

John 14:17 and the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

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Abstract

This thesis examines John 14:17, along with other passages in John, and identifies whether or not the disciples were indwelt before Jesus' glorification or after his glorification. It does this through defining of Holy Spirit terms, a study on the Holy Spirit in John, and word studies on different words throughout John. The conclusion of the paper shows that the Holy Spirit could not indwell the disciples before the glorification of Jesus and gives evidence to show why this could not occur.

John 14:17 and the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John

Was the Holy Spirit permanently inside of the disciples during the earthly ministry of Jesus, or did he only arrive for a permanent indwelling after Jesus returned to heaven at Pentecost? Many scholars, such as D.A. Carson¹, Andreas Köstenberger², Larry Pettegrew³, and Leon Morris⁴, believe that the Holy Spirit only entered the disciples permanently at Pentecost, but there are some, such as Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, B.B. Warfield, Sinclair Ferguson⁵ and Leon Wood⁶, who believe that the Holy Spirit was present in the disciples beforehand in a permanent dwelling in part, because of this passage. John 14:17 is a key passage in understanding this debate. The main issue in the passage is over whether or not the Holy Spirit had a permanent ministry inside the disciples before Jesus' glorification. The Greek word "μένει" is a matter of much debate, and is the key to understanding this passage. The issue of this thesis paper is to identify whether or not the Holy Spirit filled or indwelled the disciples before or after John 14:17. This issue will be solved through a comparison of the difference between indwelling and filling, the Holy Spirit's role in earlier sections of John, a grammatical analysis on John

¹D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John (Pillar New Testament Commentary)* (Leicester, England: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 500.

²Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 436-438.

³Larry Pettegrew, *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2001), 70-71.

⁴Morris, *The Gospel According to John (The New International Commentary On the New Testament)*, Revised ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 378-379,

⁵Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (Foundations of Evangelical Theology)* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007), 183.

⁶Leon J. Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1998), 82.

14:17, multiple word studies, and finally a survey of different interpretations will be given based on the information accumulated throughout the process.

Defining Terms

Before looking at the three passages in question the terms “indwelling”, “filling of the Holy Spirit”, and “baptism of the Holy Spirit” need to be defined. These three different descriptions of the ministry of the Holy Spirit are all unique in definition and have distinct characteristics that separate them from the others.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

There are two different views on defining the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit”. First, J. David Pawson and Robert P. Menzies, say that the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” is synonymous with the terms “filling of the Holy Spirit” and “baptism of the Holy Spirit”.⁷ Pawson claims:

A careful reading reveals a considerable number of synonyms for ‘baptized’ when describing the same happening. The Gospels use ‘come’, ‘clothed with’, ‘gift’ and ‘promise’. Acts uses ‘fall upon’, ‘come upon’, ‘poured out upon’, ‘gift’, ‘promise’ and ‘filled’ ... There is one synonym used in the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles whose significance cannot be exaggerated: namely the word ‘received’. To be ‘baptized in Spirit’ is the same thing as to ‘receive the Spirit’ [and vice versa].⁸

Pawson’s view is that all of these terms that described some aspect of the reception of the Holy Spirit can just be interchanged and are all similar in meaning. His argument is that

⁷J. David Pawson, “Believing in Christ and Receiving the Spirit: A Response to Max Turner,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 7, no. 15 (1999): 34. Robert Menzies, “Luke’s Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Pentecostal Dialogues with the Reformed Tradition,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. 101 (2008): 99.

⁸Pawson, 34.

because all of the terms are used to describe a similar experience, the reception of the Holy Spirit in the early church, then they must all be synonymous in that the authors used different words to address the same reception of the Holy Spirit.⁹

However, this view simply does not stand up to Scripture. The idea of the “indwelling” comes from the Greek word “οικέω” (verb, present, indicative, third person, singular), which means “to live or to dwell”.¹⁰ The meaning of this word carries a different connotation from the Greek word “πίμπλημι” which means “to cause something to be completely full”¹¹ or the Greek word “βαπτίζω” (verb, aorist, passive, indicative, first person, plural), which means “to cause someone to have a highly significant religious experience involving special manifestations of God’s power and presence.”¹² While the wording could be synonymous it does not appear to be the best view for the term.

A better understanding of the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” is supported by Millard Erickson and Elmer Towns.¹³ They support the view that the “indwelling” and the “baptism of the Spirit” are connected as both positional terms and occur at the same time for the believer, at conversion. The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” are positional in that they show the believer’s new

⁹Pawson, 34.

¹⁰Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996, 730.

¹¹Louw-Nida, 597.

¹²Louw-Nida, 538.

¹³Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998), 1050-51. Elmer Towns, *Understanding the Deeper Life: a Guide to Christian Experience* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H Revell Co, 1989), 148.

position in Christ, as well as in the body of Christ, the church. The indwelling is positional in that it places a believer as a “son of God” (Romans 8:9). The baptism is positional in that it places the believer into the one body of Christ. Their main reason for this view is they believe both the “indwelling” and the “baptism of the Spirit” occur at conversion. The indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit would then be defined as the act of the Holy Spirit to place the believer into the family of God and to make him a “son of God”.

