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UNDERSTANDING 'THE SPIRIT OF GOD'

PART 1

Recently the following question was sent to me:

"God is spirit and yet He uses the power of what He says is His Holy Spirit to move and act, and it's not really God in the person who is moving but the spirit of God only. The question therefore is: does this mean that God has two spirits? One that is Himself and one He uses to be His power? Does Christ share the same spirit power as the Father or do they each have a spirit power separate from themselves and each other, which they use to act and move?"

This is the question. Let's try to understand this subject.

In the Hebrew text the word translated "spirit" is "RUACH" or "RUWACH". It is a noun and it is derived from the verb with basically the same spelling, which means "to smell". "RUACH", the noun, primarily means "breath" or "wind".

In the N.T. Greek, the word translated "spirit" is "PNEUMA". This word primarily refers to "a movement of air", i.e. also "breath" or "wind".

So the Hebrew and the Greek words used in the Bible basically mean the same thing. They refer to something invisible to human eyes, but something that has movement and power, thus: air, breath, wind, etc..

Our human languages are inadequate in fully describing God. Therefore we find MANY "God is" statements in the Bible to help us understand different aspects or facets of God's existence. For example: "God is love"; "God is a spirit"; etc..

God the Father and Jesus Christ are Beings who have the form and shape we call "human". We are made in God's image and likeness. But God is composed of an essence or substance that we can't see. So we are told that God is a spirit (see John 4:24). This tells us that God **CONSISTS OF** spirit; that is what He is composed of.

But that spirit God is composed of has a specific geographic confinement; it is always in the shape of His spirit body (head, body, arms, legs, etc.), in the image of which we human beings have been created. And God as a spirit being is always in one specific location at a time. The same is true for Jesus Christ.

Now our "breath" is something that comes out of us. In this regard there is a similarity and a difference between God and man. God made us as breathing creatures, which give out breath because that is what God does. God is **CONSTANTLY AND PERMANENTLY** giving off (or radiating) "breath".

We human beings do the same. As long as we live, we constantly give out breath. The difference is that, where God constantly gives out His "breath" without ever so much as "breathing in", we human beings can **ONLY** breathe out if we first breathe in. God is self-sufficient; but we are dependent.

Furthermore, we depend on our breath for strength. When an athlete is "out of breath", it means he has no strength to run any longer, until he has "recovered his breath". It is through our breath that we human beings receive power. Can we understand this? And so our ability to breathe is also referred to as "the breath of life" (Genesis 6:17; 7:15, 22; etc.).

On the human level we have no difficulty differentiating between our fleshly bodies, which are visible and which consist of atoms and molecules; and our breath, which is invisible but which also consists of atoms and molecules. With God there is also a very clear difference between these things. There is on the one hand God's "body", which has specific dimensions (whatever they may be), and which consists of spirit. And then there is the "breath" or "spirit" which constantly emanates from God.

The difficulty which comes into this is that God's "body" is not physical, as are our fleshly bodies. It is composed of spirit essence. As a result, we end up using the same word in reference to God's "body" as we do to refer to God's "breath". Both are "spirit"; but God's "body" is different from His "breath" ... even as the molecules that make up our breath are different from the molecules that make up our bodies.

The Holy Spirit IS the breath of God! That is exactly what it is! It is a source of power that constantly and permanently radiates out from God, much the same way as the sun in our solar system constantly and permanently radiates out power, light and energy. God never has to "breathe in". It is HIS BREATH that sustains all things!

Jesus Christ has existed with God the Father for all past eternity. Jesus Christ is also God. Jesus Christ also has a body that is composed of spirit. And Jesus Christ also has "a breath". That breath is also the Holy Spirit. And even as God the Father is a constantly "breathing out" Being (constantly radiating this breath of power), so Jesus Christ is also a constantly "breathing out" Being.

