

The Relationship Between the Indwelling Presence of God and Regeneration

1998

1) Preliminary thoughts and definitions:

- a) In order to grasp the importance of this topic we must ask ourselves the following questions:
 - i) What is the relationship between regeneration and indwelling, and is there a necessary inherent and intrinsic connection between them?
 - ii) What does regeneration and indwelling mean?
 - iii) Does God regenerate saints, without indwelling them?
 - iv) Does God indwell saints, without first regenerating?
 - v) Can the natural man spiritually dead to God and his word exhibit characteristics of spiritual life? In other words can the natural man exercise saving faith without first being quickened alive by the Spirit in regeneration; or can the characteristics of life (i.e. faith, repentance holiness etc.) be present without regeneration?
- b) My basic position in this area is stated in the following propositions:
 - i) Regeneration proceeds saving faith. No man in any dispensation came to saving faith prior to regeneration.
 - ii) All saints redeemed by Christ in all ages were regenerated by the Spirit to spiritual life.
 - iii) The realities of these truths of scripture relative to God's saints are not conditioned by the revelation of these truths in the scriptures. Therefore:
 - (1) The natural man (the flesh) cannot attain to spiritual life unless the Spirit regenerates.
 - (2) Unless God regenerates no man comes to him in faith.
 - iv) God regenerates all those elected unto salvation and redeemed by Christ on the cross. All those that God regenerates he indwells. Indwelling is a mark of ownership that God owns and possess his people (Rom. 8:9; Eph. 1:13, 14). Regeneration is the vehicle or mechanism by which the goal of indwelling is reached. They are almost synonymous terms, but viewed from different vantage points. If we can prove regeneration outside of Paul, then we can prove indwelling by virtue of their intrinsic relationship to each other.

2) **Regeneration** is the work of God's Spirit whereby he quickens alive man's dead spirit, according to the eternal purpose of God and redemptive work of Jesus Christ, producing spiritual life, and all that goes with that life namely; faith, repentance, illumination of understanding, conviction of sin, desire for holiness, knowledge and love of God, and of Christ etc... No man can exhibit the characteristics of spiritual life while in his dead fleshly state.

- a) Its different names in scripture:
 - i) A quickening - John 5:21; Eph. 2:6
 - ii) Born again or born from above - John 3:3,7
 - iii) God's workmanship - Eph. 2:20
 - iv) Creating anew - Eph. 4:24
- b) Fundamental references:
John 3:3-8
Titus 3:5,6
Col. 3:10,11
I Peter 1:3
Eph. 2:4,5
James 1:17,18
I John 2:29; 3:9; 5:1
Gal. 2:20
- c) The necessity of regeneration from scripture and reason.
 - i) Below we will be contrasting the differences recorded in scripture between the flesh and the spirit. When we speak below, that the natural man cannot do something such as seek God we do not mean to say or imply that he wants to seek God but is prevented from doing so. We mean he has no desire or inclination to seek God, (Rom. 8:7, 8 cf. Heb 11:6) for to seek God belongs in the spiritual realm and the natural man **cannot**, yea **will not** do that which he has no desire to do. In saying that, we believe that a man chooses that which is most agreeable to him. It is absurd to say that a man chooses that which he hates (Jer 13:23). A mans will then is merely the act of the actor (the man's nature see Rom. 10:10) and does the bidding of the actor. The Lord said "from out of the heart proceeds all these evil things" (see Mk 7:18-23); the heart or nature of a man is the source of all the acts of the will and the will can do nothing else than serve its master. The will therefore is free to serve the dictates of the fallen nature or to put it another way, the will is in bondage to the sinful nature.
 - ii) Characteristics of the fleshly or carnal man contrasted with the regenerated man.

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Characteristics of Spiritual Death

That which is born of the flesh is FLESH [John 3:6](#)

Condition of ALL men in sin [Ecc. 7:20](#)
For there is not a just man upon the earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.