However, it may be better to not use the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” at all. The word “indwelling” is not a terms used in the Bible. The idea of the “indwelling” comes from the Greek word “οικέω” (verb, present, indicative, third person, singular), which means “to live or to dwell”.¹⁴ It is used three different places in Scripture (1 Cor. 3:16; Romans. 8:9, 11) but in all three of the passages it just means a dwelling of the Holy Spirit can occur, but never tells for how long or to what extent the dwelling takes place. Romans 8:9 states, “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.” The only conclusion that can be made from this verse is that the Holy Spirit lives in the believer to some extent, but a timeframe is not given. Romans 8:11 states, “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.” This verse shows that the Holy Spirit can live in a person and that when it does that God will give life to their mortal body through the Holy Spirit,

¹⁴Louw-Nida, 730.

but once again, there is no timeframe found in the verse. Finally, 1 Corinthians 3:16 states, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” This verse shows that the Spirit of God does live in a believer, but once again no timeframe is given to this word “οικέω”. The word “οικέω” simply shows that the Holy Spirit lives inside of the believer, similar to a person that lives inside of a house, after his conversion and acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

The term “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is a term that seems very similar to what Erickson and Towns would define as the “indwelling of the Spirit” and may be the true Biblical term for their concept of the indwelling. The word for “baptism” is the Greek word “βαπτίζω” (verb, aorist, passive, indicative, first person, plural) which means “to cause someone to have a highly significant religious experience involving special manifestations of God’s power and presence.”¹⁵ Three major views on the “baptism of the Spirit” will be looked at in the following paragraphs.

The first view, held by Wayne Grudem, Lewis Chafer, James Dunn, and Robert Reymond, is that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is a one-time event that regenerates the believer, cleanses the believer and breaks the power of sin in their lives, and places the believer into the body of Christ, all occurring during the conversion experience.¹⁶ They

¹⁵Louw-Nida, 538.

¹⁶Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: an Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 768. Cole, 144. Hyung Geun Im, “Spirit Baptism: A Study of Three Contemporary Approaches” (D. Phil diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002), 214-26. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 764.

would combine the concept of the “indwelling” and the” baptism of the Spirit” into one act, which they would define using the Biblical “baptism of the Spirit”.

They conclude that the “baptism of the Spirit” is a one-time occurring event at the conversion of the believer; there is no evidence in the Bible for a person to ever have a “baptism of the Holy Spirit” multiple times. The Holy Spirit then enters the believer, regenerating him with a new spiritual life, cleansing him of his sin and breaking the power of sin in the initial stage of sanctification, and then placing him into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).¹⁷ They use Acts 11:15-17 and Acts 19:1-6 as evidence for their position. Cornelius receives salvation through Peter’s gospel presentation, and then he is baptized with the Holy Spirit at his conversion. The disciples of John had not heard the full Gospel presentation (they only knew of water baptism and did not know of the coming Holy Spirit) and were baptized with the Spirit at their conversion after hearing Paul’s words.¹⁸ Thus, they would say that the “baptism of the spirit” is a one-time event that regenerates the believer, cleanses the believer and breaks the power of sin in their lives, and places the believer into the body of Christ, all occurring during the conversion experience.

The second view held by Erickson, Towns, Mark Lee, John Stott, and Clarke Pinnock, states that the first view goes too far and adds too much to the original meaning of the “baptism of the Spirit”.¹⁹ They argue that the only concrete idea that can be placed

¹⁷Grudem, 768.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Erickson, 895. Towns, 148. Mark Lee, “An Evangelical Dialogue On Luke, Salvation, and Spirit Baptism,” *Pneuma* 26, no. 1 (2004): 81. John R. W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: the Work of the Holy*

with the “baptism of the Spirit” is that it places the believer into one body at conversion.

They believe that the baptism is a positional term that shows placement in the body of Christ. They argue that 1 Corinthians 12:13 shows that the believer is placed into one body at the “baptism of the Spirit”, but that is all they can conclude from the wording.

They would say that the wording is never used to mean that regeneration occurs inside of the baptism, but that regeneration and baptism simply occur at the same time at conversion. Erickson states:

Thereafter, regeneration and the baptism of the Spirit were simultaneous. The case of the disciples of Apollos in Acts 19 appears to be a matter of incompletely evangelized believers, for they had been baptized only into the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance, and had not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. In none of these four cases was the baptism of the Holy Spirit sought by the recipients, nor is there any indication that the gift did not fall upon every member of the group. This interpretive scheme seems to fit well with the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:13, with the fact that Scripture nowhere commands us to be baptized in or by the Holy Spirit, and with the record in Acts.²⁰

Thus, where the first view would combine the “baptism of the Spirit” and regeneration, this view acknowledges they are simultaneous, but they are two different acts and that the baptism only places the believer into the body of Christ.

The third view, held by Pawson and Menzies, holds that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” is same as all the other terms used in the reception of the Holy Spirit, including “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” and the “filling of the Holy Spirit”, and that it is an activity that happens after conversion, always results in the speaking of tongues, and

Spirit Today, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 39. Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP Academic, 1999), 124.

²⁰Erickson, 895.

gives the baptized power for ministry or service.²¹ Their main argument for this view is that the 4 times the term baptism or filling are used in Acts (2:4,8:14-17,10:44-45,19:1-6) are normal receptions of the Holy Spirit, meaning that they are examples that should happen in the life of every believer, and not abnormal, meaning that they could only in the context of the time period of Acts and should assumed to happen in believers today.