In the same way as we human beings all share the same "breath of life" (i.e. we all breathe physical air in and out), even so God the Father and Jesus Christ share the same "spiritual breath" which both of them constantly "breathe out". They both "breathe out" this power that is called "the Holy Spirit", or "the Holy BREATH"! That is why Jesus Christ "breathed on" His disciples after His resurrection.

And when he had said this, HE BREATHED ON [THEM], and saith unto them, RECEIVE YE THE HOLY GHOST: (John 20:22)

God the Father and Jesus Christ are spirit beings. So are the angels. The thing that determines "that God IS God" is not that He is a spirit being, since there are other spirit beings which are not God. The main attribute which determines that God is God is THIS PERMANENT AND NEVER-ENDING EMANATION OF THIS POWER OF THE BREATH OF GOD, THE HOLY SPIRIT!

The angels are also spirit beings. But they are not the sources of self-generated power. They are TOTALLY DEPENDENT for all their powers upon the sources of power which God the Father and Jesus Christ make available to them. By our human standards those powers that God makes available to the angels are staggering; but by God's standards they are limited and confined. God can withdraw any powers at any time, totally as He chooses to do. This is what has happened with Satan and the demons ... God has withdrawn certain specific powers from them.

So the difference with the angels is that they do not inherently "breathe out" the Holy Spirit of their own accord; they can only "breathe out" something they have first "breathed in". The only Holy Spirit that can flow out from them is what they have first taken in. God, by comparison, never needs to "TAKE IN" any Holy Spirit. It is this attribute that sets God the Father and Jesus Christ apart as "God" from all the rest of their creation! They are totally self-sufficient ... and nobody else is!

THE CREATION OF MAN

The creation of Adam is recorded as follows:

And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

The most vital step in the creation of man was that God "BREATHED" into man. God's breath is God's Spirit! And when God breathed into man, that was the point when God imparted to human beings "the spirit in man", in addition to imparting the molecular "breath of life".

So the first thing God (i.e. Jesus Christ) did was make "the model" out of physical matter. After that "HE BREATHED" into this model. It is "God's breath" that is the source of all power. It is "God's breath" that can create life. God's breath is the power of the Holy Spirit that proceeds forth from God, and which produces life.

This FIRST "BREATHING" on the first human being opened the way for PHYSICAL MORTAL LIFE for humanity. The SECOND "BREATHING" (the one we looked at above in John 20:22) opened the way for IMMORTAL SPIRIT LIFE. In both cases it is the Spirit of God, the "breath" of God, that makes this possible.

The Bible uses a number of different analogies to teach us about God. We know that the Holy Spirit is compared to breath. The Holy Spirit is also quite often compared to "WATER". Then, instead of being referred to as "the breath of life", it is referred to as "THE WATER OF LIFE".

During the millennium Jesus Christ will rule from Jerusalem. A vision of that Temple during the millennium is recorded in Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48. In chapter 47 we have a lengthy discussion about the incredible volume of water that will flow out from the Temple, in which Jesus Christ will be residing (Ezekiel 47:1). Everything that this water comes into contact with shall be "healed" (see Ezekiel 47:8-9).

This vision is telling us that during the millennium Jesus Christ on this Earth will be THE SOURCE of the Holy Spirit that will be available to restore all things, and to help people with their lives. The water of life is "the breath" of Jesus Christ, just as much as it is "the breath" of God the Father.

After the millennium and after the 100-year period God the Father Himself will come down to the New Earth. Then both, the Father and Jesus Christ will become joint-sources of the Holy Spirit. Notice Revelation chapter 22:

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, PROCEEDING OUT OF THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB. (Revelation 22:1)

This is a reference to the Holy Spirit (also called the breath of God, the breath of life, the water of life, etc.) emanating out from both, God the Father and from Jesus Christ. Understand that it is not the throne that produces this water of life; it is something that emanates from God Himself!

But let's go one step further.

Those in the first resurrection are promised to inherit all things WITH Jesus Christ, to become "joint-heirs with Christ".

