

# A Bible Study of the Holy Spirit

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## **Introduction**

Realistically those who believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ may not know the Holy Spirit. Some disciples at Ephesus whom the Apostle Paul met did not know who the Holy Spirit is. They were introduced to the Holy Spirit. Acts 19:1-6 relates, "...Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'" When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." Thereafter, the Christians at Ephesus obeyed the authority of the Holy Spirit, received His grace, and fellowshipped Him. (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:13; 2:18; 2:22; 3:5; 3:16; 4:3; 4:4; 4:30; 5:9; 5:18; 6:17; 6:18) To know the Holy Spirit was essential for the Christians at Ephesus!

### **Why study the Holy Spirit?**

This series of lessons is written for a very practical reason: We need the same Divine fellowship, authority, and grace of the Holy Spirit which the New Testament Christians had. This relationship and these truths can and should make a powerful difference in our lives, including molding who we are on a daily basis. These are not truths which come under the category of "things which are interesting to know, but you'll never really use them." These are not truths just for the sole purpose of reproving erroneous doctrines held by our acquaintances in regard to the Holy Spirit; although this is part of their purpose. These are truths needed by Christians even when we are not assaulted with false teachings. These truths are instructional, faith-building, life-reforming, and eternally beneficial. The truths deepen our knowledge of the identity of our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The truths deepen our relationship with our God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **This study pertains to Christians today, and tomorrow.**

It may surprise some to know the impact that the Holy Spirit's work has upon Christians today! Some are shortsighted in this. By some He is ignored because they think either He cannot be understood in a practical application, or He is idle and totally disconnected from them. Therefore the Holy Spirit has been figuratively put on the shelf. Some do not want any knowledge about God. Some want knowledge about God the Father, but not about Jesus the Son. And some want knowledge about the Father and the Son, but not about the Holy Spirit. The Bible includes all three in the salvation and the eternal journey of a child of God, and we must seek knowledge about all three.

### **A controversial subject.**

In studying the Holy Spirit we have come upon a very Biblical, yet controversial subject. Controversy must not prevent our study. Most subjects in the Bible are met with controversy. We can talk to ten different people about who God the Father is, or who Jesus is, and get conflicting ideas. There is virtually nothing found in the Bible, or about God which is not controversial. Studying the Holy Spirit cannot only clear up the controversy, it will enlighten us about one of three Divine beings with whom man is to relate. If we ignore the subject, then not only are we failing in knowledge of truth, but we are restricting our relationship with God.

## *Introduction*

### **This is not a one-time study.**

Learning about the Holy Spirit must be a continuous study for human minds. The further we go in our walk in Christ, the more we should learn. In comparison, consider the magnitude of the identity of God the Father, and Jesus Christ the Son. We would expect the Divine Holy Spirit's identity to be no less expansive. All we can know is found in the Bible, because that is what God has chosen to reveal to us in scripture (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10-11), and our growth in that knowledge must increase as we go through life. These lessons, therefore, launch a study of the Holy Spirit so our growing faith may be based on what we know from God's word (Rom. 10:17). In no way is the subject exhausted by this study, but rather it prompts a lifetime study of the Bible as a whole, just as we study the identity of God the Father and God the Son.

### **A study for those who hunger in their relationship with God.**

Do you want to grow spiritually in your relationship with God? Then this study is for you.

Let's study! In the words of the Apostle Paul, may "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:14)

## **Lesson 1** **The Holy Spirit: Who Is He?**

The Holy Spirit (also called the “Holy Ghost” in the King James Version) is a Divine person spoken of throughout the Bible. New Testament teachers in the first century acquainted Christians and prospective Christians with the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> It reasons that Christians today should know the Holy Spirit and hold in Him in awe.

### **Who is the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit is God! The Holy Spirit is a “Spirit,” as is God the Father (John 4:24), and He is “Holy” as is God the Father (Lev. 11:44). The Holy Spirit is a Divine person with traits of personality, as are God the Father, and God the Son<sup>2</sup>. It causes some people concern to call the Holy Spirit, “Divine” or “God.” Keep in mind that Jesus is called “God”<sup>3</sup>, and the noun, “God,” in the Bible, may refer to any one or all of the Divine persons. “God” may be thought of as a family, or a “Godhead”<sup>4</sup> as the scriptures call the Divine three. As a perfectly united family, the three are “one God.” The Holy Spirit is one of the Godhead, and He is Divine. Therefore the identity of the Holy Spirit cannot be overstated.