Pawson states:

My first comment is to draw attention to the simple fact that these four occasions are the *only* descriptions of receiving the Spirit in the whole New Testament. The Gospels look forward to such ‘baptisms’ and the Epistles look backward to them, but neither gives us any information as to what actually is expected to happen when anyone is ‘baptized in Spirit’. Acts is our only source of understanding.²²

Thus, his argument is that as these are the only times in Scripture that show the receiving of the Spirit in Acts, they must be examples of how the Spirit should be received for every Christian.

However, there are three main arguments against this view. First, the view completely ignores 1 Corinthians 12:13, which is regarded as one of the key passages for the “baptism of the Spirit”. The view solely relies on the book of Acts and ignores the rest of Scripture. Second, Pawson cites Acts 8 as a “baptism of the Spirit”, but there is no record of the believers there speaking in tongues. Thus, it is impossible to say that Acts 8 is a “baptism” and also that a” baptism” always results in speaking in tongues. Finally, the word “baptism” (βαπτίζω) is only used in Acts 1 and not used again in any of the

²¹Pawson, 41.

²²Pawson, 39.

accounts found in Acts 2, 8, 10, or 19. The word simply cannot be equated to be in all those passages when it is never mentioned in any of those contexts.

Filling

Being “filled with the Holy Spirit” is another term used in regards to Holy Spirit language and is used differently by different scholars. The word “filling” or the Greek word “πίμπλημι” (verb, aorist, passive, indicative, third person, plural) occurs with the Holy Spirit in Luke and Acts. Louw-Nida says the word means “to cause something to be completely full”.²³ Gerhard Delling says:

In Acts, πλησθῆναι describes the work of the Holy Spirit in Christians. The primary reference here is not to the receiving of the Spirit of prophecy but to the fact that filling with the Spirit conveys the power of preaching, e.g., to Peter before his address in Ac. 4:8, to all believers prior to their witness at the prayer meeting in 4:31 (with accompanying external phenomena), to Paul before his sermon in 13:9. In 2:4 the receiving of the Spirit brings the gift of tongues.”²⁴

Three views on “filling of the Holy Spirit” will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

First, Wayne Grudem and Elmer Towns would define “filling” as an activity subsequent to conversion that helps the believer to grow and accomplish ministry, as well as sometimes give spiritual gifts.²⁵ They use Acts 4:8, 4:31, 9:17, and 13:9 as examples of where believers were “filled with the Spirit” in order to either grow spiritually or accomplish a certain ministry task, such as Peter speaking to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:8 or Paul speaking out against Elymas in 13:9. They would then say that when Paul uses the

²³Louw-Nida, 597.

²⁴Gerhard Delling, “πίμπλημι,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), vol. 6, 130.

²⁵Grudem, 1242. Towns, 148.

term in Ephesians 5:18 that Paul is using the term to show that the believer needs to allow the Spirit to control their life in order to grow and accomplish ministry in their lives.

However, a significant problem with their position is this idea of the “filling” happening to only believers after their conversion experience. Luke 1:15-16, 1:41-42, and 1:67 are all three occurrences when a “filling of the Spirit” occurred, but all three of these experiences (John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zacharias) were all “filled with the Spirit” before Jesus was even born. Thus, “fillings of the Spirit” were occurring before Pentecost.

The second view, held by Erickson, Reymond, John Polhill, David Peterson, and John Stott, states that a “filling of the Holy Spirit” is different than “baptism” and occurs more than once, usually for a particular task, or purpose, as well as for receiving gifts of the Holy Spirit.²⁶ They would argue that based upon the passages in Luke (1:15-16, 41-42, 67) and Acts (2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 13:9) that anytime that a “filling of the Spirit” was given to an individual, it was for a specific purpose or task. John the Baptist, Elizabeth, and Zacharias were all “filled” for prophetic speech in Luke. The disciples were “filled” in Acts 2 for the purpose of witnessing. Peter was “filled” in Acts 4:8 to speak to the Sanhedrin. The believers were “filled” in 4:31 to have boldness in their witness. Paul is “filled” to speak out against Elymas. They would then hold that Ephesians 5:18, when Paul commands to be “filled with the Spirit”, would be in the context of being “filled” to receive spiritual gifts. Erickson states:

²⁶Erickson, 896-97. Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 323-25. Reymond, 765. John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: Acts* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1992), 92. David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles: Pillar Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub Co, 2009), 134. Stott, 48-49.

What we are commanded to do (Eph. 5:18) is be filled with the Holy Spirit (a present imperative, suggesting ongoing action). This is not so much a matter of our getting more of the Holy Spirit; presumably we all possess the Spirit completely. It is, rather, a matter of his possessing more of our lives. Each of us is to aspire to giving the Holy Spirit full control of his or her life. When that happens, our lives will manifest whatever gifts God intends for us to have, along with all the fruit and acts of his empowering that he wishes to display through us.²⁷

Thus, the “filling of the Holy Spirit” in this context would be for the purpose of receiving spiritual gifts through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

The third view on the “filling of the Spirit” is that the filling is the same as the baptism of the Holy Spirit and that they are synonymous. This view is held by Pawson, as well as Walt Russell.²⁸ Russell attributes the following terms as interchangeable: “baptism”, “outpouring”, “gift”, “giving”, “coming on”, “filling”, “receiving”, and “falling upon”.²⁹ He puts all of the terms underneath the umbrella term “anointing of the Spirit”.³⁰ Russell states that the purpose of the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” is “empowering to the task/office of representing him as his witness on earth.”³¹ Thus, Russell’s view on the “filling of the Spirit” is that it is for empowering the believer to the task/office of representing him as his witness on earth.