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:17)

All those in the first resurrection must be "overcomers". And to all in the first resurrection Jesus Christ has promised:

To him that overcometh will I grant TO SIT WITH ME IN MY THRONE, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. (Revelation 3:21)

Do we really grasp what this means? Do we REALLY grasp it?

It is the throne of God the Father from which the power of the Holy Spirit emanates. Jesus Christ has sat down with the Father on His throne. Jesus Christ is also a source of the power of the Holy Spirit. It also emanates from Him!

But Christ has offered to all of us, who are being "invited" to have a part in the first resurrection, the opportunity to sit with Him on HIS throne. THAT IS THE THRONE FROM WHICH THE RIVER OF LIFE EMANATES! Do we understand?

God is offering us, through the first resurrection, the opportunity to be like Christ!

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

We will be like Christ not just by being spirit beings. The angels are also spirit beings but they are not "like Him". Those in the first resurrection will have the Holy Spirit emanating from them in the same way that it emanates from God the Father and from Jesus Christ ... constantly "breathing out" the Holy Spirit, without ever needing to "breathe in". We will truly be "Gods"!

THAT is why the first resurrection is "a BETTER resurrection".

Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; THAT THEY MIGHT OBTAIN A BETTER RESURRECTION: (Hebrews 11:35)

It is of a better "QUALITY" than the later ones. It is a resurrection to a "higher" level of existence than what people in the millennium will be offered.

So for all future eternity the Holy Spirit will emanate out from God the Father and from Jesus Christ and from the 144,000 who will constitute "the firstfruits unto God" (Revelation 14:4). They will all be "just like Christ", though in lower positions of authority.

This is where another matter ties in. Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom and all those in the first resurrection are the Bride. They constitute "the wife" (Revelation 19:7). That marriage between Christ and those in the first resurrection will produce "children", which will be ALL those who become a part of God's Family through the millennium and the 100-year period thereafter. And like a mother, they will assist in "feeding" their children.

This brings us to "the tree of life" in the New Jerusalem. Notice what we are told:

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] THE TREE OF LIFE, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, [and] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [were] FOR THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS. (Revelation 22:2)

God structures all those who become a part of His Family through the millennium and through the 100-year period of the second resurrection into "nations". They are also referred to a few verses earlier as "the nations of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24).

Now WHY do those from the millennium and from the second resurrection need access to this "tree of life"?

They will be immortal spirit beings, yes. But they themselves will NOT be sources of the Holy Spirit! The source of that is THE THRONE OF GOD! And they are not on that throne. It is to those in the first resurrection that Christ has offered a place on His throne. But this is not offered to those who join God's Family in a later resurrection.

BECAUSE they themselves will not on their own "breathe out" the Holy Spirit, THEREFORE God provides them with this access to the Holy Spirit in the form of "the tree of life". THEY will need to, either constantly or at certain intervals, acquire the Holy Spirit. Oh yes, it will be VERY READILY available to them, like breathing in air is available to us today. But those in the first resurrection will have this power of the Holy Spirit spontaneously emanating out from them for all future eternity, whereas those who become God's children later will have to take it in before they can breathe it out.

THAT IS WHY THE FIRST RESURRECTION IS BETTER!

Those in the first resurrection SIT with Christ on His throne. Those who come later (i.e. the innumerable great multitude of Revelation 7:9) will only STAND BEFORE THE THRONE, from which this power of the Holy Spirit will emanate. They will "stand" (Revelation 7:9), they will permanently "serve" the One on the throne (Revelation 7:15), they will have all their "needs" met (Revelation 7:16), and they will have ready "access" to the Holy Spirit (Revelation 7:17).

