God. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:18-20, also recognizes the importance of the Spirit in worship. Without the Holy Spirit, worshipers do not have the ability to approach God acceptably or freely. The human flesh is weak and incapable of worship, but those who are “filled with the Spirit” can worship God truly. Paul explains further in his letter to the Philippians: “For we, ourselves, are the circumcision, ones who worship God in the Spirit and who rejoice in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

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Levison’s book, it is ironic that he fails to mention Ephesians 5:18, “be filled with the Spirit”!

⁴⁷ On the Church as a Spirit-filled temple, see John R. Levison, *Filled with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 283-307. Given the title of

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