A. Senses

He cannot see the Kingdom of God [John 3:3](#)

He cannot hear the words of Christ [John 8:43; 47](#)

B. Mental Ability

He doesn't understand [Romans 3:11](#)

His understanding is darkened [Eph. 4:18](#)

His mind is darkened [Titus 1:15](#)

C. Moral Ability

He is not righteous [Romans 3:10](#)

He does not do good things [Romans 3:12](#)

There is no good thing in Him. [Romans 7:18](#)

He cannot stop sinning [II Peter 2:14](#)
[Jer. 13:23](#)

His heart is incurably wicked. [Jer. 17:9](#)
His heart is darkened [Rom. 1:21](#)

His conscience is defiled [Titus 1:15](#)

The flesh minds the things of the flesh [Rom. 8:5](#)

He performs the works of the flesh [Gal. 5:19-21](#)

D. Desire for God and his Law

He doesn't seek God [Romans 3:11](#)

He doesn't fear God [Romans 3:18](#)

He hates God (cf. John 15:15) [Romans 8:7](#)

He cannot come to God [John 6:44](#)

He cannot please God [Romans 8:8](#)

Characteristics of Spiritual Life in Christ Jesus

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit [John 3:6](#)

Condition of all born again ones [James 1:18](#)
Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Born again ones see [John 3:3](#)

All that are of the truth hears Christ voice [John 18:38, Matt. :25-27](#)
[I Co. 2:14-16, John 10:3](#)
[Prov. 20:12](#)

The understanding is Enlightened [Eph. 1:17,18,](#)
[Matt. 11:25-27](#)

The understanding is quickened [I Cor. 2:12-16](#)
[II Co. 4:4-6](#)
[II Co. 4:4](#)

Christ gives them understanding [I John 5:20](#)

Born again ones are righteous [II John 2:29; 3:7](#)

Born again ones walk in goodness [Eph. 6:7,8; 5:7-13](#)
[3John 11, Heb. 13:21](#)
[II Thess. 2:16-17](#)

They have a good work in them [Phil. 1:6](#)
[Eph. 2:10](#)

Born again ones have faith That which is born again can't sin [Romans 14:23](#)
[I John 3:9](#)

Born again ones have a new heart [Jer. 32:39-40](#)
[Ezek. 36:26](#)

Their conscience are purged [Heb. 9:14](#)

The spirit minds the things of the spirit [Rom. 8:5](#)

He performs the works of the spirit [Gal. 5:22-24](#)

Those with faith seek God [Heb. 11:6, Eph. 2:8,9](#)

God puts his fear in his people [Jer. 32:39-40](#)

The born again ones love God [I John 4:7, 8, 9, 10, 16](#)
[Rom. 5:5](#)

God draws his people by love They come to God willingly [John 6:44, Jer. 31:3](#)
[Ps. 110:3](#)

He pleases God with his faith [Heb. 11:6, Eph 2:8,9](#)

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He does not desire Gods ways	Job 21:14	<-->	The born again ones desire Gods ways	Ps.25:4-9
His way is not in himself	Jer. 10:23	<-->	The born again ones way is established by the Lord	Ps. 37:23, 24,28
He will not submit to Gods law	Romans 8:7	<-->	He delights in the law of God	Romans 7:22, 25 Heb. 8:10

E. Knowledge of God and of Christ

Christ does not know them	Matt. 7:21-23	<-->	Christ knows his own	John 10:4, 14, 27 I Tim. 2:19
He does know not God	Titus 1:16	<-->	Born again ones know God	John 17:2, 3 I John 5:20
He is ignorant of God	Eph. 4:18 John 8:19			

How does a man get from the left column to the right column above? By an act of his will! Hardly, for the will is merely indicative of the nature in a man. It's only by a direct and immediate act of God (it's the same power used to raise Christ from the dead [Eph. 1:19-20](#)) whereby he quickens our dead spirit alive unto him that we can exhibit the characteristics of life. The natural man cannot attain to the spiritual realm unless God in his sovereign mercy so quickens alive. Praise be to God it is not left up to us.

