

Jesus Present in Spirit

1. apostles are operating as the agents of Jesus
 - A. what does “apostle” mean?
 - i. [Friberg Lexicon] ἀπόστολος, ου, ό (1) as one who is sent on a mission with full authority *apostle, messenger, envoy* ([JN 13.16](#)); (2) as a commissioned representative of a congregation *delegate, missionary, representative* ([2C 8.23](#)); (3) in the NT used especially of a messenger for God; (a) generally ([LU 11.49](#)); (b) more specifically as a person who tells the gospel message *apostle* ([RO 16.7](#)); often of a person who has the special task of founding and establishing churches *apostle, messenger* (of God) ([EP 2.20](#)); (c) especially of the Twelve chosen by Jesus *apostle* ([LU 6.13](#))
 - B. As Jesus had sent out the 12 and 70 to be “Jesuses” (to do exactly what he himself was doing) so he sends them out after his resurrection in John 20.21. One could say that Jesus did not end his ministry at his ascension, but he continued his work in and through his disciples. But is this merely the case where someone carries on the legacy of a predecessor or is Jesus somehow mysteriously, consciously, here on earth within his disciples to empower, guide, and aid them?
 - C. Acts 9.4: to Paul, “why are you persecuting me?” Jesus takes it personal when Paul carries off Christians to jail.
2. last supper in John
 - A. Our Lord explained the coming presence of the *parakletos*¹ (paraklete, comforter, helper, advocate). The chain of events would be
 - i. the disciple demonstrates love for Jesus by keeping his commandments (John 14.15)
 - ii. Jesus will ask the Father to send the paraklete (John 14.16; 15.26; 16.7)
 - iii. the paraklete will be sent in Jesus’ name to abide in the believer forever (John 14.16, 26).
 - B. The paraklete is “the spirit of truth” (John 14.17), which will teach the disciples all things and bring to their remembrance all that Jesus has said (John 14.26), testify about Jesus (John 15.26), be more advantageous to the saint than the presence of Christ on earth (John 16.7), convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16.8–11), guide them into all truth by speaking only what “he” hears (John 16.13), and disclose Christ to the disciple (John 16.14–15).
 - C. Some interesting language switches that occur in the last supper teaching deserve our attention. In some places Jesus tells them that he will send the paraklete in others he says, “I will come to you,” note below:

¹ *parakletos* is found only five times in the NT (John 14.16, 26; 15.26; 16.7; 1 John 2.1)

Texts in which the paraklete will come

“He will give you another helper, that he may be with you forever”	John 14.16
“the helper, the holy spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you”	John 14.26
“when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father...”	John 15.26
“if I do not go away the helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”	John 16.7
“when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth”	John 16.13

Texts in which Jesus will come

“I will come again and receive you to myself”	John 14.3
“I will come to you”	John 14.18
“you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you”	John 14.17
“he who loves me...I will love him and will disclose myself to him”	John 14.21
“if anyone loves me, he will keep my word...and we will come to him and make our abode with him”	John 14.23
“I go away, and I will come to you”	John 14.28
“‘a little while, and you will see me;’ and, ‘because I go to the Father’”	John 16.17

- D. The holy spirit is coming AND Christ is coming. How can this confusion be resolved?
- i. “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he hears, he will speak; and he will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify me, for he will take of mine and will disclose it to you.” (John 16.12–14).
- E. Jesus would come to his disciples through the paraklete. “The work of Christ’s Spirit as Comforter, Advocate, and Helper was nothing other than the work of Christ Himself as Comforter, Advocate, and Helper through that divine power.”² It was through the paraklete that Christ and the Father would come and dwell within the saint (even while he is in heaven). Jesus is not literally in each member of the family of God, but through the spirit his mind is projected into us to comfort, to reveal truth, to aid in times of temptation, and to guide us to follow him. “He had been with them for a short time, but the ‘other paraklete,’ his alter ego, would be with them permanently, and not only with them but in them.”³ The spirit which inspired and

² Alva Huffer, Systematic Theology ©1960, The Restitution Herald, page 92.

³ F.F. Bruce, The Gospel & Epistles of John ©1983, Eerdmans Publishing Company, page 302

empowered Jesus during his ministry on earth would now enable him to be present within his disciples in a new and advantageous way.

3. spirit is interchangeable with Christ in Paul's Epistles

- A. Consider the chart below which enumerates some of the places that Paul speaks of the spirit:

spirit dwells in the believer	Romans 8.9, 11; 1 Corinthians 3.16; 6.19; 2 Corinthians 1.22; Ephesians 2.22; 5.18
spirit of Christ dwells in the believer	Romans 8.2, 9; 2 Corinthians 3.17; ⁴ Galatians 4.6; Philippians 1.19
Christ dwells in the believer	Romans 8.9-10; 2 Corinthians 13.5; Galatians 2.20; Ephesians 1.23; 3.16-17; Colossians 1.27

- B. Paul freely switches between these phrases as if they were synonymous. In order to demonstrate this, consider the texts below:

- i. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with power through His Spirit** in the inner man, **so that Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith..." (Ephesians 3.14-17)
 - a. One of the functions of the spirit is to empower the Christian to have Christ dwell within them. The two (spirit & Christ) are intimately linked to each other in the experience of the NT saint.
- ii. "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God** dwells in you. But if anyone does not have **the Spirit of Christ**, he does not belong to Him. **If Christ is in you**, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if **the Spirit of Him** who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through **His Spirit** who dwells in you." Romans 8.9-11
 - a. This is remarkable. It is as if the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ, and Christ himself are all equivalent ways of speaking about the same essential truth. Paul does not focus on ontological⁵ distinctions rather he sees the spirit primarily in functional terms in the experience of the Christian. From this perspective the spirit is Jesus. "The Spirit is now definitely the Spirit of Christ⁶, the other Counselor who has taken over Jesus' role on earth.⁷ This means that Jesus is now present to the believer only in and through the Spirit,⁸ and that

⁴ It may be the case that the Lord here is Yahweh depending on how one views 2 Corinthians 3. JDG Dunn has suggested that it is midrash on Ex. 34. If this is true then this reference should be moved to the previous category.