The Terms as Defined in this Paper

This paper will not use the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” because it is not a Biblical term. This paper will define the “filling of the Holy Spirit” as an event that can

²⁷Erickson, 896-97.

²⁸Pawson, 34. Walt Russell, “The Anointing with the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts,” *Trinity Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 57.

²⁹Russell, 55.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

happen more than once and is usually for a specific task or purpose, such as prophetic speech (Luke 1:15-16, 41-42, 67; Acts 2:4), boldness in witnessing (Acts 4:8,4:31), and greater power in ministry (Acts13:9). To be “full of the Holy Spirit” means that the Holy Spirit has control of the life of the believer and the believer is yielding to the influence of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). This paper will define the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” as an activity at conversion that brings the believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The “baptism of the Holy Spirit” and the “filling of the Holy Spirit” are two different concepts with two different purposes, but they can also be in the believer simultaneously. The disciples could be “baptized” permanently by the Holy Spirit and still receive “fillings of the Holy Spirit”. There does not seem to be a reason that would disallow a “baptism” and a “filling of the Spirit” as happening at the same time in the believer, which may have been what happened at Pentecost. The disciples could have been “baptized with the Spirit” into the body of Christ, but also with the “baptism” came a “filling” that enabled them to speak in tongues to the people for the specific purpose of reaching the different people groups to understand the Gospel at Pentecost.

Why is the Interpretation of John 14:17 Challenging?

John 14:17 is a difficult verse because of its unique wording. It uses both the present, “παρ’ ὑμῶν μένει”, and the future tense, “ἐν ὑμῶν ἔσται”, to describe the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit. This has caused some scholars to believe that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in the disciples already at this time even before Pentecost.³² Others

³²Cole, 183. Wood, 82.

believe that this passage shows a clear distinction between the Holy Spirit being “with” the disciples and then “in” the disciples.³³ Therefore, the main interpretive challenge with this passage is the issue of the disciples having the Holy Spirit dwelling in them in John 14:17. A secondary challenge that would arise from that is if the Holy Spirit was not dwelling in the disciples in John 14:17, then when did the Holy Spirit go into the disciples? The three options are before John 14:17, at John 20:22, or at Pentecost in Acts 2:4. The three main passages that impact when the Holy Spirit began to indwell are John 7:39, 14:17, and 20:22.

John 7:39

Now that the terms have been defined, a study on the passages in John can begin. Before a proper study of John 14:17 can be given, an analysis of John 7:39 must be done to give background material for the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John. John 7:39 states “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:39) The key word in the verse is the word “glorified”, or “ἐδοξάσθη”.³⁴ This Greek word is found six times in the Bible, all in John (7:39,12:16,13:31,13:32,15:8).³⁵

³³D.A. Carson, 500. Andreas Köstenberger, 436-438. Larry Pettegrew, 70-71. Leon Morris, 378-379.

³⁴Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland and Matthew Black, *The Greek New Testament* (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1993).

³⁵Kurt Aland, Matthew Black and Carlo Martini, *The Greek New Testament: Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology)* (Deutsche: Bibelgesellschaft, 2006).

Glorification

This Greek word “ἐδοξάσθη” is used six times in John. The first time it occurs is in the passage in question John 7:39. The second time it occurs is in John 12:16, which states “These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him” (John 12:16). This verse only shows that up until that time, Jesus was not glorified. However, it does not tell when Jesus would be glorified in the future.

The third, fourth, and fifth times the word occurs are in John 13:31-32, which states “Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately” (John 13:31-32). The context of this verse points towards the death and resurrection of Jesus. Judas had just left to initiate his plot with the Sanhedrin, and Jesus then says that is glorification is now, directly after Judas leaves. It appears from the context that Jesus knows that the events that will lead to his death are now in motion with Judas’s betrayal and that his death is coming soon, and through his death and resurrection He will be glorified and will bring glory to God.

The final time that the word occurs is in John 15:8, which states “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8). This verse does not apply to the time or nature of Jesus’ glorification. After observing all of the verses that mention the glorification of Jesus, two ideas become apparent. First,

there is never an exact mention in the Gospel of John of when the glorification of Jesus actually took place. There is no point in the book where it says that Jesus was glorified at a specific event or time. However, it seems that John is focusing on the glorification being the death and resurrection of Jesus, as explained in John 13:31-32. Craig Keener says this about the glorification ““The promise is fulfilled after Jesus is “glorified”, though the Spirit continues to elaborate his glory thereafter: believers “receive” the Spirit in 20:22, part of the passage which climaxes John’s pneumatology.”³⁶ This would place the glorification after the resurrection.

The Spirit was not yet Given

An issue that comes from the John 7:39 verse is this idea of the “Spirit was not yet given”. Cole says that the wording in the Greek should actually read “Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive, for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified”.³⁷ John is not saying that there was no Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit had not come to the Earth before this time, as the Holy Spirit had been seen numerous times in the Old Testament and then again in the New Testament as well. The glorification of Jesus had not happened yet, so therefore the Holy Spirit had not been given. This points directly, in the context of John, to John 20:22, when after the glorification of Jesus occurred, the Spirit would be given.

³⁶Craig Keener, *The Gospel of John* (Peabody: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003), 730.

³⁷Cole, 183.