- d) God demands the natural man to change.
 - i) God commands a circumcised (or regenerated) heart - [Deut. 10:6](#) Provided by grace [Deut. 30:6](#)
 - ii) God commands holiness in his creatures like he is holy. [I Peter 1:15,16](#) Provided by grace [Col. 3:8](#)
 - iii) Faith is a characteristic of the spiritual man not of the natural man.
[Rom. 8:7,8](#) cf. [Heb. 11:6](#), [Gal. 5:22](#)
 - iv) Since the natural man cannot attain true saving faith, God must give it to those of his choosing.
[Eph. 2:8](#); [Heb. 12:2](#); [Phil. 1:29](#)

3) The **cause of regeneration:**

- a) **Negatively:** Neither truth of being nor truth revealed can act to cause regeneration. Truth is not a being, nor can it act to cause regeneration. Regeneration is an act of a being who possess the attribute of truth.
- b) **Positively:** The entire Godhead works at regenerating the lost. Regeneration is an immediate efficient and direct act of God.
[John 1:13](#) "Which were born, not of blood, (ancestral background) nor of the will of the flesh (fleshly production), nor of the will of man (self determining effort) but of God".

4) The **change wrought in regeneration:**

- a) Man is entirely passive in regeneration. ([John 3:3-7](#))
- b) Regeneration is not a process but an instantaneous act of God. ([John 3:3-7](#); [Eph. 1:19-20](#))
- c) Regeneration is not just a change in faculty or affections or understanding. They are not personal entities. They reflect what is in a man but they are not what's in a man. As God's attributes express what he is in his essence so mans attributes of love or hate, holiness or sin express who he is and what his essence is.

5) **Regeneration is more that just a restoration** to Adams pre-fall state. Regeneration is to a newer and higher state in the image of Christ ([Rom. 8:29](#)). Lost sinners need more that just restoration.

- a) The spirit is not added or replaced at regeneration - but changed. The spirit substance or essence is changed which makes man in his spirit and spirit life "A new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" ([Eph. 4:29](#)). Man is has a material and an immaterial nature. The material nature refers to his flesh, bones, blood etc. His immaterial nature is composed of two parts, his soul and spirit. Prior to regeneration the soul dominates the man; the spirit is almost indistinguishable from the soul. The man is soulish or fleshly in all of his deeds and thoughts. The soul reigns in the man with all its fleshly desires as an absolute monarch. When God regenerates, its the spirit that is quickened alive in the image of Christ. The soul loses its reigning power but not its influence over the man. The spirit is now clearly defined (at regeneration) apart from the soul and reigns in the life of the saint ([Heb. 4:12](#)). At death the soul is quickened alive ([I Thess. 5:23](#)), and at the resurrection the body is quickened alive to the glory of God ([I Cor. 15:42-54](#); [Phil. 3:21](#)).
- b) Regeneration is not just reformation. Someone can be reformed and still not be regenerated.

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6) The **relationship of regeneration to saving faith:**

- a) The flesh is flesh and cannot attain to the spiritual realm unless God's sovereign Spirit so quickens. John 3:6-8 According to the law of bio-genesis, life must proceed from life. In order for a spiritually dead man to exercise that which is characteristic of a spiritual man, he must be regenerated.
- b) Regeneration precedes belief. Since faith is a property of the spiritual or quickened man there is no way to make it the basis of the quickening act. The truth John speaks in I John 5:1 "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" is relative to this point. The pluperfect "has been begotten" (gegennetai) makes the begetting precede the belief. R.V Sarrels in his book on Systematic Theology makes this pertinent statement on page 378 "It is impossible to bring the pisteuo (believes or believeth) and the gegennetai (has been begotten) close enough together to make them logically or chronologically simultaneous. The time element cannot be erased from this equation...That which takes place now cannot be a condition of that which has already been...Dr. A.T. Robertson quotes and follows Law on this text, who says, "The divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing" (Word Pictures, chapter 18)".

7) The **relationship of regeneration to the work of Christ** is fundamental in our consideration. Christ secures regeneration at the cross.

