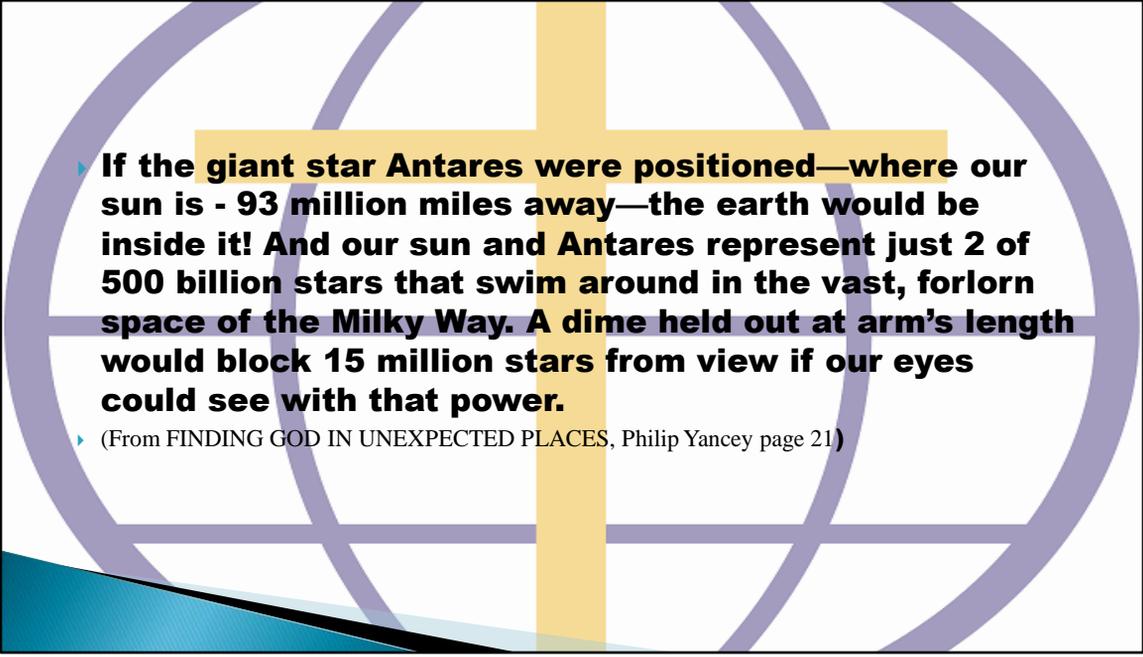




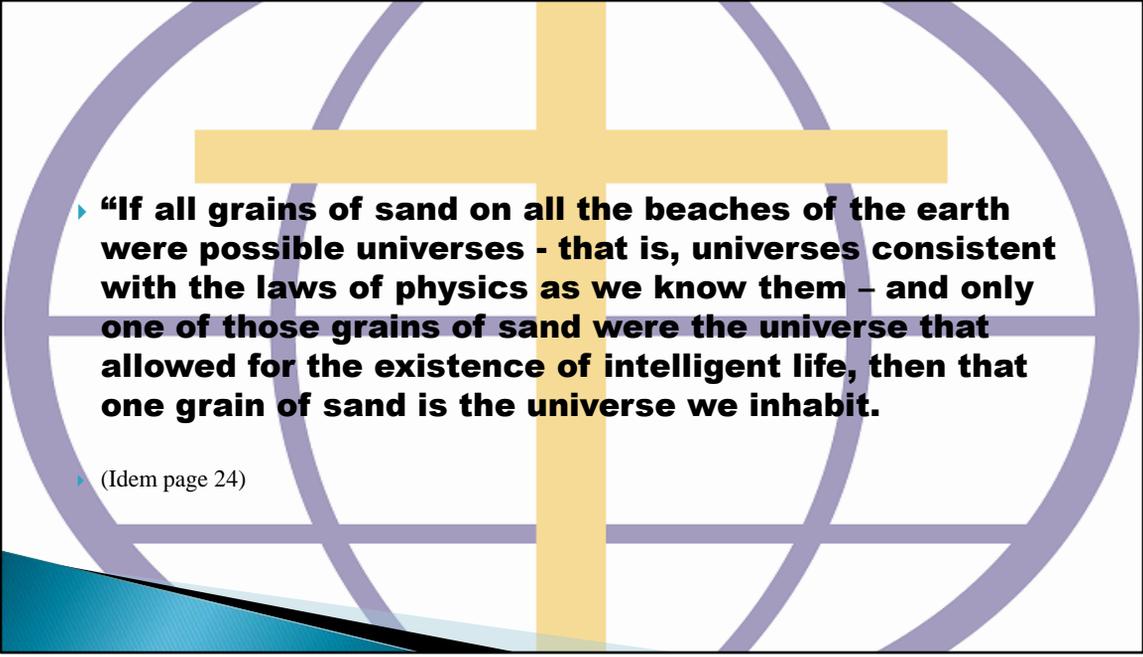
THE GREATNESS OF GOD

- ▶ **Learning about the universe does little for earthly self-esteem. Our sun, powerful enough to turn white skin bronze and to coax oxygen from every plant on earth, ranks fairly low by Galactic standards.**



▶ **If the giant star Antares were positioned—where our sun is - 93 million miles away—the earth would be inside it! And our sun and Antares represent just 2 of 500 billion stars that swim around in the vast, forlorn space of the Milky Way. A dime held out at arm's length would block 15 million stars from view if our eyes could see with that power.**

