

# OIM UPDATE

August 2011

The long, hot days of Summer are once again upon us—as the age old challenges of whether to serve God or wealth—continue to dominate the worldly machinations of people around the globe. These days of worldwide financial instability and uncertainty, being constantly debated among the populace, bring to mind some wise and comforting words uttered by the Messiah Yeshua. He communicated some key thoughts to a multitude of listeners, who in their own era, had their own concerns about daily subsistence:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [wealth, NASU]. For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, *as to* what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?...Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own**” (Matthew 6:24-25, 31-34, NASB).

Without reservation, Yeshua turned the hearts and minds of His audience away from the worries and cares of the day, toward seeking the righteousness of the Father. For those of us who follow Him today, this advice remains sound and hopefully employed.

Knowing that fears can often overcome faith, this month's lead article describes the blessing of being **“Empowered by the Spirit.”** Being reminded of the words of Yeshua that talk about the Divine connection born again Believers have to the enabling power of the indwelling Spirit, should give us the confidence required to continue to seek His Kingdom and His righteousness, even in the troubling economic uncertainties that permeate our world. Hopefully, all of us will be reminded of the responsibility we have to be of service to His work on Earth, despite financial circumstances that have the potential to take our eyes off of Him.

Also included in this issue of OIM News is an important FAQ entry recently added to the TNN website on **Galatians 5:2-3**. In many parts of the broad Messianic movement, the question “Are Gentiles obligated to keep Torah?” is being asked in increasing frequency. Many answers have been issued to this, but they are not necessarily that engaged with either the Biblical text or contemporary scholarship. I am sure that the response, of Outreach Israel and TNN Online to this question, is going to surprise many of you—but that you will appreciate our “innovative” approach!

Finally, we want to thank those of you who responded to our recent request to help out with our **Prison Ministry Outreach**. Your sacrificial offerings confirm to us that the Lord is using His people to continue His work! May the Lord bless you for unconditionally serving others without expecting anything in return!

Advancing His Kingdom until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

# EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

by Mark Huey

The words and instructions shared by Yeshua with His Disciples during the moments steadily leading toward His betrayal, humiliation, and execution—should give today's Believers great confidence in the Divine work that is expected of them by the Holy One of Israel. After demonstrating the essence of servant leadership, and describing how He will return to the Father, Yeshua declared that after He was gone the Spirit of truth would be sent to take up residence inside of His followers:

“And I will ask the Father, **and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

*Imagine what the Disciples must have been thinking when they heard this.* After faithfully following Yeshua, and learning about His walk of righteousness for over three years, their Teacher had announced His departure. Instead of establishing a Messianic state that would overthrow the Romans and correct many of the wrongs rampant in the prevailing Jewish religious leadership—Yeshua was going to leave, and His Disciples were going to instead be responsible to carry His message forward to the rest of the world, with the indwelling power of this Holy Spirit. Observing their stunned reaction to this revelation, Yeshua immediately elaborated in order to assuage any misgivings or concern evident in their expressions of consternation:

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. **After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you will behold Me; because I live, you shall live also. In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.** He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:18-21).

Apparently, the relationship between Yeshua and His Disciples had been so intimate, that their expressions revealed a loss similar to a child losing both parents. Without hesitation, Yeshua calmed their fears by telling them that He would not only come to them, but that they would have comfort as the Holy Spirit took up residence inside of them as His followers, and they would be able to commune with God. *The close fellowship that the Disciples had with their Master would not be lost.* When we look at Yeshua's message to them in John 14-15, did the Disciples at all have an inkling that the New Covenant prophecy of Ezekiel 36:25-27 was in the process of fulfillment (cf. Luke 22:20)?

“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances**” (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

The excitement of considering a new heart and a new spirit, able to fully obey the commandments of God, had to be overwhelming to remember, given all of the events that transpired around the Last Supper. The Disciples were probably confused, and a bit unable to digest all of the words the Lord told them. Were they going to be the sole recipients of this blessing, or were there others to be included? One of them named Judas (not Judas Iscariot), asked a logical question, about the extent of the blessings available by receiving the Holy Spirit. He was told how the ability for the Father and Son to come to someone, via the presence of the Holy Spirit, was accessible to anyone:

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Yeshua answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me. These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you’” (John 14:22-26).

