

***The computer*** technology allowed many startup companies to flourish. Bright people with ideas married their ideas with the technology, and we have seen many young people become multimillionaires overnight. It all has to do with the vision of a person, and his or her ability to attract the investment and followers and clients.

What if the visionary suddenly met the early demise? What would happen to the startup company? Will the staff be able to fulfill the vision of the founder? Chances are, the startup company will die, along with the idea of the founder.

***In its*** beginning, the movement known today as the Christianity was nothing more than a movement of lowly people. At its leadership was a young carpenter, surrounded by 12 people from the commoners' class, whom the carpenter hand-picked. Their movement was financed by a few wealthy women who faithfully followed them.

At the height of the movement, the leader was arrested, and was accused of the crime he did not commit, and was executed. Now what would happen to the movement?

***The normal*** consequence should have been the quick dissolution of the movement, and the disciples should have been disbanded, and the followers scattered. We know the account of what the disciples did, when their leader died: they went back to their old profession, in order to make ends meet.

Soon, the disciples burst out of their hiding places, and they started to proclaim that Jesus has resurrected. Many believed, and became Christians. Also, many doubted their story, and discounted as unfounded rumors.

***If it*** was true that Jesus did not resurrect, then, what would have been the normal course of the movement whose leader was publicly executed, whose disciples attempted to spread the rumor that he resurrected?

Rationally speaking, how many years, or how many months, could the failed movement have eked out its life by spreading the outrageous rumor that its leader came back from the dead? How many startups can revitalize its marketability by spreading the rumor that its founder is not dead, but well and alive, only he just became rather permanently reclusive?

Rationally speaking, the Christian movement should have been dead within a few years, at the most. Only a few history buffs should have heard about a small sect that gained its popularity during the Roman occupation of the Hebrew territory.

*Mysteriously*, the movement grew explosively. How gullible can people be? Do people really swallow the claim of a few, uneducated, working class people, and become the followers of a dead leader? Given its longevity, the Christianity should be the longest living hoax in history.

So there has to be the reason why it retained its life this long. There had to be something that convicted people that they declared their allegiance to this dead man whom they accepted as having resurrected. Something uncontrollably powerful, something objectively confirmable, something irresistibly overwhelming, made the believers out of them—what could that have been?

*In a* few O.T. accounts, the phrase, the Spirit of God, or Spirit of the Lord, was used to describe the presence of God. The very first account of the phrase, the Spirit of God, is found in Genesis 1:2:

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

The first account that specifically credits the Spirit of God for the enabling gifts of the Spirit is found in Exodus Ch. 31, when God instructed Moses to construct the tent of meeting:

The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> "See, I have called by name Bez'alel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: <sup>3</sup> and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, <sup>4</sup> to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, <sup>5</sup> in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, for work in every craft. <sup>6</sup> And behold, I have appointed with him Oho'liab, the son of Ahis'amach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

God's Spirit gifts a person with ability, intelligence, knowledge, and all craftsmanship, in order to fulfill God's purpose. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are not intended to fulfill individuals' ambitions or career aspirations, but to fulfill the purpose God envisions. Unfortunately, many mistakenly believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for their own private uses.

***Another well*** known verse is found in Joel (Ch. 2):

<sup>28</sup> "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. <sup>29</sup> Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

The prophet Joel spoke of the day when God's Spirit would be poured out on the people. The Christians later encountered this verse, and were stunned by its forceful prophesy that reminded them of what they had experienced: the Pentecost. They were convicted by this verse that spoke to their unforgettable experience, the experience which they had shared in the same place, at the same time, altogether—the event which Acts faithfully recorded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

***This Holy*** Spirit was not an accidental gift. If the prophet Joel prophesied about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, according to John, the coming of the Holy Spirit was a planned event. The writer narrates in

chapter 14 the promise that we have heard earlier:

<sup>16</sup> And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.

<sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, 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 have said to you.

***Then, the*** actual fulfillment of this promise takes place in Ch. 20. It is in no way as spectacular or sensational as the version provided in Acts Ch. 2. It does not take place 50 days from the Easter, either. In the very evening of the resurrection—the Easter evening—Jesus appeared to the disciples:

<sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

John's account is to the point and concise: the Holy Spirit will empower the disciples to forgive the sins of any. Until then, people believed that only God can forgive. The Holy Spirit empowers ordinary people, and the spirit-filled people can do extraordinary things. According to John's Gospel, the promise made in Ch. 14 was fulfilled on the day Jesus resurrected.

***The believers*** who accepted the gospel messages never witnessed the resurrection of the Lord, or the risen Lord with their own eyes. Yet this outpouring of the Holy Spirit convicted the believers that Jesus had resurrected from the dead. They now have this powerful conviction founded upon their own physical and intellectual experiences.

Once the believer have experienced this Holy Spirit, no rational argument, no threat of death penalty can chase them away from this conviction. To them, this reality of the Holy

Spirit is stronger than any visible reality they have yet seen.

They have been convicted that there is something far greater than their eyes can see, greater than their imaginations can capture, that is beyond their understanding, yet more real than what they can see or touch. Nothing in this world can stop people who are convicted of things beyond human description.

*There is* reason why Christianity continued through the centuries. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit did not happen on individual basis. It always happened when a group of people gathered to pray, just as we have today. They all experienced the same thing in the same place at the same time. The Holy Spirit created the community of believers who were convicted of the same thing. And that, as we know it today, is the church.

The Holy Spirit directs Christians away from the secular matters, to be concerned with things of the eternal, imperishable nature.

John's Gospel called the Holy Spirit as the Counselor, the Advocate. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, who strengthens us in our weakness, who equips us in our poverty, and guides us in our endeavor to remain faithful to our calling. It is the gift God gives to whoever seeks it.

May this day be the day the Holy Spirit is poured upon us.