▶ (From FINDING GOD IN UNEXPECTED PLACES, Philip Yancey page 21)



▶ **“If all grains of sand on all the beaches of the earth were possible universes - that is, universes consistent with the laws of physics as we know them – and only one of those grains of sand were the universe that allowed for the existence of intelligent life, then that one grain of sand is the universe we inhabit.**

▶ (Idem page 24)

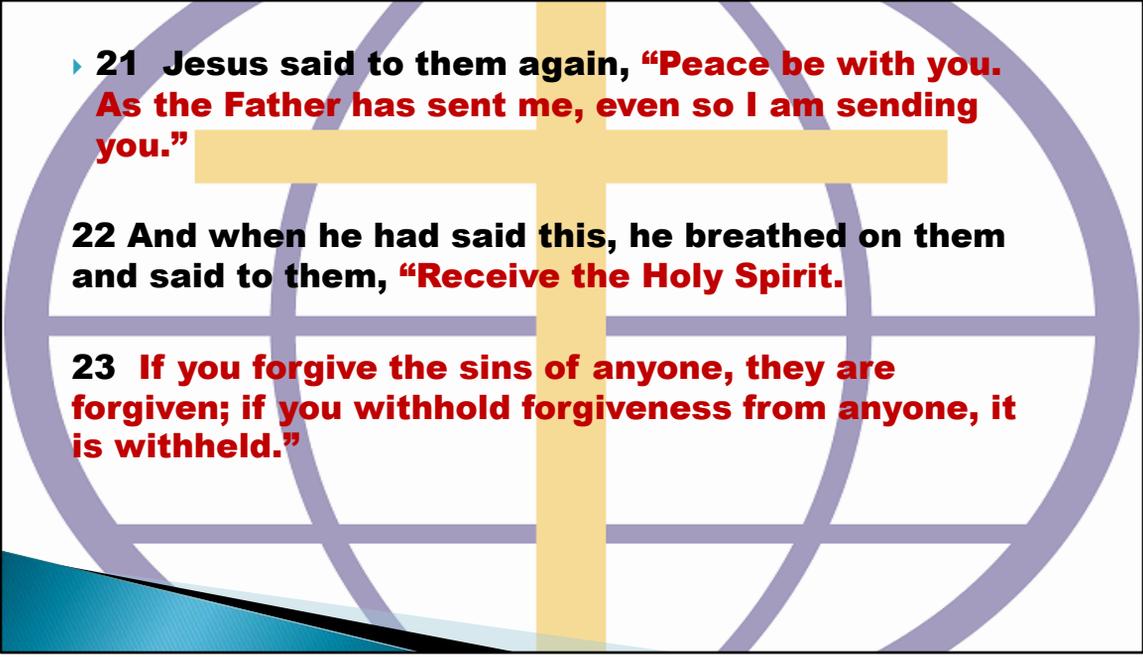
I am quoting from Philip Yancey before the Scripture reading to remind ourselves of the greatness of God who sustains the whole of the universe. He has inspired the words we are about to read.

