

Holy Spirit: Literal or Representational Indwelling?

Holy Spirit Indwelling Series Part 1

There are varying understandings of what is meant by the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit”. This series of articles aims at examining the assertions of men and applications of scripture to determine the meaning of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit literal or representational? Is the gift of the Holy Spirit the beginning of His indwelling? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be sealed with the Holy Spirit? What exactly does the indwelling accomplish for a man? These questions and more will all be carefully answered by gradually moving through this series.

Here is a statement of the Apostle Paul, validating the existence of the topic of study, but in itself not a full explanation of what the Spirit indwelling is or does:

Romans 8:9 – *“But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

Next, for fun consider this apparently opposing statement of Paul using the same exact word, “dwelleth”:

Romans 7:18 – *“For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not.”*

These statements are a bit of a teaser for this article and will be returned to before its end. At present, consider the following statements:

- **Full of Energy** – Representative of moving about without tiredness.
- **Full of laughter** – Representative of being cheerful or humorous
- **Full of light** – Representative of someone who is optimistic
- **Full of wisdom** – Representative of someone intelligent / knowledgeable
- **Full of the Spirit** – Representative of someone walking according to truth and righteousness

Today, when the above are said, they are seen as representing different personality traits. In the first century, and mistakenly today, the last statement “Full of the Spirit” is viewed differently at times. This will be examined in a later article in this series. For

now, observe how these statements are widely regarded as representational and not literal filling someone up with energy, laughter, light, wisdom, and Spirit.

Revelation 1:10 records the writing of the apostle John, *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...”* The question to be asked is: Was John literally in a spirit? Or was this a representation of his state of mind? **I John 4:6** also written by John states: *“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”* The context is the discernment between true and false teaching. The spirits here are not literal spirits that man is to be looking to find. They are representational rather of bodies of teaching. **2 Timothy 1:7** states: *“For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline.”* Has God given man four literal spirits that are literally roaming around inside of him? No, these are representations of man’s state of being. **Romans 7:17** states: *“So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me”*. Is sin literally living inside of Paul? Or is it the representational propensity to give into unrighteous desires that Paul is talking about. Finally, **Colossians 1:19** states: *“For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell;”* Can qualities literally dwell or is the text saying Christ was representational of qualities? In all of the verses mentioned in this paragraph, there is a representation of qualities. There is no literal dwelling, abiding, or living in a person of these qualities.

The terms abide and dwell are the same word at times in the Greek and used interchangeably depending upon the translation give a picture of how God and the Holy Spirit dwell within His Church and man representatively. **John 6:48-58** – presents a discussion where Christ states in **vs. 56** *“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.”* Putting aside the doctrines of consubstantiation and transubstantiation, Christ said he would dwell or abide in those who did as he stated. How exactly was He going to do that? Literally? On the other side of the statement is the abiding or dwelling of the individual in Christ. How is that going to happen? Literally? Consider the following passages:

John 8:31 – *Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples;*

John 14:19-21 - *Yet a little while, and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me: because I live, ye shall live also. In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.*

John 15:4 – *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.*

Romans 8:9 – *But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

2 Timothy 3:14 – *But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.*

1 John 4:15-16 – *Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.*

In the above passages there are many purposeful representational dwellings from the sides of Man, the Father, Jesus, the Spirit, the Word, things learned, and love. The audiences were Jews, apostles, Romans, Timothy, and Christians. They were being told to abide or dwell in unity within the will of God. All of the language is representational. It is also reverse. There is therefore a reverse indwelling. For man to literally abide in all of the things mentioned is not even common sense. The passages were given to tell man that if he does the things which God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) has established God and man will be representatively of one mind.

I Cor. 3:16-17 states “*Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye.*” This statement is often read to establish that the human body houses the Holy Spirit. However, to do so literally is a poor misinterpretation of scripture. The discussion of **I Corinthians 3** focuses on building something. The building is the Church. The materials are the souls of man. The temple of God is the Church. The Spirit lives representatively in it because the Church represents those obedient to the Word of God given by the Spirit of God to man. When man does not obey, he essentially tries to destroy the temple of God. He is straw, wood, hay, and God will destroy Him. Only those who are obedient to God and are united with God in His Church will be allowed to remain (**Isaiah 59:1-2**, **2 Thessalonians 1:8**). This verse in no sense advocates a literal dwelling of the Spirit of God within an individual.

Wrapping up loose ends, **Romans 7:18**, mentioned at the beginning of this article remains to be discussed. In this verse Paul says nothing good dwells within his flesh. What about the Spirit! Does that not dwell within him? Isn't that what **Romans 8:9** said? Yes, it did. It was also seen this was representative. The point Paul is trying to get across in the verses surrounding and including **Romans 7:18** is that striving after

the flesh, worldly things, results only in sin. Good does not come from a worldly focus. It is when we match our lives with His will that we are representative of His Spirit. That is the indwelling of the Spirit. Man dwelling in the Spirit, the Spirit dwelling in man, relationships of unity, abiding, and dwelling. Paul was not making a contradictory statement.

This article presents the belief that the indwelling of the Spirit of God is completely representational based upon man's obedience to the Word of God. The next article will further examine the belief of a literal indwelling of the Spirit, whether or not it has any relationship with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and when the indwelling is supposed to begin.