What are some ways we can know the Holy Spirit is God (Divine), as are the Father and the Son?

First, we see the Holy Spirit is Divine in that He participated in creating “the heaven and the earth,” just as the Father and Son did.<sup>5</sup> We know that “God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:2). The concept of “God” here involved more than one person. When Genesis 1:26 says, “And God said, Let us make man in our image,” we can see the term “God” involves a plurality of persons. This is because the Hebrew word for “God” is plural, and the pronoun “us” is plural. The plural word “God” partly involves the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit created (Gen. 1:2; Psalm 104:30; Job 26:13). As far as scriptures teach, only three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) are Divine persons, who created. The Holy Spirit is one of the Divine three which participated in creating the heavens and the earth.

Second, we see the Holy Spirit is Divine in that He has Divine authority. Jesus said , “Go ye therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). This is a powerful and monumental commission which Jesus gives to His Apostles. The power which stands behind this commission, to teach and to baptize, is the backing and authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This places the Holy Spirit in a position of Divine authority along with the Father and the Son, whereas no others are ever placed in this position.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:38-39 The “gift of the Holy Spirit” was promised to those, Jews and gentile who repented and were baptized into Christ.

<sup>2</sup> God the Father is called a “person” (Heb. 1:3 KJV; Ezek. 14:7 NAV); Christ is called a “person” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:10 KJV). It can be seen that being called a “person” does not always refer to a “human.”

<sup>3</sup> John 20:28 Thomas called Jesus, “My Lord and my God.”

<sup>4</sup> Col. 2:9 Christ is the fullness of the “Godhead” bodily. Acts 17:29 The Godhead is not like “gold, silver, or stone graven by art and man's device.”

<sup>5</sup> Acts 17:24-26 the Father created; Colossians 1:13-17 Jesus Christ created.

Third, we see where the Holy Spirit is Divine in that He has Divine attributes. He is Divine because He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), He is Divine in knowledge, because He knows the mind of God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10-11), and His power is supernatural (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:7-11).

Fourth, the Holy Spirit abides in a uniquely Divine relationship with the Father and the Son (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:14; Rom. 15:30). A Divine alliance, with mutual respect, exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Divine relationship of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son is indicated when Jesus was baptized, and John the Baptist witnessed the following. "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"(Matt. 3:16). Here we see not one, but two Divine endorsements of Jesus. We see the Father and the Holy Spirit showing association with and approval of Jesus the Son. When John bare record of this event, he reported the presence of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus (John 1:29-34). The Divine approval of the Father was impressive, but also the Holy Spirit's presence impressed John, and caused him to bare record that Jesus "is the Son of God." The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in a uniquely Divine relationship, in which they agree and work together harmoniously.

### **What the Holy Spirit is Not.**

Misconceptions of the Holy Spirit abound.

The Holy Spirit is a person, and not an "it." Since He is called a "Spirit" or a "Ghost"(KJV) it makes some think about a vague, mystical, impersonal "it," "gas," or "thing." The word "Spirit" (from the Greek, "pneuma"), often refers in scripture to persons, either Divine<sup>6</sup>, evil<sup>7</sup>, or angelic<sup>8</sup>. Keep in mind that Jesus calls God a Spirit in John 4:24, and later defines a spirit as having no flesh and bones, nor does a spirit eat meat (Luke 24:39-43). If we can accept God the Father as a "Spirit," then we can accept the Holy Spirit likewise. We may never understand everything there is to know about God as a "Spirit," but we can know what He desires us to. Notice traits of personality each of these passages show the Holy Spirit has.

