



# ***Difficult and Hard to Understand Passages***



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Why do we study??

***To understand the mind of God!***

## **Isaiah 55:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> “For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> “For *as* the heavens are higher than the  
earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and  
My thoughts higher than your thoughts.

## ***Difficult and Hard to Understand Passages***

What are the two most dangerous words we can use trying to understand scripture??

***"I Think"***



## ***Difficult and Hard to Understand Passages***

What is the hermeneutic used in the Lord's church to "interpret" scripture??

***1. Direct Command***

***2. Examples of the Apostles***

***3. Necessary Inference (what can be logically inferred by studying the passage)***

# ***Difficult and Hard to Understand Passages***

What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Romans 8:11

**11** 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.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

**Part 1:** The scriptures are perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of Christians!

There are primarily two schools of thought on the matter of ***how*** this “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” happens within the Lord’s church today:

1. There is a physical “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit within each of us. (Gus Nichols)
2. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of Truth as an instrument to influence our lives. (Guy N Woods)

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Since the concept of a physical indwelling of the Holy Spirit is rather straightforward, let's consider the view which presents the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as using the Word as an instrument to influence our lives.

Let's begin by discussing what "dwells in you" actually means and why this is difficult for us to understand.

It is also important to understand as we're taking about this that the scriptures also teach, with equal clarity, that God and Christ are also "dwelling" in us.



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## **II Corinthians 6:16**

**16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

**"I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;  
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**

## **Ephesians 3:17**

**17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

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I John 4:15

<sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

Colossians 1:27

<sup>27</sup> to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.



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Since it is clear from these scriptures that both God, the Father, and Christ, the Son, also “dwell” in us, what we are trying to understand is whether the teaching here refers to a “literal” in-dwelling?

It does not seem reasonable at all to conclude that there is an actual, literal, physical, bodily indwelling of either God or Christ living in us.

But since the teachings on “dwelling” are the same relating to God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, how is this in-dwelling accomplished?



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Let's review one of the reasons we deduced during an earlier study why miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit are no longer needed.

I Corinthians 12:31

**<sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.**

This "more excellent way" is love! And it is within this passage, Paul would also reveal the "perfect"!

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I Corinthians 13:8-10

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy*, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away.

<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part;

<sup>10</sup> but **when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.**

Miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit are no longer needed because we now we now have the “perfect.” That is, the word of God, the word of truth, the Gospel!! – (John 17:17)



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In this school of thought, it is through the “perfect” (the word of truth) that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit dwell in the hearts of faithful disciples in a similar manner.

I John 4:12-14

<sup>12</sup> No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

<sup>14</sup> We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world.



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Now, let's consider the following "parallel" passages from the Apostle Paul in his letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colosse. These support the same teaching, but follow a different pattern of logic:

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Ephesians 5:18-19

<sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be **filled with the Spirit**, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;

Colossians 3:16

<sup>16</sup> Let the **word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.



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To be “filled with the Spirit” was, in the inspired Apostle Paul’s parallel teachings, the same as allowing “the word of Christ richly dwell within you!”

It would appear that the Apostle Paul inferred that being **filled with Spirit** and the **word of Christ dwelling in us** are synonymous.

From this perspective, why then, should we assert that the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts through the word be any different?



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Here are the conclusions to this point:

#1: The word of truth (the gospel) is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit exercises His influence on the Christian. As one receives the word of truth into his heart and through obedience allows it to motivate his life, to this extent, he is influenced by the Holy Spirit, and thus enjoys His abiding presence (i.e., the indwelling of the Holy Spirit).

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Here are the conclusions to this point (cont.):

#2: This statement is **NOT** to be interpreted as suggesting that the Holy Spirit is the word of truth! The Holy Spirit uses the word of truth (gospel) as the medium, or instrument, by which He influences our lives.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Here are the conclusions to this point (cont.):

#3: The influence of the Holy Spirit is limited to the contents of the word of truth (gospel) which He inspired. This was the purpose of the "perfect" (the word of truth, the gospel) coming. We no longer need the Holy Spirit to provide inspiration for additional teachings from God since we have the "perfect."



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

**Part 2:** What exactly do the scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit does in our lives??

#1. He strengthens us – Ephesians 3:16

<sup>16</sup> that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

#2. He sanctifies us – II Thessalonians 2:13

**13** But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.



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#3. He saves us – Titus 3:5

<sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,

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#4. He justifies us – I Timothy 3:16 (KJV)

<sup>16</sup> And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

#5. He testifies to us – Hebrews 10:15-16

<sup>15</sup> And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying,

<sup>16</sup> "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM  
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:  
I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,  
AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"

*He then says,*

<sup>17</sup> "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS  
I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."

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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

#6. He prompts us to love God – Romans 5:5

<sup>5</sup> and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

#7. He leads us as God's sons – Romans 8:16

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

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#8. Will raise us from the dead – Romans 8:11

**11** 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.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

#9. Intercedes for us in prayer – Romans 8:26-27

<sup>26</sup> In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

<sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Our conclusions:

1. The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of Christians today!

(Regardless of whether you interpret this as a “physical” spiritual indwelling or through the Spirit using the word of truth as an instrument to accomplish the indwelling. The principle teaching should be clear and without confusion!)



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Our conclusions (cont.):

2. One school of thought is that the word of truth (the gospel) is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit exercises His influence on the Christian. As one receives the word of truth into his heart and allows it to motivate his life, to this extent, he is influenced by the Holy Spirit, and thus enjoys His abiding presence (i.e., the indwelling of the Holy Spirit).

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Our conclusions (cont.):

3. This previous statement is **NOT** to be interpreted as meaning the Holy Spirit is the word of truth! The Holy Spirit uses the word of truth (gospel) as the medium, or instrument by which He influences our lives.



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Our conclusions (cont.):

4. The influence of the Holy Spirit is limited to the contents of the word of truth (gospel) which He inspired. This was the purpose of the "perfect" (the word of truth, the gospel) coming. We longer need the Holy Spirit to provide inspiration for additional teachings from God.

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Our conclusions (cont.):

5. All that we need to know about how to live the Christian life is set forth in the New Testament which was inspired by the Holy Spirit: by this instruction, the Holy Spirit leads and guides us in the right way.

6. The scriptures assert, with equal clarity, that both God, the Father, and Christ, the Son, also dwell in us.



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What does the Holy Spirit do in our lives today?

Our conclusions (cont.):

7. The Holy Spirit strengthens us by means of the word of truth (the gospel) which He inspired!

8. The Holy Spirit will raise us up by means of the words of Christ when "*all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice and will come forth*" (John 5:28-29). Here too, the Holy Spirit will act by means of the words of Christ!

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