

Foundation for Spiritual Reality

Before meeting the Lord, the earthly, natural reality in which we live is all that we know. It doesn't matter how well or ill adjusted we are to this natural reality, after meeting the Lord we move into a spiritual reality for which none of us are prepared. Many of us learn about how things operate in the spiritual realm by trial and error because we have no one to teach us. Others learn about spiritual things from television or conferences. We experience various spiritual manifestations and interact with others who also have various spiritual manifestations, some wonderful and some weird. In our naivety we tend to assume that all things spiritual are of God. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Peter gave us the foundation for spiritual reality in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. When those listening to him asked what they should do, he said:

Acts 2:38-39 NASB

(38) Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(39) "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Peter gave three foundational requirements as we move into the spiritual realm.

1. Repent
2. Be baptized (water baptism)
3. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (baptized with the Holy Spirit)

In the next verse he said the promise was to as many as the Lord will call and he extended it across both time and space (your children and all who are far off).

These three requirements are necessary before we begin to move in spiritual things. Without them we will crumble under spiritual pressure.

If God Permits

As a loving Father, God protects us from ourselves. Without a solid foundation the Lord does not permit us to move very far into the things of the spirit. The first two verses of Hebrews chapter six give us the six foundation stones that are necessary for us to build upon as we mature. The writer of Hebrews says that we should lay the foundation and then move on [for a discussion of the six foundation doctrines see "*The Blueprint Series: Foundations Workbook*" available on the website]. But, it is verse three that shows us the Father's care.

Hebrews 6:3 NASB

(3) And this we will do, if God permits.

Why would God not permit us to move on from the foundational doctrines? Because, as we move deeper into spiritual things, the consequences of falling away become more extreme as shown by the next verses.

Hebrews 6:4-6 NASB

- (4) For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,
- (5) and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
- (6) and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

The person described here is certainly not a novice in the things of the Lord. He has

1. been enlightened (seen the Truth concerning Jesus)
2. tasted of the heavenly gift (received Jesus, been born-again)
3. partaker of the Holy Spirit (baptized with the Holy Spirit)
4. tasted the good word of God (continued in the word as a disciple)
5. tasted the powers of the age to come (moved in miracles, healing, deliverance, etc)

Verse six says that a person who has moved on in the Spirit through these five areas has matured to a place that if that one fell away, it would be impossible for that one to be renewed. However, God does not permit us to move on into the spiritual realm until a proper foundation is laid and it begins with Acts 2:38.

God's Pattern for Spiritual Reality

We were created to fellowship with God and walk in the spiritual dimension. Jesus said that He is Truth. The root of the word for “truth” means “reality”—the fullness of all spiritual reality is found in Him. Jesus is our pattern.

The end result, the goal, of spiritual reality is fellowship—the type of fellowship that is maintained within the Godhead between Father and Son.

1 John 1:3 NASB

- (3) what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

It is the Lord's desire that we walk in the same type of fellowship as that of the Father and Son and that we proclaim what we have seen and heard in order to bring others into fellowship with us and, therefore, into fellowship with the Father and Son.

As we move in the spiritual realm, we will begin to experience various types of spiritual experiences. There are two types of spirits that are active within spiritual reality:

- 1) holy spirits, such as, *the* Holy Spirit and angels;
- 2) unholy spirits, such as, fallen angels and demons.

When we enter the spiritual realm, we are open, to various degrees, to both types of spirits. As we mature our senses are trained by practice to be able to distinguish between good and evil.

Hebrews 5:14 NASB

(14) But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

1 John 4:1 NASB

(1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

We cannot, naively, accept every spiritual manifestation as being from God. To do so is to open ourselves to deception. However, just like bank tellers learn to spot counterfeit bills by handling the real thing, we learn to recognize the false by handling (experiencing) the Holy Spirit.

Characteristics of Holy Spiritual Experiences

James 3:17 NASB

(17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

This verse gives us the characteristics of the things that come from God and are actually given in an order of importance.