I would encourage all of us to truly listen to what God is telling us in his living word, to really hear what he is telling us. Let us make an effort to hear what he is telling us without injecting our preconceived ideas into what he has inspired.

Let us be teachable. Let us be humble as we listen to these words from the Creator of this vast universe where we are given the grace to exist in one of its tiniest parts, this earth.

Scripture reading John 20: 19-31 (ESV)

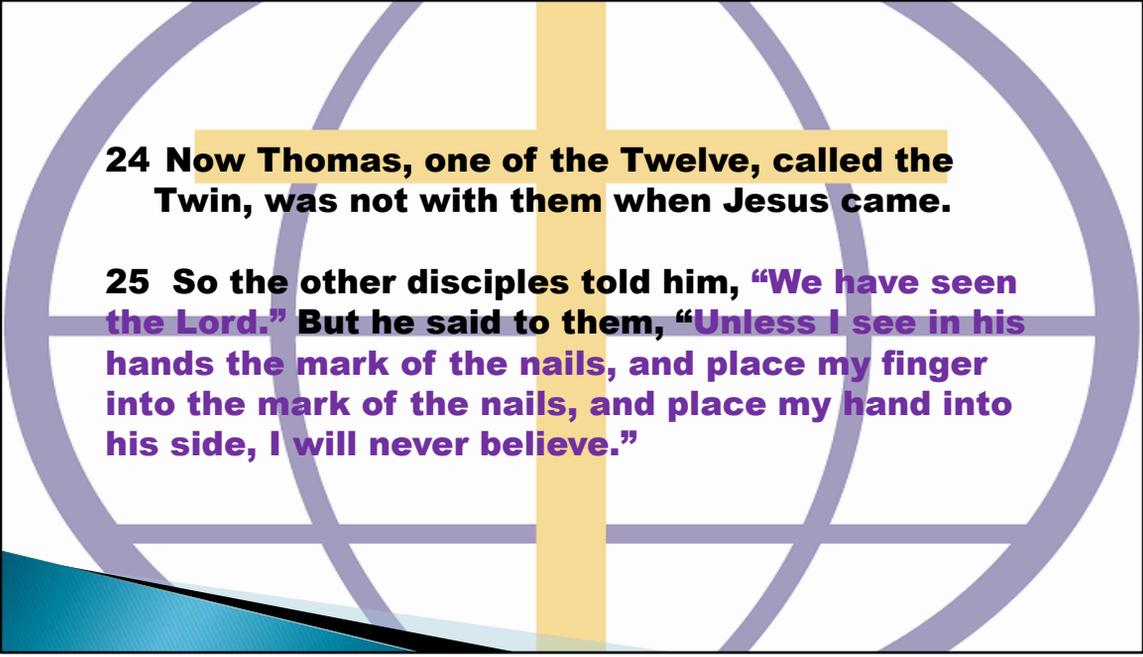
- ▶ **“1 ¶ Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.**
- ▶ **2 So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”**



▶ **21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”**

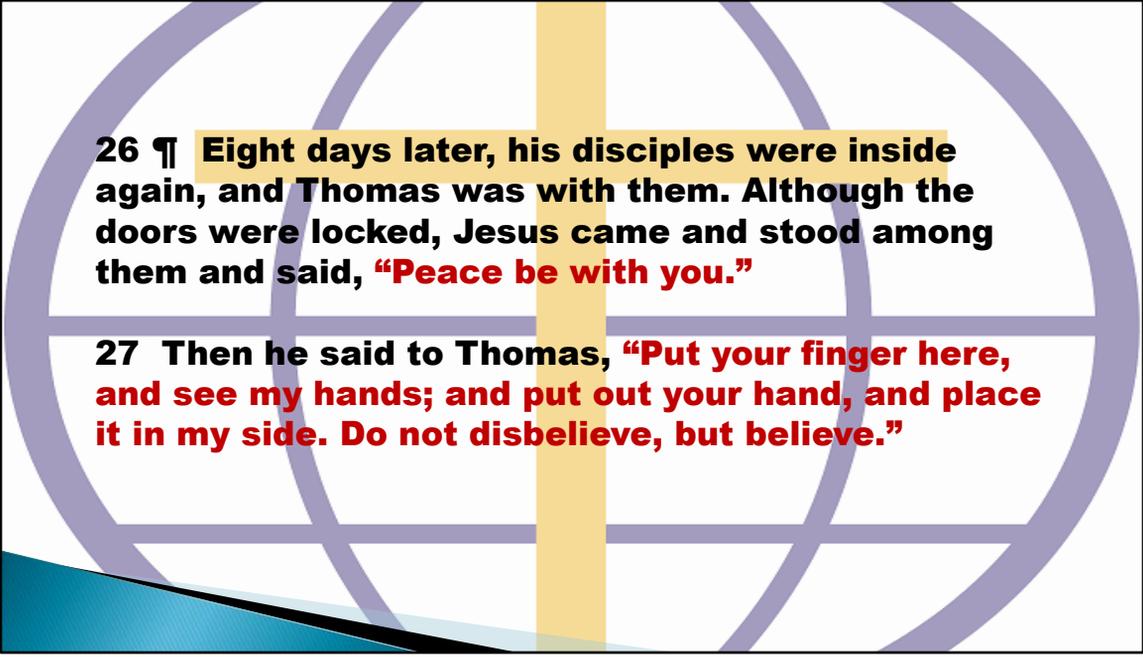
22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