1. Matt. 12:31-32 The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed.
2. John 16:13 The Holy Spirit guides.
3. John 16:14 The Holy Spirit Glorifies.
4. Acts 7:51 The Holy Spirit may be resisted.
5. Rom. 15:30 The Holy Spirit loves.
6. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:11 The Holy Spirit possesses knowledge.
7. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:13 The Holy Spirit can teach.
8. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:14 The Holy Spirit communes.
9. Eph. 4:30 The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

The Holy Spirit is not simply "the Bible." There is a false notion that the Holy Spirit is no more than the word itself. Although the Holy Spirit is in perfect harmony with the word, He is separate and apart from the word. The Holy Spirit received the word, and revealed

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<sup>6</sup> The "Spirit of God" is the Holy Ghost. Matt. 12:28-32

<sup>7</sup> A "spirit of an unclean devil" dwelt in a man. Luke 4:33-35

<sup>8</sup> Angels are called "spirits." Hebrews 1:13-14

it to the prophets and Apostles. (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21; Eph. 3:3-5; John 16:13)

The Holy Spirit is not just a power of God. Sometimes the word "spirit" (pneuma) refers to "the wind"<sup>9</sup>, or "breath"<sup>10</sup>, and some would conclude the Holy Spirit is no more than a powerful wind or breath from God. The Holy Spirit is often associated with power<sup>11</sup>, but He is His own Divine person.

### **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit is God, who is Divine, a member of the Godhead, as are the Father and the Son. We should hold the Holy Spirit in awe, just as we do the Father and the Son. The identity of the Holy Spirit cannot be overstated. A lifelong study of the Holy Spirit by every one of us is warranted and necessary.

### **Discussion**

1. Which persons are members of the God family?
2. In what ways is the Holy Spirit described similarly in the Bible to the Father and the Son?
3. How can three persons be called "one God?"

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<sup>9</sup> John 3:8 The "wind blows..."

<sup>10</sup> Rev. 13:15 "he had power to give life (breath) unto the image of the beast..."

<sup>11</sup> Rom. 15:19 "by the power of the Spirit of God"; Acts 10:38 "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."

**Lesson 2**  
**The Holy Spirit Throughout Biblical History**

**The Holy Spirit existed throughout Biblical history because He is eternal Himself, and He is involved with the complete Biblical theme.**

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent and eternal, as are God the Father, and God the Son (Psa. 139:7; Heb. 9:14). Thus, His existence throughout all of Biblical History is without question. Various roles of the Holy Spirit are specified in the Old and New Testaments.

The Holy Spirit has Biblical concerns in that He collaborates efforts with the Father and the Son for man's redemption. The Holy Spirit works to complete the purpose and theme of the Bible: Man's redemption and the glorification of God through Jesus the Christ.

Some might think the Holy Spirit is a new subject only recently discovered! But for man, the subject of the Holy Spirit is as old as any other Biblical subject. And it may seem at times the Holy Spirit is more interactive with human concerns than the Father or the Son, especially since the time of Christ. The book of Acts seems to step up the activity of the Holy Spirit. But keep in mind the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have collaborated in man's redemption, without interruption or conflict among themselves. All three Divine persons have been active throughout both Old Testament and New Testament times. Just because we see one Divine person mentioned at one juncture, it does not mean the other two are idle at that point.<sup>12</sup> In parts of the Bible the focus of record may be on the Father or the Son.<sup>13</sup> When they complete certain works which are spotlighted, it does not mean they are through working in other areas. All three, including the Holy Spirit, are always concerned and working for the eternal welfare of mankind.

So, the Holy Spirit existed throughout all of Biblical history because He exists eternally, and He has the same Biblical concerns, while collaborating efforts with the Father and the Son for man's redemption.

**The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament**

We can see from the following list that the Holy Spirit was present and active throughout all of the Old Testament. He is involved in the matters of God, which point to man's redemption through Jesus Christ. Here are some instances where the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the O.T.

1. The Holy Spirit was present at Creation. Gen. 1:1-2; 1:26-27; Psa. 104:30; Job 26:13
2. The Holy Spirit strove with man before the flood. Gen. 6:3
3. The Holy Spirit spoke through men in the Old Testament. Men were able to prophesy God's word by receiving it through the Holy Spirit. O.T. Scriptures were then recorded in this manner. 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 23:1-2; Ezek. 11:5; Zech. 7:12; Psa. 95:7-11; Acts 1:16; Heb. 3:7-11
4. Holy Spirit fellowship was offered to or withheld from the Israelites. Psa. 51:11; Isa. 63:10-11
5. The Holy Spirit gave the pattern for the construction of the temple. 1<sup>st</sup> Chron. 28:11-12

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<sup>12</sup> John 5:17 tells that the Father and the Son work continuously, not even stopping on the Sabbath.