Yeshua’s response also interjected two key components, which will evidence the presence of the Holy Spirit within a person. Confirmation is to come with a new heart of flesh indwelt by the power of the Spirit of God, and a genuine love for the Lord coupled with a willful obedience to His word. On the contrary, those who do not love the Lord will not keep His words. The obvious contrast between those who believe and receive the Holy Spirit, and those who do not—will be evident by their actions—not their words or intentions. One either loves the Lord, with a heartfelt desire to keep His instructions—or one does not love the Lord, perhaps considering His words as simply nice platitudes or expressions that could be uttered by any human being with at least a modicum of a moral compass.

However, for the person who truly believes in Yeshua and the eternal salvation He provides, *His words are the ultimate in truth*. What He has stated must be taken very seriously. In fact, Yeshua told His Disciples immediately earlier, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6). This declaration, in and of itself, makes belief in Him and His atoning work essential, if anyone desires reconciliation with God.

Before turning to quell troubled hearts in the moments before His execution, Yeshua affirmed that the Helper or the Holy Spirit would not only teach His Disciples all things, but bring back to remembrance what He had declared. In order for any of us to be teachable and recollect what has been said by the Messiah, hearts of stone must become softened to His words, followed by heart-changing belief in order to receive His indwelling presence.

### **Indwelt with the Spirit**

Being indwelt with, and empowered by, the Holy Spirit—was surely an awesome reality that the Disciples no doubt began to ponder, as they listened to Yeshua’s words. Throughout the Tanach or Old Testament, which recorded the history and exploits of the Ancient Israelites, there are multiple accounts of how the Holy Spirit used various individuals to further God’s will for His people. Perhaps the Disciples, as they heard Yeshua’s teaching to them about the Holy Spirit, began to contemplate the account of the seventy elders who received the same Spirit as Moses, in order to prophesy to those in the camp. *Could they be so blessed?* As it had been written, Moses declared that he wished that all would receive the Spirit:

“So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. Also, he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people, and stationed them around the tent. Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed *Him* upon the seventy elders. And it came about that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied. But they did not do *it* again. But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. So a young man ran and told Moses and said, ‘Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.’ Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, ‘Moses, my

lord, restrain them.' But Moses said to him, 'Are you jealous for my sake? **Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!**'" (Numbers 11:24-29).

The Disciples might have also thought about the glorious exploits of the different judges and prophets of Israel. These were figures who were indwelt and empowered by the Spirit of the Lord, when challenges had arisen from some of Israel's archenemies, or when stern rebukes and admonitions needed to be issued to those in rebellion against Him, or when promises of deliverance to the repentant needed to be declared:

"And when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. **And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel.** When he went out to war, the LORD gave Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand, so that he prevailed over Cushan-rishathaim" (Judges 3:9-10).

"Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the sons of the east assembled themselves; and they crossed over and camped in the valley of Jezreel. **So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon;** and he blew a trumpet, and the Abiezrites were called together to follow him" (Judges 6:33-34).

"**Now the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah,** so that he passed through Gilead and Manasseh; then he passed through Mizpah of Gilead, and from Mizpah of Gilead he went on to the sons of Ammon" (Judges 11:29).

"**Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon [Samson] mightily,** and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil, and gave the changes *of clothes* to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house" (Judges 14:19).

"When he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted as they met him. **And the Spirit of the LORD came upon [Samson] mightily** so that the ropes that were on his arms were as flax that is burned with fire, and his bonds dropped from his hands" (Judges 15:14).

"**Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you [Samuel] mightily,** and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. And it shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires; for God is with you" (1 Samuel 10:6-7).

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and **the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.** And Samuel arose and went to Ramah" (1 Samuel 16:13).

"And it will come about when I leave you that **the Spirit of the LORD will carry [Elijah] where I do not know;** so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me, although *I* your servant have feared the LORD from my youth" (1 Kings 18:12).

"**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,** because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners;" (Isaiah 61:1; cf. Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22).

“Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!’ And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard *Him* speaking to me” (Ezekiel 2:1-2).

When the Disciples heard Yeshua’s claims about the Holy Spirit coming to indwell them, did they really think about figures like Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel? Did they at all contemplate what the Spirit of God had done through others down through the ages? Is it even possible that some of the Disciples might have thought that the time Yeshua spoke about here at the Last Supper, was that which had been prophesied by Joel?

“And it shall come to pass afterward, **that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;** your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29, RSV).

One can only imagine what thoughts were circulating in the heads of the Disciples, as they heard Yeshua tell them that they would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this is why after giving them some reassurance for their troubled hearts, Yeshua not only repeated His statement that He was going back to the Father, but He said that they would have a great peace unlike that available in the world:

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe. I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go from here” (John 14:27-31).

Time began to run out with the moments Yeshua could spend with His Disciples, as Judas Iscariot and the Roman cohort would arrive soon to arrest Him. It was at this point, though, that Yeshua gave some of His most profound instructions about what it meant to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and letting the Holy Spirit accomplish God’s will through His own. Yeshua declared that He is the true vine and that His followers are the branches attached to the vine. The direct connection, between Yeshua and His followers, is what allows anyone to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:1-8).

Yeshua communicated here that the essence of bearing fruit for the Kingdom, comes when one abides in direct connection with God. Disciples of the Messiah may be considered to be extensions of Him and His indwelling power. But notice that in the midst of this description it is abundantly clear that apart from His empowerment, disciples can really do nothing. *This statement, when fully considered, is extremely humbling.*

Did Yeshua declare that fruitfulness in the Kingdom, is merely an extension of letting the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit achieve God's work? Given the horticultural analogy of a vine with branches bearing fruit, confirms that this is exactly what was stated.

For many who get caught up in good human works, this can be difficult to understand. After all, are there not many wonderful, positive things that people do that on the surface appear to be an extension of God's work on Earth? God-seekers and theologians have been debating this conundrum for millennia, but based on what has transpired over the centuries, does anyone really want to claim that *their own* good human works have contributed to God's eternal plan? This is why it is so imperative that we each *make sure* that we are attached to the vine, and that the good works we perform are truly generated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Empowered by the Spirit**

While contemplating the questions presented by the words of Yeshua, His First Century Disciples—and by extension us today—wonder about the difference between the Lord's work through human vessels, and perhaps good works that are generated by just the human will. Yeshua said that the need to completely depend upon Him is required, if one wants to truly bear the fruit of service:

**"You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you"** (John 15:16).

The Lord has uniquely chosen each born again Believer to serve Him and bear fruit. Such a declaration does not sound like this is a matter of human choice, but that it is rather God's providential decision to choose and appoint various people for His tasks. Elsewhere, though, we see that what God has prepared for us are not the choices we make to love Him or obey Him, but the good works that He expects us to perform (Ephesians 2:10). There is definitely a mystery present at times, as we evaluate the sovereignty of our Creator, and our human ability to make freewill choices. If this confuses you, as it has confused many Bible readers over the centuries, my advice is **for each of us to make sure that the Lord abides within us, and that all of our actions are genuinely guided by Him.**

Communicating the reality that God empowers a human vessel with His Holy Spirit, to bear fruit, is something confirmed throughout the Apostolic Scriptures. God's people are to serve as a kind of living sacrifice, and they are to pray without ceasing. They are to be constantly entreating the Lord as they are filled with His Spirit, as they resist the temptation to sin, and as they perform good works:

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Messiah Yeshua" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Just considering these two examples, one can conclude that part of being a fruit-bearing branch of the Almighty, is definitely attributed to a mind which focuses its thoughts on communion with the Holy One. This does not mean that as the expression goes, "One is so Heavenly minded that he is no Earthly good." One has to instead be focused on the ways of Heaven, so that the reign of Heaven can break the stronghold of the sins of Earth! Being humbly and willingly sensitive, to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, is critical as one walks with God and accomplishes His will. ***Only by being united to Yeshua the Messiah, and by being empowered by the Spirit, will the good works that the Father desires us to have be truly manifest!***