God is just! There is a reward for having faithfully "overcome" during this first life. Such "overcoming" was instrumental in the development of godly character. The reward is not just the matter of being resurrected and changed into spirit beings 1100 years ahead of the rest who join God's Family. The greater degree of character that was developed is also the reason why God will give those in the first resurrection a higher level of access to the Holy Spirit for all eternity! They themselves will be changed by God into becoming SOURCES of the Holy Spirit ... that is the kind of "breath" God will give to those in the first resurrection.

So let's now look at our original questions.

God IS a spirit being who has "a breath", which is also called "His Holy Spirit". Jesus Christ has that same "breath". That same "breath" is also offered to those in the first resurrection, but NOT to those in the millennium and in the 100-year period.

God only has ONE "breath" or "spirit", not two. Don't confuse this with the fact that God is also composed of the same substance that His "breath" consists of. That is like us human beings, who are composed of molecules and atoms; and the air we breathe is ALSO composed of the same molecules and atoms.

When "the Spirit (i.e. breath) of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2), it does not mean that God Himself was right there, hovering above the water. The "breath" of God was there for the

explicit purpose of recreating the surface of this planet, to make it fit for human existence. As is explained in Psalm 104:30:

THOU SENDEST FORTH THY SPIRIT, THEY ARE CREATED: AND THOU RENEWEST THE FACE OF THE EARTH. (Psalm 104:30)

God had "sent forth" His "breath" in Genesis 1:2 and this resulted in the recreation that we read about in Genesis 1. It had nothing to do with God Himself being right there on the scene.

Well, I hope this has given you a few things to think about. Search and you will find, ask and it shall be given unto you ...

PART 2

QUESTION & ANSWER ABOUT THE ARTICLE ENTITLED

'UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRIT OF GOD'

Here is a question I received from someone after he had read Part 1 of this article.

"In general, I found Frank Nelte's paper about the spirit interesting and fairly informative.

However, I do have one question: If those who are converted to spirit during the millenium and during the Great White Throne judgment will not have the spirit emanating spontaneously from them, why did Christ say, on the Last Great Day, speaking of all those who would THEN come to Him : "...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters..." This EXPLICITLY speaks of the spirit, emanating from those who do come to Christ at that time (and bring fruits meet for repentance, etc., showing their obedience and willingness to live God's way) !

The reward for those who are in the better resurrection is not, I believe, the emanation of the spirit - ALL who are spirit members of God's family will be like Him (at least, there are no scriptural references to support anything else). The reward is that we will be sharing God's throne, able because of our perseverance, experience, and overcoming through exercising God's Spirit (God having developed in us all these things), to serve many more beings than those who come later, able to GIVE more."

The rest of this article is my reply to this particular question.

First, I'd like to make clear that I don't feel that I have all the answers ... I don't have them. But if I had to wait until I have ALL the answers before saying anything, THEN I would never get to say anything at all. So with most of my articles I am putting out some ideas to stimulate the thinking of those who read the articles. At times it will stimulate questions that I can't answer, and that is also fine.

Here are some thoughts for you to consider. Possibly they will stimulate more questions, and that would also be fine. Anyway, here goes:

A premise I believe to be true:

I do not believe that ANYONE will be "converted to spirit during the millennium or DURING the Great White Throne judgment period". I don't believe there is any evidence for this idea anywhere in the Bible.

In the resurrection chapter Paul lists the process (1 Corinthians 15:23-25) from Christ's resurrection until "death is destroyed", yet there is no indication of people becoming spirit beings DURING the millennium or DURING the GWT judgment period. Rather, this description by Paul places all of those who join God's Family after the time of the first resurrection TOGETHER IN ONE GROUP, referred to as "then the end ones" (there is no verb 'comes' in the Greek text). I have explained this in detail in my article entitled "The People During The Millennium".

Revelation chapter 20 also covers the time from Christ's second coming (when Satan is bound) to the time of the second death. And in this account there is also not the slightest hint of people being changed into spirit beings at any time during the millennium.