John 14:17

With the background material covered, the paper will now focus on the verse in question, John 14:17, which states “*that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you (John 14:17). Does this verse state that the disciples already had the Holy Spirit permanently inside of them, or does it state that the disciples were going to be filled permanently by the Holy Spirit, or does this verse say that the disciples already had a dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit inside of them temporarily and that it would become permanent later?

Receiving the Holy Spirit

One of the most important words in the verse is this word “received” or the Greek word “λαμβάνω”; it is a critical word when dealing with Holy Spirit terminology. This idea of the Holy Spirit being received occurs ten different times during John and Acts. It occurred in John 7:39, when John said, “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). This verse refers to a future reception of the Holy Spirit to happen after the glorification. The next time the word received is used in relation to the Holy Spirit is the verse in question, John 14:17, when John contrasts the disciples with the world. The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, but the disciples can receive the Holy Spirit. Next, the word is used in John 20:22. This verse is highly controversial. John says, “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and “said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Jesus is again talking to the disciples at this current time.

The next time that the word is used in this context is Acts 2:33, which says, “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear” (Acts 2:33). This verse shows that the disciples have received the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised them, sometime between John 7:39 and Acts 2:33, possibly in John 20:22 or possibly in Acts 2 at Pentecost, or even at some other time. The next time the word is used is five verses later, in 2:38, which says “ Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). In this verse, Peter is calling on the Jews to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after they have repented and have been baptized in the name of Jesus. This verse shows that there is a sequence of events that needs to happen for this specific reception of the Holy Spirit to occur; they must first believe and then they will receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14-19 is the next time that the wording is used again with the Holy Spirit and occurs three times in the passage. It says, “Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they *began* laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, saying, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit” (Acts 8:14-19). First,

Peter and John had to go to Samaria to pray for the Samaritans so that they could receive the Holy Spirit. Verse 17 is the first time the wording is used with a Samaritan. It occurs again in verse 19 when Simon tried to bribe Peter and John into giving him the power to give out the Holy Spirit and allow others to receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 10:47 is the next time the wording is used, saying “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?” (Acts 10:47). This verse occurs right after the Holy Spirit “fell upon” the Gentiles. It is the first time that the Gentiles had ever received the Holy Spirit in recorded Scripture. The final time that the wording is used is in Acts 19:2, when Luke says “He said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they *said* to him, “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” (Acts 19:2). This wording occurs when Paul meets with a group of John the Baptist’s disciples that had not received the Holy Spirit.

“Abides with You”

The word “abide” in this verse is important to understand. It is the Greek word “μένω», which means “to remain in the same place over a period of time—‘to remain, to stay.’”³⁸ This Greek word is used 29 times in the New Testament, with 21 of those occurrences used by John, either in his gospel or in his epistles.³⁹ This is a word that John frequently uses throughout his works and it is almost always translated as “abides”

³⁸Louw-Nida, 728.

³⁹Ibid.

or “remain”. Therefore, the Holy Spirit “stays” or “remains” with the disciples for a period of time.

A major issue with the construction of the phrase is that it is only found one other place in the entire New Testament, in John 14:25, which says, “These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you” (John 14:25). However, it is hard to compare these two constructions because they are looking at two entirely different persons. Jesus at this point is in human form and is bound by human constraints. The Holy Spirit is not bound by human constraints and therefore lives in a different plane than Jesus at this time period.

Abides with You Compared with Will Be in You

Another major issue with the verse is the idea of a contrast between the two phrases “abides with you” and “will be in you”. The wording appears to show that John was trying to communicate that there should be a division between the two ideas, with the first being in the present tense and the second being in the future tense. Beasley-Murray states “It is better not to distinguish the prepositions too sharply but, with Schnackenburg, to see in the two brief clauses a single figure of speech, affirming the presence of the Spirit with the disciples, while yet recognizing that the latter points to the Spirit’s inner presence in individual believers.”⁴⁰ Gerald Borchert states, “This text is not about two ways the Spirit dwells “with” and “in” Christians like a two-stage salvation process, interpreted in an individualistic way of thinking as some well-meaning people

⁴⁰George R. Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 36, John (Second Edition)*, 2 ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 382.

have proposed.⁴¹ However, the conflict comes between scholars on the degree of the division and what exactly the division means.

First, scholars disagree on whether or not this terminology given shows that the disciples already had the Holy Spirit permanently inside of them, or if they were going to have the Spirit permanently inside of them at a later time. Scholars that support the idea that the disciples could already have the Spirit permanently at this point, including Thomas Goodwin, John Owen, B.B. Warfield, Sinclair Ferguson⁴², as well as Leon Wood⁴³, have an argument to support their idea: the disciples could already have a permanent Holy Spirit because the Old Testament saints could have already had a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that the “abides with you” and “will be in you” both talk about a permanent dwelling presence, but to a different degree of presence.⁴⁴

First, supporters of this view argue that the Old Testament saints had a permanent dwelling Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. They use the concept of regeneration of the Old Testament believers to show that the saints must have had a permanent dwelling Holy Spirit because they believe that there can be no regeneration outside the work of the

⁴¹Gerald L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary: John 12-21* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2002), 125.

⁴²Cole, 144.

⁴³Wood, 82.

⁴⁴Ibid.

Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Graham Cole states this about the regeneration of the Old Testament saints:

OT believers were saved, as far as the NT writers are concerned. Paul tells us that Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4:1-12). Hebrews can appeal to a parade of OT figures starting with Abel and accenting supremely Abraham to illustrate the life of faith (Hebrews 11).⁴⁶

So, therefore, if the Old Testament saints were regenerated, which is evident when it says that Abraham “believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6), then their argument is that they must have had the permanent dwelling Holy Spirit because regeneration cannot occur without the permanent dwelling work of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the supporters of this view argue that the wording of John 14:17 merely shows that the Holy Spirit was already dwelling inside the believers, but two different degrees of the dwelling would occur. While Jesus does use two different words in “with” and “in”, the difference is not as drastic as some seem to make it appear. Wood says, “But what did Jesus see in the use of *with* that suited this Old Testament activity, in distinction from *in* for the additional work of the New Testament? The most likely answer is that with (*para*) is probably the nearest Greek word in meaning to in (*en*) and still have a clear distinction indicated.”⁴⁷ Wood’s argument is that Jesus is not using two words that are supposed to be differing in nature, but that Jesus is actually using two words that are very similar in nature except for minor differences.

⁴⁵Ibid., 70.

⁴⁶Cole, 143.

⁴⁷Wood, 87.

This concept that “with” is similar to “in” with just minor differences does have some support in Scripture. There are four different times when the phrase is used to show that two people were “dwelling in the same house”: in John 1:39, Acts 9:43, Acts 18:3, and Acts 21:8).⁴⁸ First, John 1:39 says “He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour” (John 1:39). In the wording “they stayed with Him”, “stayed” has the root “μένω”, the same Greek word used in John 14:17. In the context of this verse, two of John the Baptist’s disciples, one being Andrew, stayed with Jesus in the same place that Jesus was staying at.

Second, in Acts 9:43, Luke says, “And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner *named* Simon” (Acts 9:43). The Greek word “μένω” is again used in this verse. The context of the verse shows that Peter stayed with Simon at Simon’s house. Third, Acts 18:3 states “and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers” (Acts 18:3). The context of this passage is when Paul stays in Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla. Finally, Acts 21:8 states, “On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him” (Acts 21:8). The context of this passage is when Paul and his companions stayed at Philip’s house in Caesarea on Paul’s way back to Jerusalem.

These verses show that, at the very least, the wording “abides with” or “stays with” or “remains with”, all stemming from the same Greek word, can sometimes mean

⁴⁸Ibid.

that the two people are staying in the same location. This does not prove that this means the Holy Spirit was abiding inside the disciples at this time, but it does make it a possibility based upon the wording.

This raises the question of why Jesus would say two different words at all in the passage if they were meant to be taken as similar verbs. Wood says:

Since Jesus did use two different prepositions, however, it follows that He did wish to convey some variant meaning. What was the difference He had in mind? The difference that seems to fit the situation best is the distinction that has been seen already—the distinction between the Spirit’s work in believers before the church started and after this time. Christ was saying that the Spirit had been “with” believers in the senses that have been noted (regenerating, indwelling, sealing, filling, empowering), but that the time was near when He would additionally baptize them and then empower them in a new way for gospel proclamation.⁴⁹

Jesus could have been trying to make a distinction between the two different dwelling ministries of the Holy Spirit; the time before the glorification and the time after his glorification.

Another group of scholars, including D.A. Carson⁵⁰, Andreas Köstenberger⁵¹, Larry Pettegrew⁵², and Leon Morris⁵³, propose that the phrase “He abides with you and will be in you” reveal a clear distinction that shows the Holy Spirit did not dwell permanently inside the believers until Pentecost. Two of their main arguments are that

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Carson, 500.

⁵¹Köstenberger, 436-438

⁵²Pettegrew, 70-71.

⁵³Morris, 378-379.

“abides with you” shows that the Holy Spirit could not have been inside the disciples and that John 7:39 shows that the disciples could not have had a permanent Holy Spirit living in them before the ascension,

First, they claim that the phrase “abides with you” shows that the Holy Spirit could not have been inside of the disciples, but instead meant either Jesus was saying that the Holy Spirit was dwelling in Jesus himself and was working with the disciples through himself, or that the Holy Spirit was outside of the believer working and would not go inside the believer until Pentecost. While they do have a valid argument in the wording, as “abides with you” does appear that the Holy Spirit was outside of the disciples, this paper has already shown that the phrase can mean sharing the same household in some contexts, opening up the possibility that the Holy Spirit could be permanently dwelling in them even with this wording. However, saying that the Holy Spirit could not dwell inside of an individual at least temporarily until Pentecost is not supported in Scripture. There are many occurrences in the Old Testament revealing wording that shows the Spirit was dwelling inside of a person, including Ezekiel 2:2, Judges 14:6, 19:15:14, 1 Samuel 10:10, 11:16, Judges 6:34, 1 Chronicles 12:18, 2 Chronicles 24:20, Exodus 31:3, 35:31, and Ezekiel 11:5.⁵⁴ Therefore, to say that the phrase “abides with you” has to mean that the Holy Spirit has to be outside of the disciples because Pentecost has not yet happened does not seem supported by the Old Testament.

Second, the idea that the Holy Spirit could not dwell permanently until after the ascension because of John 7:39 seems to be based more on preconceived notions than on

⁵⁴Wood, 86-87.

actual Scripture. As seen earlier in the paper, there is no wording in John 7:39 that tells exactly when the glorification will take place. Supporters of this argument claim that the glorification occurred at the ascension, and therefore the Holy Spirit could not dwell permanently until after the ascension. Russell Quinn says, “While some place a good deal of exegetical weight on the role of the ascension in John, our study showed that the narrative does not clearly set it forth as a requirement for the giving of the Spirit.”⁵⁵ The verse does not say that, and John 13:31-32 actually points to the death and resurrection as the glorification of Jesus. This would allow for the permanent dwelling to occur after the resurrection of Jesus, which will be addressed in the next section.