<sup>13</sup> The Father is to be emphasized in our giving and prayer (Matt. 6:1-18). The Son Jesus was emphasized as a sinless sacrifice.

6. The Holy Spirit helped in the Jewish restoration from captivity. Ezek. 36:27

### **The Holy Spirit in the New Testament**

Again we see where the Holy Spirit is present and active in the New Testament. And again He collaborates with the Father and Son in man's redemption. Here are some instances where the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the N.T. (Note most of these items will be studied in depth in future lessons; these are given as an overview at this point)

1. Caused Mary to conceive the Christ child. Matt. 1:20
2. Authorizes baptism in obedience to the Gospel. Matt. 28:19
3. Moved Apostles and prophets to reveal and record the Gospel. John 14:16-17; Eph. 3:3-5
4. Convicts men of sin. John 16:7-8
5. Some were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5
6. His gift given at obedience of the Gospel. Acts 2:38
7. Washes, justifies, and sanctifies the saved. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:9-11
8. Seals, and bears witness of God's children. Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:16
9. Gave gifts so some would have the ability to perform signs, wonders, and miracles. Heb. 2:3-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:8-10
10. Makes intercession for saints. Rom. 8:26-27
11. Rebukes and admonishes Christians. Rev. 2:7
12. Abides in Christians. Rom. 8:9-11
13. Communes with Christians. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:14

### **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit existed throughout Biblical history and He is involved with the complete Biblical theme. The Holy Spirit is not restricted to the time period of Biblical history, because He is eternal.

### **Discussion**

- 1) In the Bible we see where the subject of God was new to some people (Acts 17:22-23ff). The same was true of Jesus (Acts 17:18), and the same was true of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-2). But how long have these three Divine persons been revealed to man?
- 2) Can we assume the Holy Spirit is working, even when His specific work is not accounted for in the Bible? Why?

### **Lesson 3**

#### **The "Gift" of the Holy Spirit promised in Acts 2:38 (The entire chapter 2 must be considered)**

This lesson focuses on the "gift" mentioned in Acts 2:38, in which sinners were promised, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and yeoushall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

More than one gift is said in scriptures to be of the Holy Spirit. Besides the "gift" mentioned in Acts 2:38, another "gift" is mentioned in Acts 10:45 and 11:17, which relates to baptism of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore the New Testament speaks of other supernatural "gifts" used in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century church (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:4-10).

Just because all of these gifts are called a "gift" does not mean they are all speaking of the same thing. The Holy Spirit gives gifts, and they are not all the same.

Scholars tell us the identity of the "gift" cannot be determined by the study of the Greek word for "gift," which is, "DOREA." Thus it must be determined by studying the context.

#### **The Need for "the gift."**

What need did the Jews on Pentecost have for the Holy Spirit? Importantly, the Jews already knew who the Holy Spirit is. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 in no way introduced the Holy Spirit to the Jews; but rather it assumed they were acquainted with the Holy Spirit, and it assumed they realized the need for a relationship with, and the blessings from the Holy Spirit. The first century Jews assumed they had the Holy Spirit's fellowship and grace; in essence they thought they had Him in their lives, as King David desired (Psa. 51:11). But when Peter convicted them of murdering the Christ, they knew they were at enmity with God, and at enmity with the Holy Spirit (vv. 36-37). These Jews cared about Peter's offer of "the gift of the Holy Spirit?" Obviously some wanted the "gift," and Peter told them how to get it. They needed this gift of the Holy Spirit, for they were lost from God without it.

#### **The "Gift of the Holy Spirit" is related to Jesus Christ.**

Peter's sermon does something new in the minds of the Jews. Peter links God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and salvation to Jesus Christ. All four things are intertwined in the sermon. Peter mentions God's prophecy given by Joel, which says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...and...whoever call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:17-21). Then Peter says to those who are obedient to Jesus Christ, "you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Relating the three: God, Holy Spirit, and salvation to the fourth, Jesus Christ, was new for the Jews. The gift of the Holy Spirit was not a new subject to the Jews. Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through Jesus was a new concept to them.