Before changing anyone into spirit beings in the first resurrection, God is VERY EXACT to not let even a single person go ahead of anyone else. God makes righteous Abraham wait almost 4000 years so that he doesn't even go 5 minutes ahead of us in this generation. Yet people have assumed that during the millennium God will at different times just change people into spirit beings. This assumption has no biblical support at all.

Therefore, UNLESS IT IS PROVED OTHERWISE, I will continue to believe that all those from the millennium and from the GWT judgment period will join God's Family at precisely the same time, referred to by Paul as "then the end ones". This procedure is in harmony with the way God has planned the first resurrection.

The comment about John 7:38 is very good and valid. My reply here is this: Yes, Jesus Christ SPOKE these words on the Last Great Day. But I feel it is a bit of an INTERPRETATION to say that Christ was speaking TO PEOPLE WHO WOULD BELIEVE ON HIM ABOUT 3000 YEARS LATER. That would mean this offer from Christ only had "prophetic value". It seems to me that He was stating a fact that would apply to those who would respond to Him THEN, at that time (i.e. 2000 years ago). It would also apply to all who would respond for the next 2000 years.

However, I agree that I have no ironclad support for limiting Christ's offer to those people before the millennium starts. So yes, perhaps this shows that my speculation is not correct?

I feel there is THE POSSIBILITY that when people come up in the second resurrection and then refer to this event with: "Lord, you said that if we would believe on You, then the Holy Spirit would flow out of us ...", that Jesus Christ might reply: "Yes, My son, that is what I offered you about 3000 years ago. But you didn't want to respond then, did you? And My offer stood for a full 2000 years. Since you chose not to accept My offer when I extended it to you, I now STILL offer you immortal life and free, ready ACCESS to the Holy Spirit. But the offer to have you yourself become a SOURCE of the Holy Spirit is what you forfeited by not responding to me earlier. It is part of the reward for those who had to overcome Satan's pressures. You are now living in an environment totally free from Satan's influence."

This scenario is obviously only a speculation on my part, and it does not really prove the objection wrong. So let me now add my reasons WHY I feel as I do. See if you can show me a flaw in this line of thinking?

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me IN MY THRONE, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father IN HIS THRONE." (Revelation 3:21 AV)

1) There are TWO distinct thrones. One is God the Father's throne, and the other is Jesus Christ's throne. Both thrones represent positions of power, but they also present a hierarchy.

2) Christ sits with the Father on His throne, meaning that God the Father SHARES something with Jesus Christ. God elevates Jesus Christ to His, the Father's, level.

3) Those in the first resurrection are promised the privilege to sit with Christ on His throne, being joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). Those in the first resurrection are NOT promised to sit on the Father's throne! That privilege is reserved for Jesus Christ. This sets Jesus Christ for all future eternity above every other individual (except the Father Himself) in God's Family. But those in the first resurrection are promised to be elevated to the point of sharing Christ's throne. This sets them for all future eternity above all others who only join God's Family later.

4) Now it is the thrones of God the Father and of Jesus Christ which are THE SOURCE of the Holy Spirit, from where it "flows out" (see Revelation 22:1 and Ezekiel chapter 47). This means that those in the first resurrection sit on one of the two SOURCES of the Holy Spirit. By being pictured as "sitting" on this source, it implies that they also CONTROL this source of the Holy Spirit, that it ALSO flows out from them.

5) But it is only after the Holy Spirit has proceeded forth from the source, that it is instrumental in producing the tree of life (see Revelation 22:2). So the tree of life bears fruits as a result of the Holy Spirit, which has been supplied from "a source", on which source those in the first resurrection are shown as "sitting".

6) God's eternal Family is going to be grouped into "nations", because it is so large, and because God is a God of order. These "nations" will not necessarily be along physical, ethnic lines, since the "nations of Israel" that make up those in the first resurrection will also not be along ethnic lines. The FIRST resurrection will include people from many different nations, yet they will all comprise "the Israel of God". So the "nations of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24) will very likely be grouped according to how they lived their lives before God, rather than according to some genetic background.