23 If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”



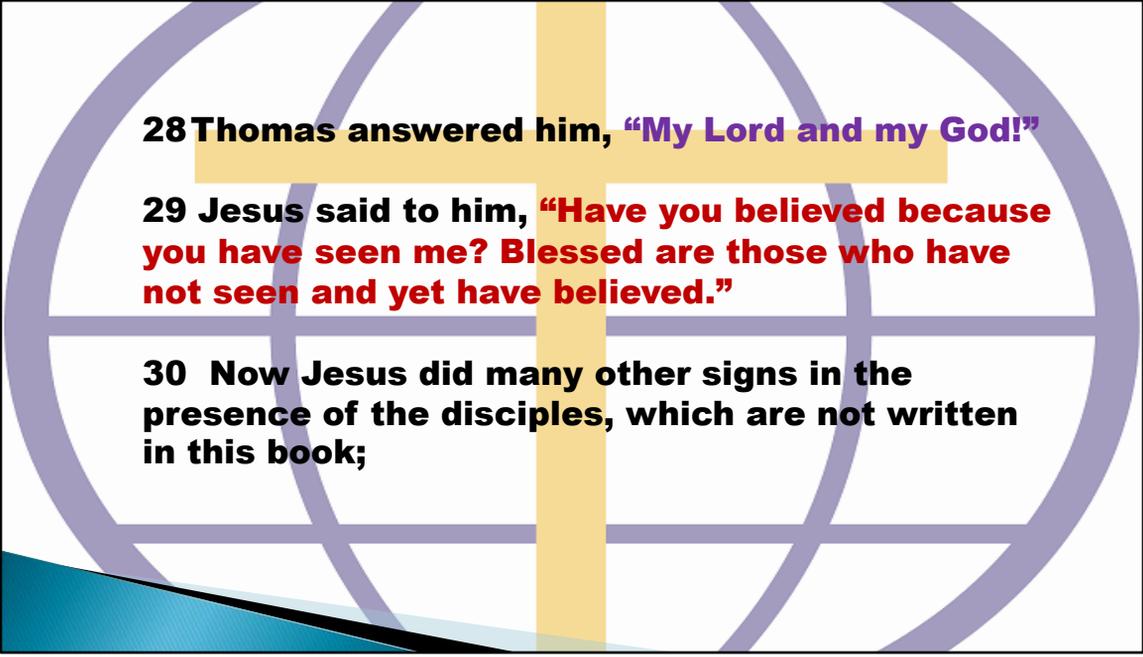
24 Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”