#### **What is the Gift?**

What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit" here? Peter rephrases Acts 2:38 in Acts 3:19. The portion which parallels "*the gift of the Holy Spirit*" is "*so that time off refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.*" Thus the gift was the Holy Spirit Himself (fellowship and grace). Having the presence of the Holy Spirit is always sought for in the life of an Israelite in the Bible. The Israelites sought in on the day of Pentecost, just as David had sought it (Psa. 51:11). Obviously Peter's focus is not so much to define the "gift of the Holy Spirit," but rather to tell his audience how to get it. It is assumed they knew what it is, and they wanted it. It involved a "promise" of God, as Peter said to the Jews in the next

*The "Gift" of the Holy Spirit promised in Acts 2:38*

verse (39), "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." And Peter shows the promise is fulfilled through Jesus Christ. None of these Jews to whom Peter spoke had previously related any of God's promises to Jesus of Nazareth. "The promise" relates to the third promise of God to Abraham, which was not fulfilled centuries earlier as the first two promises were (land was first, nation was second - Gen. 12:1-3). The third promise was, "in thee (Abraham) shall all families of the earth be blessed." Galatians 3:14 calls this the "promise of the Spirit." Thus, when Peter says, "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," he relates it to the promise which is unto "you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2:39). This is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, which is also called the "promise of the Spirit." Its fulfillment is made possible through Jesus Christ!

Did Peter's penitent audience want the gift? Yes! "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day were added unto them about three thousand souls."(Acts 2:41) Which person, honestly, could go on living, knowing he did not have the "gift of the Holy Spirit," which was now being given by God through Jesus Christ? The "gift" had arrived through Jesus Christ; it was God's promised blessing through the seed of Abraham. Would they accept it? Some did, others did not. Others believed the "gift of the Holy Spirit" would come outside of Jesus.

**Conclusion**

"The gift of the Holy Spirit" in essence is Himself with the associated grace and fellowship. The benefits of the Holy Spirit's grace and fellowship are innumerable, but the theme is centered on redemption and spiritual blessings. Who has the gift of the Holy Spirit? Sinners who believe the Gospel, repent of sins, and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Every sinner can do this. God says, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Without this gift, we are lost.

**Discussion:** What was the chief concern of the Jews who said, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)? How did the "gift of the Holy Spirit" address this concern?

**Lesson 4**  
**Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

Baptism of the Holy Spirit was done at a certain time, for a certain purpose. In the New Testament it was first spoken of by John the Baptist, who spoke of baptism of the Holy Spirit in front of skeptical Pharisees and Sadducees; and it was spoken of before the time of Jesus' own water baptism, temptation, and three year ministry. (Matt. 3:1-12) It was spoken of by John as a wake-up call. If Jews were skeptical about John's message, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," then they would be ill prepared for receiving Jesus, who would baptize with fire (punishment), or baptize with the Holy Spirit (a blessing).

**The administration of Holy Spirit baptism would be by Jesus.**

Holy Spirit baptism would be more impressive than the water baptism which John administered<sup>14</sup>. It would be administered by one mightier than John, who could only baptize with water. It would be administered by one who would also baptize some in fire. This one would be Jesus, who later promised His Apostles He would fulfill John's prophecy, and baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). It is important to note that no one, other than Jesus, is said in scripture to baptize with the Holy Spirit. No man has this capability.

**Two cases where Holy Spirit Baptism took place.**

The two instances of Holy Spirit Baptism were isolated incidents, at two specific times. Other than these two times mentioned in the New Testament, there were no occurrences.

First, Holy Spirit baptism took place in Jerusalem, where it was promised to the Apostles. After Jesus was resurrected He spent forty days on earth. In Acts 1-2 we see where Jesus promised Holy Spirit baptism to the Apostles (Acts 1:4-8). Jesus said they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit within days of when He spoke. With the baptism they would receive power and be witnesses of Jesus. In Acts 2 the Apostles were in Jerusalem sitting in a place on the day of Pentecost. It says there was a "sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, ...then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." All of what Jesus promised to the Apostles was fulfilled here. They were in Jerusalem, they received power, and they witnessed of Jesus.

The purposes of Holy Spirit baptism upon the Apostles include the following. First, it empowered the Apostles with supernatural abilities. They would miraculously speak in foreign tongues (languages). This showed their power was beyond that of men. Second, it demonstrated Divine presence and Divine endorsement of what was taking place, which was the preaching of Jesus Christ. The preaching of Jesus and His resurrection, and requiring people to believe, repent, and be baptized in His name was new. Why should anyone accept it? Baptism of the Holy Spirit gave Divine endorsement or Divine credence to the message Peter and the other Apostles preached to the Jews.