7) These "nations of them which are saved" will have access to the fruits of the tree of life, not to "heal" them, but for "their well-being" (see Revelation 22:2).

8) It is NOT essential for the existence of a spirit being to have access to the Holy Spirit, since Satan and the demons can exist without any access to the Holy Spirit. However, access to the Holy Spirit can certainly contribute to THE WELL-BEING of spirit beings. Access to the Holy Spirit affects THE QUALITY of the existence of a spirit being.

IN ANALOGY:

We physical human beings need to daily replenish ourselves with physical food. The food supplies are so abundant around the world (clean animals, clean fowls, fish, fruits, vegetables, berries, nuts, root-plants, etc.) that if we are reasonably prepared, we can travel to any part of this earth without having to worry about "starving". Also we can carry certain supplies (though not unlimited) with us. Our "dependence on regular supplies of food" does not really prevent us from doing anything we want to do. We can even go without food for a few days, though we certainly "feel better" when we have the opportunity to eat really nutritious foods.

SIMILARLY I WOULD SPECULATE:

Access to the fruits of the tree of life is not absolutely essential to maintain the existence of the spirit beings that are given this access to the tree of life. But this access is something that ENHANCES the existence of those who take in these "fruits". And having taken in a certain amount, they will feel thoroughly "refreshed" (for lack of a better word) ... like when we have had a full meal. No doubt this

analogy falls short in some ways.

9) The "innumerable multitude" of Revelation 7 is shown as **STANDING** before the throne of God the Father and before Christ (see Revelation 7:9), and the main thing we are told about them is that **ALL THEIR NEEDS TO EXIST WITHOUT STRESS** will be freely available (see Revelation 7:16). They won't ever again suffer hunger or thirst or feel too cold or too hot. **THIS EMPHASIS** shows clearly that this group has nothing to do with "RULING" with Christ. By "standing before the throne" it shows that they do not have the same access to what that throne represents as do those who "SIT" with Christ on His throne. Those who "stand" must **IN SOME WAY** be on a lower level than those who "sit".

10) Now the exact same point (a stress-free existence with all their needs met) is made in Revelation 21:4, that those before God's throne will never again **SUFFER** in any way. All their needs are met. This description is compatible with giving them free access to the tree of life. "Access to the tree of life" is **NOT NECESSARILY** the same as being promised **RULERSHIP**. Think about this concept for a while.

By contrast, for those who are being offered a part in the first resurrection: **HAVING THEIR NEEDS MET** is **NEVER** a part of the description of what God holds out to them. That just never is what God focuses on for them. For them God always focuses on **RULING**.

11) Exactly **HOW** is it that those in the first resurrection will "SERVE" those who come later? Is it by sitting on a throne and giving orders ... **OR IS IT PERHAPS BY PROVIDING SOMETHING THAT THOSE INDIVIDUALS "REALLY NEED" TO FEEL WELL?**

Yes, this is certainly a speculation on my part!

But is there any greater way that the firstfruits could possibly "serve" those who are changed into spirit beings later, than to help provide access to the Holy Spirit for them, like helping them to have access to the equivalent of "their daily bread"? This is just a speculation, but give it some thought.

12) The Day of Pentecost pictures those in the first 'harvest', i.e. those in the first resurrection. On the Day of Pentecost Peter applied the prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 ("... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ... see visions ... dream dreams"), as recorded in Acts 2:16-17) to the people who had received God's Spirit **AT THAT VERY TIME**. Now **WE TODAY** are responding to God under the same conditions as existed in the 30's AD (i.e. Satan is loose and able to tempt us and deceive us; we have to resist this, etc.) when Peter was speaking. But very few of us in God's Church (if any ??) have "seen visions" and "dreamed dreams" that are direct messages from God.