26 ¶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

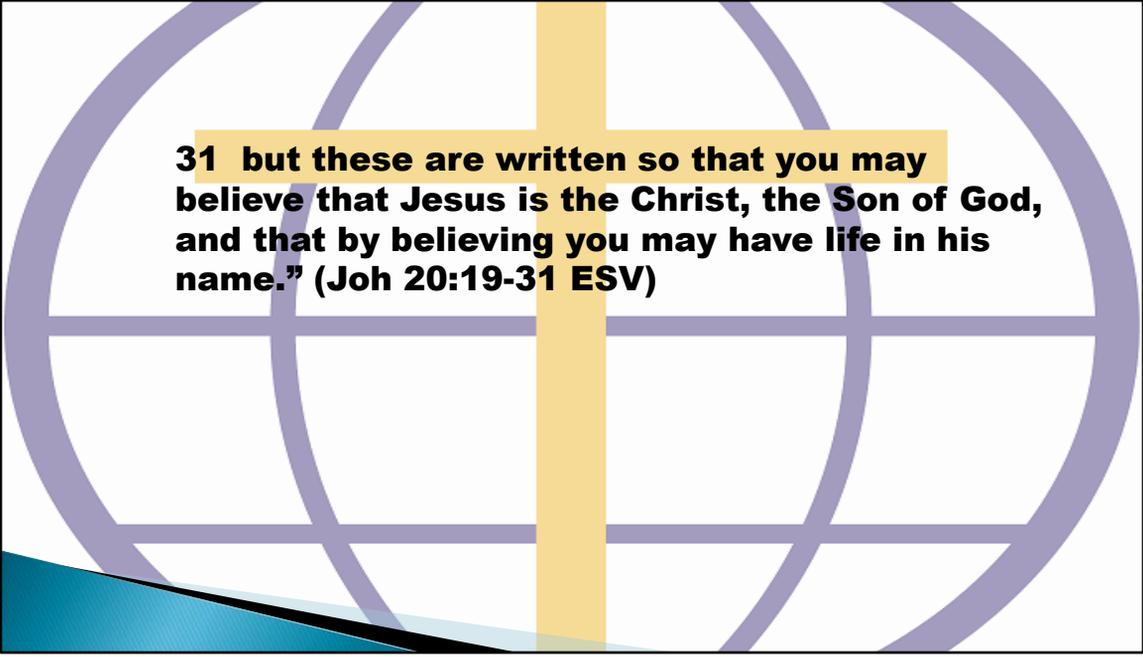
27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”



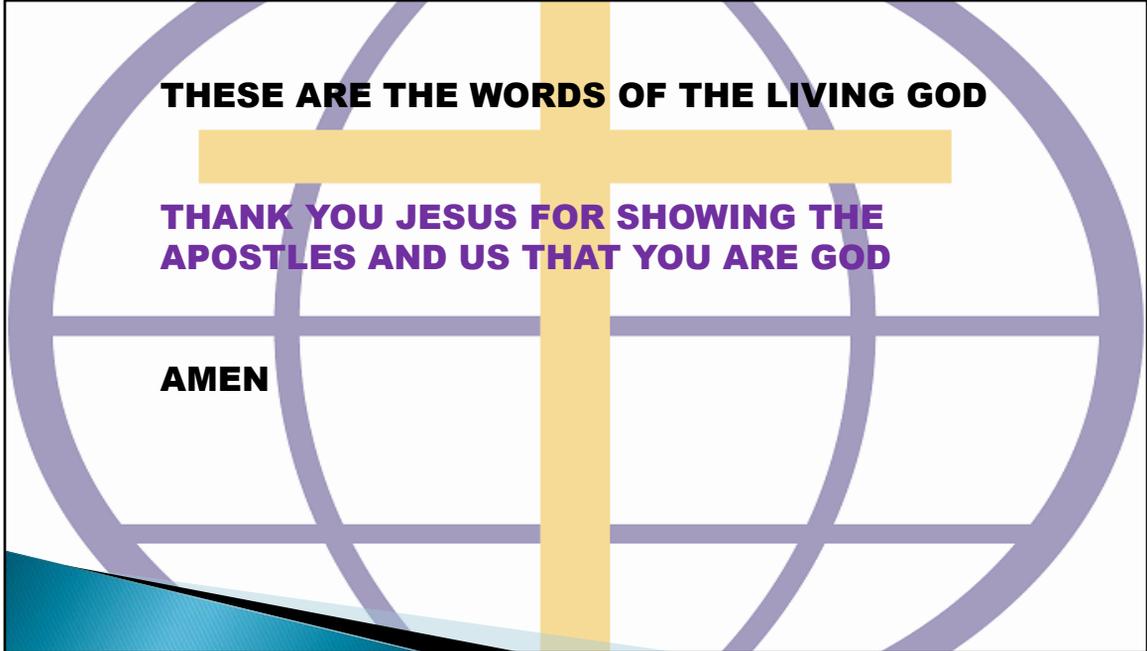
28 Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;



31 but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (Joh 20:19-31 ESV)



During today's sermon, we will focus on verses 20 to 22 where Jesus showed himself to the disciples and showed them his hands and his feet. **Jesus told them again, "Peace, be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, "receive the Holy Spirit...." (ESV).**

The fact that Jesus breathed on them and said, **"Receive the Holy Spirit"** shows us that Jesus is truly God and man in his one person.