⁵ Of or related to substance

⁶ (Scripture references were not originally footnoted) Acts 16.7; Romans 8.9; Galatians 4.6; Philippians 1.19; also 1 Peter 1.1; cf. John 7.38; 19.30; 20.22; Acts 2.33; Hebrews 9.14; Revelation 3.1; 5.6

⁷ John 14.16; cf. 1 John 2.1

⁸ John 14.16-28; 16.7; Romans 8.9f; 1 Corinthians 6.17; 15.45; Ephesians 3.16f; cf. Romans 1.4; 1 Timothy 3.16; 1 Peter 3.18; Revelation 2-3

the mark of the Spirit is both the recognition of Jesus' present status⁹ and the reproduction of the character of his sonship and resurrection life in the believer^{10,11}

4. head of the church: Christ is the one "who searches the minds and hearts" (Revelation 2.23). He is the head of the body (Colossians 1.18) who is able to cause "the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love" (Ephesians 4.16). The risen Christ is with us always (Matthew 28.20) and in the midst of two or three gathered in his name (Matthew 18.20). His role as head of the body only makes sense if he is involved with the body, communicating with it, otherwise it would be a paralyzed body. The circumstance involving the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus is a good example of Jesus at work in his heavenly ministry to coordinate activities on earth (especially considering that Jesus also appeared to Ananias).
 - A. The Letters in Revelation chapters two and three ably demonstrate that Jesus knows what is going on in his church and he is even aware of the inner thoughts and intentions of people.
 - i. Rev 2.1: Jesus walks among the seven lampstands (churches)
 - ii. Rev 2.2-4: "I know your deeds and toil and perseverance, and that...but I have this against you..."
 - iii. Rev 2.9: "I know your tribulation and your poverty..."
 - iv. Rev 2.13: "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you..."
 - v. Rev 2.19-20: "I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance...but I have this against you"
 - vi. Rev 2.23: "I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds."
 - vii. Rev 3.1: "I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive..."
 - viii. Rev 3.8: "I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door..."
 - ix. Rev 3.15: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot..."
 - B. Also, in Revelation two and three, at the end of each letter (there are seven), Jesus says, "hear what the spirit says to the churches,"¹² indicating that Jesus, who was speaking, is the spirit (or that Jesus is speaking via the spirit). Furthermore in these two chapters, the word "I" is used 52 times indicating that Jesus is personally involved in his church. Below are most of the phrases attached to the "I" in Revelation 2 and 3.
 - i. I know your deeds, I have this against you, I am coming to you, I also hate, I will grant to eat of the tree, I know your tribulation and poverty, I will give you the crown, I know where you dwell, I have a few things against you, I am coming to you quickly, I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth, I will give some of the hidden manna, I will give him a white stone, I know your deeds, I have this against you, I gave her time to repent, I will

⁹ 1 Corinthians 12.3; 1 John 5.6-12

¹⁰ Romans 8.11, 14-16, 23; 1 Corinthians 15.45-49; 2 Corinthians 3.18; Galatians 4.6f; 1 John 3.2

¹¹ JDG Douglas, New Bible Dictionary (second edition) ©1962, ed. By JD Douglas, FF Bruce, JI Packer, N Hillyer, D Guthrie, AR Millard, DJ Wiseman, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., pages 1140-1

¹² Revelation 2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22

throw her into a bed of sickness, I will kill her children with pestilence, I am he who searches the minds and hearts, I say to you, hold fast until I come, I will give authority over the nations, I will give him the morning star, I know your deeds, I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of my God, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you, I will not erase his name from the book of life, I will confess his name before my Father, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan...I will make them come and bow down at your feet, I am coming quickly, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, I will write on him the name of my God, I know your deeds, I wish you were cold or hot, I will spit you out of my mouth, those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, I stand at the door and knock, I will come in to him and will dine with him, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne.

5. How is this possible? Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus is in heaven interceding/mediating as the high priest would in the temple on the Day of Atonement. Jesus is a man (1 Timothy 2.5) seated at the right hand of God (Mark 16.19; Hebrews 12.2; etc.) in heavenly places (Ephesians 1.20; 1 Peter 3.22; etc.). Yet he is still present among us in spirit even though his *parousia* has not yet occurred. So how can Christ be intimately involved in working within his church even while he is in heaven? As the disciples asked, how could he disclose himself to them without the world seeing him (John 14.22)? We have to retain the tension between Jesus at the right hand of God until he comes when God (through him) makes his enemies a footstool AND Jesus present within his church to guide her until that grand event. Christ is present through the spirit. The spirit which proceeds from the Father and connects Christ to his body like a nervous system—making him aware of what is going on and allowing him to coordinate his body. In other words, the spirit is Christ in me.