So Joel's prophecy does not apply to **ALL** who come to God under the same conditions. So is there the possibility that likewise John 7:38 ("... out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters") does not apply to **ALL** people who come to Christ at whatever time of human history? That it is a **SELECTIVE** statement about people at a **SPECIFIC** period in human history?

13) IF John 7:38 describes what will happen to people in the second resurrection, **THEN** the following point requires an answer:

A) The fruits of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem have no meaning or attraction or purpose for God the Father and for Jesus Christ. Those fruits will **NOT** be for **THEIR** benefit.

B) Likewise, there really is no purpose in providing fruits from the tree of life for those in the first resurrection who will have "rivers of living water" flowing out of them, and who will have different degrees of "GLORY" emanating from them, even as there are different "glories" between different stars (see 1 Corinthians 15:40-42). The tree of life really does not serve any purpose for such glorious beings.

C) The purpose of the fruits of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem is TO MAKE SOMETHING AVAILABLE, something that some beings will just not inherently have. It is "to provide something".

D) It makes perfect sense to PROVIDE access to the fruits of the Holy Spirit on the tree of life for those beings who do NOT have "rivers of living waters flowing out of their bellies".

E) Therefore the existence of the tree of life for "the nations of them which are saved" IN THE NEW JERUSALEM in itself proves that there will be "saved individuals" who will not have the Holy Spirit flowing out of them.

F) I think it would be a cop-out to dismiss the tree of life in Revelation 22:2 as simply being "SYMBOLICAL" of something. Revelation chapters 21-22 describe a REAL city that God will create. It will have real features. It is not some vague, nebulous description that God has just made up. The description is detailed and specific. There really will be a "river of water of life". And on both sides of that river will be the tree of life. It does not matter whether that "tree" will consist of matter or of spirit. There will be a "tree of life". IT MUST SERVE A PURPOSE!

G) Now exactly what is it that comes first with God: the physical representation or the eternal spiritual reality? Specifically: did God put "a tree of life" into the garden in Eden BECAUSE God had planned to have such a tree in His New Jerusalem approximately 7000 years later? Or does God plan to have the tree of life in His New Jerusalem BECAUSE He first had such a tree in the garden of Eden? Exactly what came first with God?

Surely the tree of life in the New Jerusalem is not just "an after-thought", something God planned AFTER He had tried out such a tree in the garden in Eden?

For that matter: did God create THE CONCEPT of physical rivers on this physical earth flowing away from a source BECAUSE God has planned to have a river in the New Jerusalem? OR does God plan to have a river of living water in the New Jerusalem BECAUSE He first created physical rivers on this earth and they proved to be a good idea? Again, the second suggestion doesn't sound right.

WHAT COMES FIRST? Are we not to understand the spiritual reality in the presence of God by looking at the things that God created on the physical level as part of our environment ? See Romans 1:20.

Try to think these things through without any prejudiced feelings and ideas. If you can set aside your unproved feelings and ideas (things we ministers in most cases taught you over the past 20-30 years), then you will be able to read the Word of God at face value, for what it actually tells us.

14) So IF my speculation, that those who join God's Family any time after the time of the first resurrection do not have the Holy Spirit "flowing out of them", is correct, THEN there is a readily understandable purpose for the tree of life in the New Jerusalem.

BUT IF John 7:38 is really something that also describes the people in the second resurrection, THEN please explain the purpose of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, at a time when there will not be any mortal human beings?

THIS IS THE POINT THAT REQUIRES AN ANSWER!

We in God's Church have never in the recent past had an adequate and satisfactory explanation for the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, which is "for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2), "of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24). I believe that the explanation I have offered in this article presents a distinct possibility.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE NEW JERUSALEM MUST SERVE A PURPOSE!

And that purpose cannot be to "heal" people of physical sicknesses and diseases.

Well, I hope this at least stimulates your own thinking and Bible study further. I realize that none of these thoughts really conclusively PROVE what I have presented in Part 1. But they should at least reveal my underlying thinking.

Frank W. Nelte