- a) It is one of the "all things" that Christ with the Father freely gives to us. (Rom. 8:32)
- b) The Son's work is the distinguishing basis for those the Spirit quickens alive. (John 3:3-16)
- c) The Son tells the Spirit what, where, and when with respect to the application of his work. (John 5:26; 16:13)
- d) It is one of the many spiritual blessings that flow through Christ's and his work (Eph. 1:3)
 - i) Understanding and knowledge - I John 5:21
 - ii) Faith - Philip. 1:29; I Peter 1:19-21; Heb. 12:2
 - iii) Life - John 10:11,28; Gal. 2:20; John 17:2-3
 - iv) Purification - Titus 2:14; Eph. 5:25-27; Heb. 9:14

8) The **relationship of regeneration to indwelling:**

- a) Regeneration is the mechanism (or vehicle) by which God can indwell and have communion with his people. God regenerates no one he doesn't indwell, in fact God regenerates to indwell. We can therefore say that regeneration and indwelling are identical but viewed from different perspectives. God desires to be in communion with his people, but before there can be communion there must be a change in the dead spirit of man. There are two things that are fundamental to our consideration of this topic; things must be in agreement before they can work together and there must be a likeness of essence before there can be a union. We can't have communion with God until we are in union with him.

**We can't be in union with God until our spirit essences are like his Spirit.
Our essence can't be like his until He quickens us alive in the image of his Son.**

- b) As far as the body of Christ is concerned, God will incorporate no foreign material into that body. The dead spiritual nature or essence of members of that body must be made alive and like the essence of the body before it can be joined to it.
- c) Regeneration: the beginning of the sustained power of the Godhead manifested in the new nature.
 - Created Col. 3:10,11; Eph. 1:19,20; Rom. 6:4,5
 - Power that works in us Eph. 3:16,20
 - Power that sustains us II Co. 4:16
 - Power that causes us to progress towards holiness and towards the image of Christ. II Co. 3:18; Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:10,11 Please compare with Heb. 12:14.
- d) God regenerates to indwell. There must be a likeness of essences before there can be a union of essences. God regenerates to have fellowship with his people.
 - It a mark of ownership Rom. 8:9-11
 - Considered prophetically for corporate national elect Israel Ezek. 36:25-27
 - Considered symbolically Ezek. 37:5,9,10,14
 - Considered originally as a purpose of God giving life Gen. 2:7,;1:27
- e) God indwells through the Holy Spirit by means of power manifested in the new nature.
- f) The importance of understanding indwelling in light of God's omnipresence cannot be understated. God's attributes tell us who and what God is as far as his essence is concerned. Any doctrine that affects God's attributes affects what we understand God to BE in his essence.
 - i) Omnipresence Defined: God is unbounded by space and time and is therefore everywhere. God is neither included in space nor absent from it. God is above all space yet present in all of it. Ps. 139:7-10 "Whither shall I go from you Spirit?"

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Jer. 23:23, 24 "Do not I fill heaven and earth." God is not restricted or limited by anything or anyone he is unbound.
I Kings 8:27 "Heaven and earth cannot contain thee" There is no extension of substance to his creation nor is the creation a containment for God essence.

Acts 17:27 "...though He be not far from every one of us."

- ii) When God is said to dwell somewhere whether in heaven or earth or in men it does not imply that a part of God's essence is there more that somewhere else, but that God is especially manifesting his power or graces in such a way that he is said to be present.

- (1) God is said to dwell in the tabernacle above the mercy seat.

Ex. 27:21; 28:11,12 The Lord is before the tabernacle.

Ex. 25:8,22; 29:42-43 God is said to meet his people above the mercy seat.

- (2) God is said to dwell in the temple built by Solomon.

I Kings 8:13,27 God is said to dwell in the temple Solomon built.

cf. with I Kings 8:27 "the heavens of heavens cannot contain thee"

- (3) God is said to dwell in heaven as his habitation.

Ps. 115:3 "Our God is in the heavens" \

Isa. 63:15 "I look down from heaven" ---> They denote manifestations of his presence

Matt. 5:9 "Our Father which are in heaven" / or exertions of his power.