Second, Holy Spirit baptism took place at the house of Cornelius. Just as Divine credence was given to the preaching of Jesus in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, it was

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<sup>14</sup> Matt. 3:11

also given when the gospel was preached to a non-Jew and his household. In Acts 10-11 we see where Peter was called by God to take the gospel to Cornelius. Cornelius was a Gentile, and if Jews were skeptical about whether God intended for Jews to be saved through Christ, they would be even more skeptical about whether the gospel should be taken to the Gentiles. Even Peter resisted God's command to teach a Gentile. So by necessity, Holy Spirit baptism took place at the house of Cornelius, during the course of Peter's sermon. This Holy Spirit baptism was called a "gift" (Acts 10:45; 11:17), and Peter said it was a gift like the one he and the Apostles received "at the beginning" (Acts 11:15-17). This point Peter makes proves that Holy Spirit baptism was an infrequent isolated event, which was not taking place at every conversion. He had to refer back to the "beginning" of his preaching to find a parallel incident.

For what purpose did Cornelius receive Holy Spirit baptism? It was to give Divine credence to what was taking place. Acts 11:18 says it caused Jews who heard about it to glorify God, and say, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

**Holy Spirit baptism confirmed the opportunity to be saved, but it did not, by itself, save anyone.**

Holy Spirit baptism confirmed the opportunity to be saved, but their salvation never came outside of their obedience to the Gospel of Christ, and Holy Spirit baptism was never the point at which they were forgiven of their sins.

When the first instance of Holy Spirit baptism happened in Acts 2, it proved the gospel was to be preached unto the Jews. When the second instance of Holy Spirit baptism happened in Acts 10-11, it proved the gospel was to be preached unto the Gentiles. In both instances the ones who received it spoke in tongues, and in both instances there were people who responded with amazement. In both instances its purpose was explained to the audience by Apostles. Its purpose was that God wanted all people, Jews and Gentiles, to hear Jesus Christ preached, and believe and obey Him. But Holy Spirit baptism itself never saved anyone outside of their obedience to the Gospel, nor was it evidence that anyone was saved at the point of Holy Spirit Baptism. In the case of Cornelius, even after Holy Spirit baptism occurred, Cornelius had to "hear words," whereby he and his house could be saved.<sup>15</sup> He could only be saved after he obeyed the "words" of the Gospel.

The baptism which is said to "save" (forgive) is water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> After Holy Spirit baptism took place in both instances, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was commanded.

**Water baptism is commanded, whereas Holy Spirit baptism is not.**

Never is there a command in scriptures for a person to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. However, it is promised.<sup>17</sup> Man has no control in administering Holy Spirit baptism. This is a baptism man could not administer even if he wanted to. Jesus controls it, and He administers it at His will. On the other hand, water baptism in the name of the Lord is commanded.<sup>18</sup> The Bible never commands Holy Spirit baptism, but rather the Bible

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 11:14

<sup>16</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:20-21

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 3:11 says Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:5 Jesus told the Apostles they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit baptism in a few days.

<sup>18</sup> Acts 2:38 Water baptism is commanded in both Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:47-48, after Holy Spirit

promises it. Therefore, man must never command others to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

**Holy Spirit Baptism does not take place today.**

Holy Spirit baptism took place only twice: first upon the Jews at Pentecost and then upon the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius. At no time and nowhere else did it take place in the New Testament. Paul wrote that the Gentiles were, as a people, sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16).

There is no promise, command, or reason for any further occurrence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Today we must trust what the Holy Spirit demonstrated on Pentecost and at the house of Cornelius. We must trust that no matter what our race is, we have been "granted repentance unto life." This means we all have the opportunity to obey the gospel of Christ, and be saved by God.

**Conclusion**

Baptism of the Holy Spirit was administered by Jesus upon the Apostles and upon the house of Cornelius. It empowered those who received it, but it did not save them outside of their obedience to the Gospel of Christ. It did, though, prove that all could be saved, both Jews and Gentiles, through the gospel of Christ. Its action, which took place only in the first century, still benefits us today.

**Discussion.**

1. How do we know Cornelius was not saved at the point of receiving Holy Spirit baptism?
2. How do we benefit today from the Holy Spirit baptisms which took place in the first century of the gospel?
3. How do we know we do not need Holy Spirit baptism to be re-enacted upon us today?