The Father gave us His Son. The Father and Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit. Only God can do this. Therefore Jesus is God!

In breathing the Holy Spirit, pneuma, Jesus did something that only God can do. It is the fulfilment of promises he made before his death to his disciples.

The word "pneuma" means wind. In John 3, when John met Nicodemus, he told him that the work of the Holy Spirit was like that of the wind. (Next slide)

Karl Barth says in **Church Dogmatics**, page 392 of volume V.1

▶ *"The fact that God gives His pneuma to man or that man received this pneuma implies that God comes to man, that He discloses Himself to man and man to Himself, that He gives Himself to be experienced by men, that He awakens man to faith, that He enlighten him and equips him to be a prophet or apostle, that He creates for Himself a community of faith and proclamation to which He imparts salvation with His promise, in which He binds man to Himself and claims them for Himself, in short in which He becomes theirs and makes them His."*

The disciples did not fully understand what Jesus did when he breathed on them the Holy Spirit. They would only understand more fully at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would descend on them and be in them.

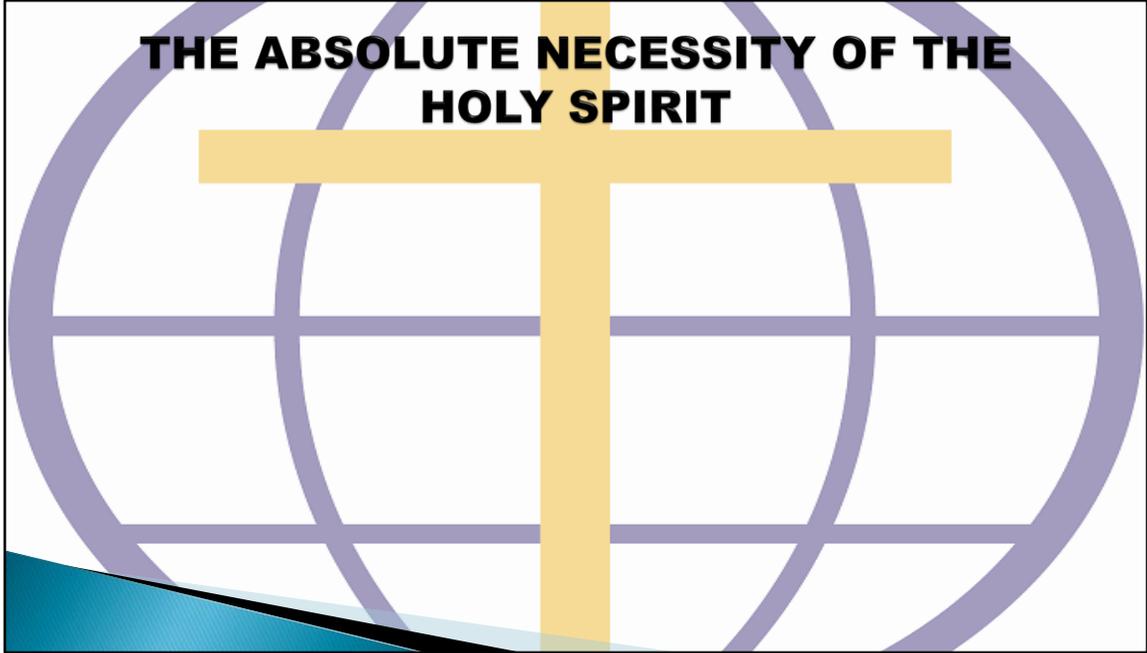
When Jesus appeared to his disciples, he had already gone to God the Father. He was resurrected in his human body. The man Jesus was resurrected and rose from the dead. That he was able to breathe on them the Holy Spirit shows that he is also fully God.