- (4) God is said to indwell his people. As God's essence is no more present in heaven than in the remotest part of the universe so to God's essence is no more present in me as a believer than anywhere else. God is not contained by the new nature. A part of God's essence is not personally in me. God dwells in me similar to the way he dwelt in the temple. God is said to dwell there because his power was manifested there. The temple was where God met his people Israel. The new nature is where God manifests his power to meet and have fellowship with us.

9) **Regeneration and indwelling outside of the Pauline scriptures:**

- a) God regenerates no one he doesn't indwell. Was not Christ the author and finisher of Abel, Noah, and Abraham's faith (Heb. 12:2). Please notice that Heb. 12:2 comes right after Heb. 11; there is no other way to take this verse but in light of the previous chapter. Is not the faith Christ gives his people part of those blessings Christ secured on the cross that he will freely give us with the Father (Rom. 8:32). If the O.T. saints were the possession of Christ, then according to Rom. 8:9 they had the Spirit of Christ (I Cor. 10:4 Christ was the Rock that followed them). I use Abraham as one example, others very easily could be Peter (Matt. 16:16), and David (Ps. 51). Once we have established an essential connection between regeneration and indwelling, we can prove one exists by the existence of the other. The essential doctrines of the mystery, the hope, position and responsibility of the joint body of Christ are not revealed outside of Paul. However we do find the doctrine of indwelling spoken of outside Paul. How can this be? Are we to say to the opponents of dispensationalism that John heard these truths through Paul even though in John 6:56 and 15:4-7, John merely records the words of Christ, and adds no narrative at all. In 1st John the writer had a good grasp of the doctrine of indwelling and gives credit to the anointing that abides in him as the reason. Notice the other passages I John 3:24; 4:12,15. If indwelling (the Spirit in a man) is a doctrine of the mystery then we have Christ, and John revealing body truths to Jews in direct contradiction to Paul's scriptures (see I. above)
- b) If the body began with Paul, and being "in Christ" is descriptive of the mystery truth of being in the body, then what does it mean when Paul says in Romans 16:7, that there were those "in Christ" before him. What does it mean when Paul say's in Galatians 1:22, that "he was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ." This proves that the "in Christ" relationship is not part of that secret mystery revealed to Paul, but describes the indispensable union between Christ and his elect. The Greek work for "in" is "en" and means co-extensive union and association. The elect are in intimate union with Jesus Christ in four related aspects.

1st Eternal union in Christ in the mind and purpose of God. (Eph. 1:3-5)

2nd Representative union with Jesus Christ on the cross. (Romans 5:12-21; 6:1-10)

3rd Vital union in Christ in our present walk in the Spirit. (Rom. 8:1-11)

4th Personal union with Christ in the intermediate state and resurrection. (II Cor. 5:1-9; Thess. 4:13-17)

- c) What does "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" mean if Abraham was not in Christ. Does that mean that Abraham was and is under condemnation? This passage connects topically back to Romans 5 and 6, where Paul describes the headship of Christ as representing the elect that are in him, and Adam as representing those that are in him. Jesus Christ was a divine vicarious substitute for all those he came to represent on the cross. Romans 6 is descriptive of that substitutionary work. Those elect that Christ represented were so united to him in the mind and purpose of God that when he died, they died in him; when he was buried, they were buried in him; when he rose from the dead, they rose from the dead in him. If Abraham (David?) was not "in Christ" then Abraham is still under condemnation contrary to many passages (Rom. 4:2-25). Paul say's in II Cor. 5:17, that "if any man be in Christ then he is a new creature". Abraham was a new creature, for

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Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20).