### **Lesson 5**

#### **The “Earnest” of the Holy Spirit**

**(Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; and Ephesians 1:3-14)**

The “earnest of the Spirit” is related to Christians in the scriptures. As in all Biblical things we must apply such blessings to our lives in a fashion which is defined by the scriptures.

#### **What is “earnest”?**

The word “earnest” is defined as “first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid.”<sup>19</sup> Its like a security deposit, a guarantee, or a proof of intentions.

When earnest is given by one side in a contract (agreement), it demonstrates they are “earnest” in fulfilling their full obligations spelled out by the contract. For instance, if one desires to purchase a property, he might make an offer with which he attaches a 5% earnest check. If the offer is accepted, the earnest check applies towards the purchase price. In this case the earnest check shows “earnestness” by the prospective buyer. If his offer is accepted, and he does not follow through with the purchase, he loses the earnest money. Therefore, “earnest,” which relates to an agreement, is meaningful.

#### **What is “the earnest of the Spirit”?**

What is it that has already been granted before we receive the full inheritance and “redemption of the purchased possession” (Eph. 1:3-14)? It would be all things done by the Holy Spirit to benefit a Christian to this point. Here are a few things which would represent an earnest. The Holy Spirit has given Christians an “earnest” in that He has already given us the opportunity to be saved, whether we are Jews or Gentiles.<sup>20</sup> The Holy Spirit has given those who obey the gospel the promised “gift,” which is all spiritual blessings one gets as he or she obeys the Gospel of Christ.<sup>21</sup> The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit makes intercession for Christians before God, with groanings which cannot be humanly uttered (Rom. 8:26-27). All of this means that while we live on earth, this side of Heaven, and this side of incorruption and immortality, we can receive part of what the Holy Spirit ultimately gives to those who are saved in Jesus Christ.

#### **How do we receive the “earnest of the Spirit”?**

We receive the earnest of the Spirit if we are in Christ. Those who are not in Christ have not received the earnest of the Spirit (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:20-22; Eph. 1:13-14). How does one get in Christ? One gets into Christ by obeying the Gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27).

#### **How do we know we receive the earnest of the Spirit?**

The blessings which are an “earnest” must be accepted by faith.<sup>22</sup> By faith we trust we can have salvation. By faith we trust we are forgiven when we obey the Gospel of Christ (Mark

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<sup>19</sup> Arndt and Gingrich, Greek-English Lexicon

<sup>20</sup> Both Jews and Gentiles are “granted repentance unto life” by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.  
See Lesson 4.

<sup>21</sup> Acts 2:38-39

<sup>22</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:7

16:16; Acts 2:38). By faith we trust the Holy Spirit is bearing witness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), and by faith we trust the Holy Spirit is making intercession for the saints of God (Rom. 8:26-27). If we live by faith in these things, we will also trust that God's final reward for us, "Heaven," will come in His time.

Could someone demand more than the "earnest" which is given by the Holy Spirit? Indeed, trusting the evidence of what God has already done for us is not enough for some people. God's evidence of truth does not give them satisfaction. To them the "earnest" is not sufficient to produce the faith which God requires.<sup>23</sup> They look for things not promised, such as physical evidence or a direct supernatural operation from God. They look for God to speak to them directly, to see a vision, to see a miracle performed, or to perform a miracle themselves, or to experience something like a bolt of lightning, or a burning within their bodies. They want "proof" beyond the earnest of the Spirit. But man is in no position to demand anything from God, much less to demand something beyond the "earnest of our inheritance" which God mercifully gives.

How did Paul know he was saved and that he could trust the other promises of God? Remember that Paul was saved, and he had faith in his salvation (Rom. 1:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:12). But what proved that he was saved? Paul's visions, miracles, and prophesies did not prove that Paul was personally saved. They proved that God could save anyone who obeyed the Gospel of Christ, but they did not prove that Paul was living by the Gospel. In fact, Paul said that his final reward could still be lost.<sup>24</sup> The way Paul knew he had salvation and the hope of everlasting life was because he knew the Gospel to be the truth, and he had obeyed the Gospel, and continued to live by it.