John 20:22

John 20:22 is a very controversial passage, but is also critical in understanding both John 7:39 and John 14:17. These three verses are connected by the concept of “receiving the Spirit”. First, John 7:39 said, “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive”. This is the promise of the coming Holy Spirit. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit had never come before, as He had been in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, but that He would come in a different way after the glorification of Jesus. John 14:17 then shows that the world will not be able to receive the Holy Spirit, only the followers of Christ will be able to receive the Holy Spirit. Finally, John 20:22 appears to be the fulfillment of this theme that occurs through the Gospel of John.

⁵⁵Russell Quinn, “Expectation and Fulfillment of the Gift of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John” (D. Phil diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 198.

The text is very straightforward, saying “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Scholars believe many different ideas about this verse. Raymond Brown⁵⁶ and John Pretlove⁵⁷ believe that John 20:22 and Acts 2:4 are just the same account written by two different authors. This does not make logical sense because of the immense differences in the text, the times are different, the place is different, and the manner of distribution is different. These have to be two separate events. C.K. Barrett believed it was impossible to harmonize the two times into the same event.⁵⁸ Gary Burge states:

The crux of the issue is that John does not anticipate another gift of the Spirit. He gives no hint of something to come, and if we did not possess the narrative of Acts, we would easily conclude that John 20 fulfills all of Jesus’ promises. At the same time, Luke provides no hint that another giving of the Spirit occurred on Easter. He points forward to one giving on Pentecost, following Jesus’ ascension.⁵⁹

The passages have too many distinct differences to harmonize into one account.

Graham Cole identifies seven different possibilities for the verse, showing the complexity of the verse. He says that the verse could be one of seven possibilities: a presentation of the regeneration of these disciples as a new Adamic race, a presentation of a creation of a new Israel, a commissioning of the church for a mission, a revival of a remnant of Israel for prophetic ministry, John’s version of Pentecost, an example of

⁵⁶Joost van Rossum, “The ‘Johannine Pentecost’: John 20:22 in Modern Exegesis and in Orthodox Theology,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 149.

⁵⁷John Pretlove, “John 20: 22--help from Dry Bones?” *Criswell Theological Review* 3, no. 1 (2005): 93.

⁵⁸C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1962), 475.

⁵⁹Gary M. Burge, *NIV Application Commentary: John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 560.

enacted prophetic symbolism pointing to Pentecost, or an act that is proleptic of Pentecost.⁶⁰ All of these are possibilities, but Cole is also coming into this passage with his own presuppositions. He believes that the disciples could not have a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost, so he skips the possibility that John 20:22 is the reception of the Holy Spirit that John had mentioned in 7:39 and 14:17.

John 20:22 as a fulfillment of John 7:39 and 14:17 is a legitimate possibility as an option. Herman Ridderbos says “there is nothing in this Gospel to suggest a later outpouring of the Spirit to be distinguished from the one spoken of here”⁶¹ John 7:39 merely shows that the Holy Spirit could not come in a different, unique way until after the glorification of Jesus. If the death and resurrection of Jesus is the glorification, as this paper has suggested with the use of John 13:31-32 as support, then the passage could be the fulfillment that John was writing about.

Another reason to see John 20:22 as the fulfillment of 7:39 is the wording of “receive the Holy Spirit”. The Greek word “λαμβάνω”, which means “to take” or “to receive” is used in both verses.⁶² This connection shows a very good possibility that John was trying to link the two passages together. The Holy Spirit is promised, and then is received after the resurrection. This idea that the promise of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled in John 20:22 is a possibility for the passage.

⁶⁰Cole, 188-189.

⁶¹Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 643.

⁶²Delling, 4.

Possibilities for John 14:17

There are three main possibilities for John 14:17: the disciples were already regenerated and had a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were regenerated but were waiting on the Holy Spirit to come after the glorification of Jesus, which would occur after his death and resurrection in John 20:22, or that the disciples were regenerated and did not receive a permanent Holy Spirit until Pentecost.

The Disciples Were Regenerated and had a Permanent Dwelling

The main evidence for this proposal is the regeneration of the Old Testament saints and the use of the word “abiding with them” as a possibility to mean that the two objects were abiding together in the same place. The idea that the Old Testament saints were regenerate is supported through Romans 4:1-12 and the model of Abraham. However, some scholars, such as Lewis Sperry Chafer, D.A. Carson, and Michael Green, state that regeneration was a New Testament idea.⁶³ They believe that while the Old Testament saints were saved, they were not regenerated because regeneration was not possible in the Old Testament.

In contrast, Graham Cole shows that the idea of regeneration was found in the Old Testament. Cole says “With the OT language of “circumcised hearts,” “hearts of flesh” replacing “hearts of stone,” and “a new spirit,” we are moving in the same conceptual field as the NT ideas of regeneration and new birth.”⁶⁴ The wording of the Old

⁶³Cole, 144.

⁶⁴Ibid., 145.