Thomas doubted. All the disciples doubted. That a dead man could resurrect from the dead was absolutely unheard of and was impossible. The resurrection of Jesus was more than a resuscitation. It was the resurrection of a dead human being to immortal life.

Jesus spending 40 days with them in his human spiritual body took away all their doubts. They all listened to him and they gathered to receive the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Let us take a look at the fulfilled promises of Jesus to his disciples -the promise of the

Holy Spirit. It is indeed an awesome promise as the third person of the one God who would descend to the earth to do an awesome work, a work which is invisible to the human eye but whose work can be seen in changed lives.



We all need God. All human beings do. However, we cannot create a relationship with God on our own. God has to intervene.

Being born in sin, we are all estranged from God until God opens our minds for us to enable us to receive him.

God, in his freedom, can come to live in human beings to give us his life. We cannot give ourselves immortality. Only God can give this gift.

As we shall see more clearly, the Holy Spirit is God just as the Father is God and Jesus is God.

Only God can make us ready to be in relationship with him. This work is done by God the Holy Spirit through our High Priest Jesus Christ who in himself brings us in relationship to God the Father.

Man cannot know his destiny and the reason why we were created apart from a relationship with God himself. Again, God has to come to us to open our minds to

make us ready to receive him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit permits us to experience God and to have a relationship with him by coming and residing in us. He is the only one who can transform our hostile human spirit as He brings us into his wonderful light. He is the only one who can bring us in relationship with him where we encounter him subjectively. It is more than knowing him as external to ourselves. It is knowing him as he indwells in us and we, indwelling in him!

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS DIFFERENT FROM JESUS

- ▶ **“15 Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts.**
- ▶ **16 But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.**
- ▶ **17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.**
- ▶ **18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2Co 3:15-18 ESV)**

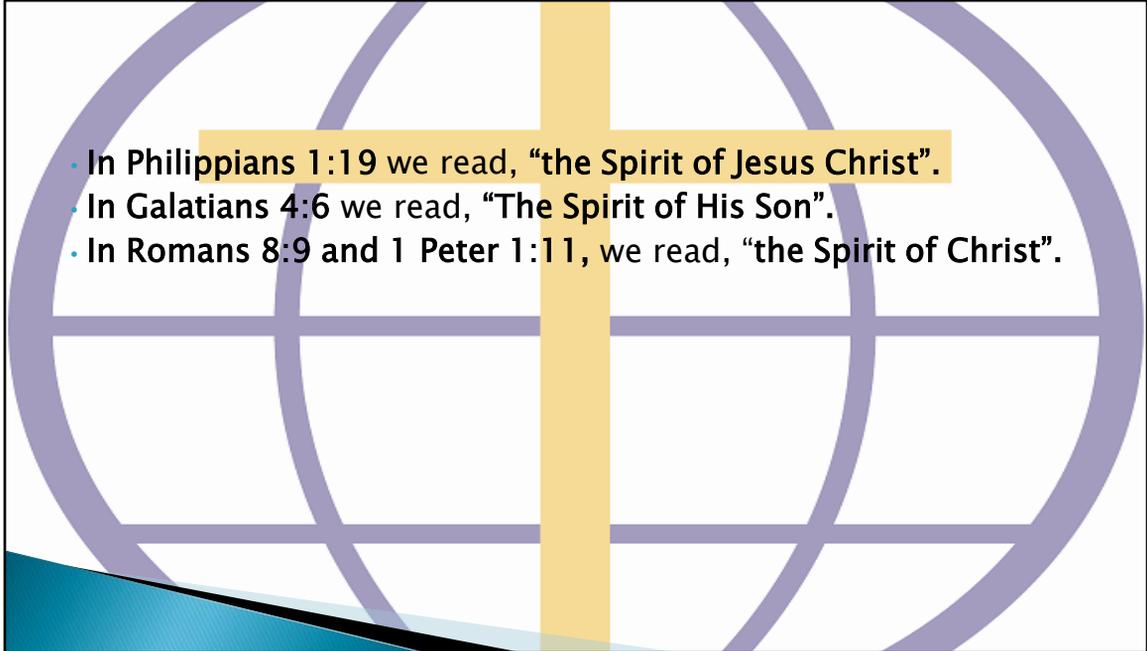
This passage and others show us that the Holy Spirit is God just as God the Father is God and Jesus is God.