- d) A New Testament analysis of Abraham's relationship to regeneration.
- i) Abraham had faith, (Heb. 11:8) and therefore was regenerated. Jesus Christ and his work is the originator of Abraham's faith (cf. Heb. 12:2; with John 15:5 b).
 - ii) Abraham's faith pleased God (Heb. 11:6,8).
 - iii) The flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7,8) therefore all those in the flesh and without the Spirit have not faith. (cf. II Thess. 3:2)
 - iv) Abraham's faith is the fruit and product of the Spirit's work in him (regeneration cf. John 3:5-8) not a product of his flesh. (Gal. 5:18,22,25)
 - v) Faith was a free gift to Abraham from God. (Eph. 2:8)
 - vi) Faith was given to Abraham as with all the elect by Christ (Philip. 1:29; Heb. 12:2) through his redemptive work on the cross (I Peter 1:18-21; Rom. 8:32).
 - vii) Abraham was "Christ's" (in a redemptive sense) like we are "Christ's". (Gal. 5:24,18; Rom. 8:9)
 - viii) Abraham's faith was by the Spirit's work in him (regeneration) through the person and work of Christ. If Abraham was not "Christ's" he would not have the Spirit of Christ who alone produces faith. (Rom. 8:9)
 - ix) Abraham was led by the Spirit and therefore was not under the works of the law with respect to condemnation. (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 4:1-5; 8:1; Gal. 3:6-29)
 - x) Chronologically in Abraham's life:
 - (1) He was regenerated, (in Ur of the Chaldees) and faith issued forth from that quickening. See D.1.d above.
 - (2) He was justified by faith MANY years after he first believed in God. Cf Gen. 12:1,2; Heb.11:8; Acts 7:2 with Gen. 15:6.
- e) Some insist that Paul's statement in Col.1:27 "Christ in you the hope of glory" proves that the "in Christ" relationship is confined to mystery truth. However when we examine the context carefully, we see that the emphasis is not on the "in" but on the "you", saints of v.26 and the Gentiles of verse 27a. The fact that Christ was "in" anyone was not a new revelation and part of the mystery (see prior sections). Christ is now forming a totally un-prophesied joint body with each member having full equality with one another (Eph. 3:1-6). Although there are Jews in the body, Gentiles comprise the greater part of the body community. Paul is called the Apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13), because his commission is primarily to the Gentiles, and it's with that emphasis that Paul seeks to "provoke to emulation them which are my flesh that I may save some" (Rom. 11:14). "You" refers back to the saints (v.26b) to whom the mystery has been revealed. They are the Gentiles to whom the riches of the glory of the mystery is made known. The emphasis is on "You Gentiles", you are the ones whom Christ is in. This truth is further brought out in Ephesians 3:1-6.
- Verse One Paul was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles.
Verse Two The dispensation of the grace of God was given to Paul for the Gentiles.
Verse Three The dispensation of the grace of God is doctrinally revealed to Paul as the mystery.
Verse Five The mystery revealed to Paul was not revealed prior to its revelation to him.
Verse Six In the mystery the Gentiles have full equality in every way with the other body members.
- f) God indwells elect Israel corporately at the return of Christ to earth to set up Israel's kingdom. Ezek. 36:37; 37:14
- g) The Spirit in a man does not equal the Spirit upon a man. The Spirit in a man refers to life (see Ezek. 37:14,9,10; 11:19; 36:27); the spirit upon a man refers not to power internalized, but power manifested externally.
- i) Spirit in a man - refers to the power of the Spirit of God manifested in the new nature God created, known through the graces given and the presence of God felt. All of God's saints have the power of the Spirit in them (i.e. the new nature).
 - ii) Spirit upon a man - refers to the power of the Spirit of God manifested externally in some discernible measure usually in prophecy, tongues, visions, physical strength etc.. The power is transient; its purpose always to bring glory to God. Not all that had the power of the Spirit on them had the Spirit in them (cf. King Saul, Judas Iscariot and Heb. 6:1-6)
 - iii) O.T. references to the Spirit upon a man, refers to the Spirit of God giving power manifestly for some particular service for God.
Ezek. 39:25-29
Joel 2:28, 29
Numbers 11:25
Judges 6:34; 11:29; 14:6
I Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6
 - iv) N.T. references to the Spirit upon a man.
Luke 3:21,22 cf. Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1
John 1:33
Luke 24:49 Power from on high cf. Acts 1:8; 2:1-13, 33.

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Note: the Holy Spirit coming in power at Pentecost was a prophesied event and therefore not part of the secret mystery revealed to Paul.