Testament on this issue is so vague that it makes it difficult to make a decision one way or the other. It appears that it was possible for an Old Testament saint to have had a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit because they were possibly regenerated, but without any specific examples or words to show it, it makes it almost impossible to come up with a definite conclusion on whether or not they were regenerated and received a permanent dwelling Holy Spirit or not.

The wording “abiding with them” could possibly show that the Holy Spirit and the disciples were abiding in the same place. It has been shown that the wording can mean that on some occasions. Once again though, without a definite showing of whether or not the disciples had a permanent Holy Spirit inside of them, it is possible that the disciples could have been regenerated and received a permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit, but it is hard to come up with a definite conclusion based solely on the information available in Scripture.

The Disciples were Regenerated and had a Filling of the Spirit in 14:17 and then Received the Permanent Dwelling of the Holy Spirit in John 20:22

The three main arguments for this idea that the disciples were regenerated and then received a permanent Holy Spirit in John 20:22 are, one, the promise of receiving the Holy Spirit in John 7:39 was fulfilled in John 20:22 and that, two, the glorification was after Jesus’ death and resurrection, according to John 13:31-32, and, three, the disciples could have had a temporary filling of the Spirit without having a permanent dwelling of the Spirit. This idea of the receiving the Holy Spirit in John is seen in 7:39, 14:17, and then finally in 20:22. The wording connects all three of the passages together

and establishes this theme of receiving the Holy Spirit. To say that the promise given in John 7:39 is not fulfilled in John 20:22 but is fulfilled in Acts 2 at Pentecost does not make thematic logic in the book. John primarily focuses on receiving the Holy Spirit after the glorification of Jesus and then secondarily focuses on the glorification throughout the book to show how the reception of the Holy Spirit could be accomplished after the glorification. For John to ignore the fulfillment of the reception of the Holy Spirit when writing his account does not follow his thematic scheme that he had built throughout the book. John 20:22 is the climax of his account, something he had built up to throughout the book. Raymond Brown says, “As we turn to a direct discussion of vs. 22 and the breathing forth of the Spirit, we recognize that for John this is the high point of the post-resurrection activity of Jesus and that already in several ways the earlier part of this chapter has prepared us for this dramatic moment.”⁶⁵ To say that it is insignificant and does not complete his pneumatology does not make logical sense in context with the account.

Second, the glorification of Jesus appears to occur when Jesus has died and then is resurrected. There is nothing in the text of John that says that Jesus had to have ascended for the glorification to occur. This leaves open the possibility for the receiving of the Holy Spirit permanently to occur in John 20:22 after the death and resurrection of Jesus, not necessarily only at Pentecost.

Third, there is nothing in the text to deny that the disciples could have been temporarily filled by the Holy Spirit during this time period. John the Baptist, Elizabeth,

⁶⁵Brown, 68.

and Zacharias had all been filled during this time period for specific purposes, as was shown earlier in the paper. The disciples could have received a filling of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of having greater power in their ministry alongside of Jesus. There is nothing in the text that prevents this. When John said that the Holy Spirit was “abiding with” the disciples, he could have been referring to a filling, and then “will be in you” could be referring to the permanent dwelling that would occur in John 20:22. However, much like the regenerate and indwelling theory, the John 20:22 indwelling theory just cannot be conclusive in nature. It can be possible, but with the ambiguity of Holy Spirit language, it is very hard to be conclusive. Without using a phrase specifically about the disciples having a permanent dwelling by the Holy Spirit in any of the three possibilities, it makes this possibility open but without conclusive evidence to support it.

The Disciples were Permanently Dwelled by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost

This is the most general and most widely accepted of the three proposals, but it does have two problems that it must deal with as well. First, the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” that occurs in Acts 2:4 does not specifically state a permanent dwelling. There is nothing in Acts 2:4 that specifically separates this filling with other fillings in Scripture. Also, some of the same disciples that were filled in Acts 2:4 were filled again, specifically in Acts 4:31. If the term “filled with the Holy Spirit meant a permanent dwelling in Acts 2:4, then it would have to mean a permanent dwelling again in Acts 4:31. The disciples could not be permanently dwelled into twice because it is a one-time work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if this is in fact the permanent dwelling of the Holy

Spirit, then it must be explained why it occurs multiple times with the same wording occurring in the passages.

Second, if Acts 2:4 is the permanent dwelling of the Holy Spirit, then John 20:22 appears almost irrelevant or insignificant. John builds up to this filling of the Holy Spirit in his gospel, but it is irrelevant because it does not complete the promise that was made earlier in the book. This leaves John with a cliffhanger on his pneumatology in his account. If Acts 2:4 was the permanent dwelling, then it would make sense for John to finish his account with Pentecost instead of ending it before Pentecost. While this possibility is still very open and very possible, it does present problems as well that need to be solved.

Conclusion

It appears from the context of John and the way that the wording of Holy Spirit language is used in Scripture, that it is impossible to make a conclusion about this idea of the indwelling and filling in the Gospel of John with John 14:17. With the specific wording about a permanent dwelling completely missing from the passage, as well as from John 20:22 and Acts 2:4, it is just not possible to make a definitive statement about whether or not the disciples had a permanent dwelling Holy Spirit in them in John 14:17, after Jesus' death and resurrection in John 20:22, or all the way until Acts 2:4 at Pentecost. All three possibilities have positives and negatives on each side and the vague wording and lack of clear commands on the Holy Spirit in John, along with the different wording used for the Holy Spirit, make it impossible to conclude on which idea is definitive.

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