In the book of Acts, we read that when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, they lied to God (Acts 5).

There are other passages that show us clearly that God is one in three distinct persons. 1 Peter 1 is an example.

“1 ¶ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” (1 Pe 1:1-2 ESV)

There are expressions in a few verses in the Bible which may lead to think that the Holy Spirit is Jesus. We have to look at the whole of God's word to understand that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are distinct. (next slide)



These verses do not tell us that the Holy Spirit is identical with Jesus. In a few minutes, we are going to look at the promises Jesus made about the Holy Spirit before his death. These definitely show that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are different persons in the Godhead, God being one. The Holy Spirit never inspires anything which goes against what Jesus taught. There is no incompatibility or inconsistency in God.

In our prayers, we should never refer to the Holy Spirit as “it” or “that” just like we would never refer to God the Father or God the Son as “it” or “that”. We are to refer to the Holy Spirit as “who”, “he”, etc. The Holy Spirit is so much more than a power.

These Scriptures prove that Jesus is indeed both human and divine. He appeared to the apostles in his glorified body not as a man but as God. Only God can give the Holy Spirit.

Karl Barth explains this well. (next slide)

**Karl Barth – Church Dogmatics, volume I.1
pages 452-453**

- ▶ **We must now add at once that while the Spirit is the element of revelation which is different from Christ as the exalted Lord, while He is revelation to the extent that it becomes an event on us and in us, nevertheless He is still to be regarded wholly and entirely as the spirit of Christ, of the Son, of the Word of God. He is not to be regarded, then, as a revelation of independent content, as a new instruction, illumination and stimulation of man that goes beyond Christ, beyond the word, but in every sense as the instruction illumination and stimulation of man through the Word and for the Word** (the word being Jesus).

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

▶ **“38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (Joh 7:38-39 ESV)**

1 – When was Christ glorified?

Jesus was glorified when he ascended to heaven. After his ascension and glorification, he sent the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AN ANSWERED PRAYER

▶ **“14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. 15 ¶ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 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. 18 ¶ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (Joh 14:14-18 ESV)**

2- Jesus promises another Comforter like him, the Holy Spirit. He is an answered prayer given by the Father to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit Sent Forth by God the Father

- ▶ **“But the Helper, 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.” (Joh 14:26 ESV)**

3-

Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit from the Father

“26 ¶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” (Joh 15:26-27 ESV)

4- This is very strong evidence again that Jesus is God. That is why he could breathe on the apostles gathered together and tell them, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

Jesus Must Leave before They Received the Holy Spirit

- ▶ **“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (Joh 16:7 ESV)**

The Holy Spirit is a treasure given to us by Jesus Christ.

He is precious.

What is one thing that the Holy Spirit does among so many others? (Next slide)

The Primary Responsibility of the Holy Spirit

▶ **“12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Joh 16:12-15 ESV)**

These are powerful Scriptures showing the enormous and gracious responsibility and honour given to Jesus Christ by God the Father.

The apostles could not comprehend and remember all that Jesus did and taught. It was the role of the Holy Spirit to equip them.

Can we better see why Jesus is the Cornerstone of the church, the Head of the church and why the apostles are part of the foundation of the church?

This is why their writings in the New Testament are so important. They contain the revelation of Jesus Christ given to them and to us after his resurrection and ascension to heaven, his ascension to the Father's throne.

The role of the Holy Spirit is to point us to Jesus and his teachings. He is the agent of the Godhead who permits us to have a relationship with Jesus as our High Priest and with God the Father, who is our Abba Father, a term of endearment with the connotation of God the Father being “Our Dad”, that is our perfect Dad!

There is so much more that can be said about the gift of the Holy Spirit given to God's

disciples and to the world but it will have to wait until Pentecost!

Let us thank God that we have clear evidence that Jesus is both God and man in his one person and thank him for the gift of the Holy Spirit who shows us the awesome wonders of Jesus, of God.

Let us remember that the gift of the Holy Spirit is “our guarantee of eternal life” because He is God!

Like Thomas, let us say to Jesus, “My Lord and my God”!

Let us praise and thank Him! Let us pray.