1. **Pure.** All things that come from the Holy Spirit are pure. They are never suggestive of impurity. They are never manifested in a lewd, rude, crass, or insensitive manner. His manifestations are never animalistic or bestial. Part of the Spirit's name is Holy. All that He does reflects His Holy character.

When the Holy Spirit moves on His people, the enemy will also move where he can in order to confuse and discredit the work of the Holy Spirit. In a recent “revival move” of the Lord there were many questionable manifestations including barking like a dog, writhing and hissing like a snake, and other animal-like behavior. These are not manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Apparently, the leadership of this “revival” either accepted these as being of the Holy Spirit or didn't have the maturity or experience to know the difference or lacked the spiritual fortitude to correct the excesses.

2. **Peaceable.** Next, the manifestations of the Holy Spirit are peaceable. They do not come with agitation, unrest, frenetic behavior, or similar things. Neither do they produce these things in others. Instead, they bring rest.
3. **Gentle.** The Holy Spirit is gentle; never domineering, compulsive or hard.
4. **Reasonable.** The things done by the Holy Spirit are reasonable not unreasonable. We may not always understand the reason for His ways are higher than ours. However, the Lord is not capricious or without reason.
5. **Merciful and fruitful.** Our God is a merciful God and this is expressed in His ways of dealing with us. The manifestations of the Spirit exhibit mercy and will produce good fruit in us and through us.
6. **Unwavering.** The Holy Spirit is not indecisive. He doesn't waver between issues. He is unchangeable for He is God.
7. **No hypocrisy.** The Holy Spirit does not show favoritism. In Him there is no hypocrisy, no appearing to be different at different times.

All manifestations of the Holy Spirit will exhibit these various characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Major deviation from these makes any manifestation suspect as not being the Holy Spirit. Let us use wisdom and discernment as we learn to walk in the spiritual realm.

Spiritual Patterns

We were created to fellowship with God and walk in the spiritual dimension. He has provided patterns to help us understand spiritual things.

Example Pattern: the tabernacle

Acts 7:44 NASB

- (4) "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.

Hebrews 8:4-5 NASB

- (4) Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;
- (5) who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."

The tabernacle was a copy or a model of something in the heavenlies. It was important that

Moses follow the plans and pattern as directed by the Lord. The pattern leads us to spiritual truth and testifies to Jesus.

This is an illustration (just one of many) of how the tabernacle pattern reveals Truth. Jesus said that He is the door (John 10:9). He also said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and that no one could come to the Father except through Him (John 13:6). The pattern of the tabernacle allows us to understand this more fully. Jesus, as the door, represents the three doors of the tabernacle—as the Door to the outer court, He is the Way; as the Door to the Holy Place, He is the Truth; as the Door to the Holiest of Holies, He is the Life. [Every aspect of the furniture and structure of the tabernacle reveals Truth as applied through Jesus.]

Example Pattern: Jesus

Jesus told us clearly that we are to follow Him; that He is our example.

Matthew 16:24 NASB

(24) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Matthew 10:38 NASB

(38) "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

John 12:26 NASB

(26) "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

1 Peter 2:21 NASB

(21) For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

Our goal is fellowship with the Father and the Son. Jesus is the Way to the Father. We must follow in His steps if we desire to have fellowship with the Father.

If we pattern after Jesus, we will deny ourselves, take up the cross (knowing that we are to die on it), and follow Him as His servant, partaking in His suffering. We learn to have the same mind that He has as we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and yield ourselves to His plan and purpose for our lives.

As believers mature, the pattern of Jesus is reproduced in them. This is one of the ways that we can determine the true from the false. All of those who are truly of the Lord, will have the pattern of Jesus stamped upon them.

Philippians 3:17 NASB

(17) Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.

As we pursue spiritual reality, we need to remember the first law of photocopies: *copy the original not a copy*. Not using the original makes fuzzy copies.

Lesson 2 of this series will look at the outcome of faulty foundations and fuzzy copies.