Paul's proof that he had the earnest of the Spirit was in the promises of God which were already fulfilled in his life, which were given through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had delivered some of these promises. He had baptized Jews and Gentiles, He had granted forgiveness through Christ, and He had borne witness of those who are children of God. And upon those promises which God already fulfilled, God assures everlasting life in Heaven. This is the proof Paul had of his daily salvation, and the proof that he had hope of eternal life. Paul knew this proof held true in his life because he committed his life to what God offered (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:12). Paul trusted that if he participated in the promises of God through Christ, he would receive what God promised. Paul accepted God's proof by faith, and so must we.

### **Conclusion**

The earnest of the Spirit assures us of things to come. By the "earnest," such as the forgiveness of sins, which the Holy Spirit has already given, we know God's other promised blessings await us after this life is over. The Holy Spirit comforts us by giving us an earnest of our inheritance.

### **Discussion**

1. How does the earnest of the Spirit give us hope?
2. How do we know we are saved as promised in Mark 16:16?
3. How do we know Heaven awaits those who are saved in Christ?
4. How can we demonstrate to others we have the earnest of the Spirit?

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<sup>23</sup> Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1

<sup>24</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:27

## **Lesson 6** **Sealed with the Spirit**

Christians are said to be “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). In fact this seal is said to be “the earnest of our inheritance.” What is this “seal?”

### **Look at the word “seal” as it is used in the Bible.**

It is generally a “mark” imposed by God by which God recognizes a Christian’s authenticity and ownership. In comparison, companies which manufacture things are careful to put their seal on everything they make, but only on that which represents them. The seal with which Christians are sealed is basically a Divine identification process, by which God recognizes who are His children. Look how the word “seal” is used in the Bible.

Ezek. 9:4 .....Mark or seal to show ownership of God's people.<sup>25</sup>

John 3:33 .....Those who receive, believe and obey the doctrine of God vouch for its truthfulness. They identify something as being true.

John 6:27 .....God showed His approval of Christ by miracles He wrought by him. Miracles were to the doctrine of Christ what a seal is to a written instrument, like a deed or a will.

Rom. 4:11 ...Seal of righteousness. Circumcision became the external authentication of the righteousness Abraham had by faith.

2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:19 Seal of righteous living. God positively knows the identity of His own.

Rev. 7:2-3 &

Rev. 9:4 .....God assured safety to His saints during plagues because His saints were sealed, marked, or positively identified.

Thus, the “seal” is a process of identification used by God. Those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit receive spiritual blessings through Christ (Eph. 1:3-14) and stand to inherit everlasting life. Also, they are identified by the Holy Spirit so as not to be judged among the unbelieving.

### **How are the children of God sealed by the Holy Spirit?**

As individuals, most of us want recognizable identification. Some do bizarre things to be identified as being extraordinary or unique. It is possible to be mistakenly identified by humans. We should not be surprised that others do not properly recognize our Christian identity. The world did not even properly identify God's own Son, Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup> Christians can be thankful that God takes care of our identification process. God tells us to seek recognition through Christ, as did the Apostle Paul.<sup>27</sup> God then comforts us by saying we are “sealed” (marked, identified) with the Holy Spirit. It is not some visible mark (tattoo, imprinted number “777,” special clothing, or pious look). It is a spiritual recognition, in that “The Lord knows those who are His” (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:19). If we are faithful in Christ, we are assured we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and God knows who we are.

God's children are identified by their heart's belief, their confession, their new birth

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<sup>25</sup> Vine's says Ezek. 9:4 uses the word “mark” in the same way “seal” is used in the N.T. (Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)

<sup>26</sup> John 8:19 “Ye neither know me, nor my Father”

<sup>27</sup> Gal. 6:17 Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

(baptism) and their righteous fruits; and they are sealed by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8; Matt. 10:32-33; Gal. 5:22-24; Rom. 8:16). It is not always recognized by men, but it is always seen by those who are Divine. Those who are counterfeit Christians are easily detected by the Holy Spirit.

### **What being “sealed” does not mean?**

In today’s language a seal can mean different things. We must be careful we are not making the seal of the Holy Spirit something it is not! In today’s language a “seal” can be a means of verification; like a sealed envelope, which means the contents have not been tampered with.<sup>28</sup> It can also mean that something is contained, or shut off, like vegetables preserved in a canning jar. God’s word does not teach these meanings apply to the idea of being sealed with the Spirit. The word “seal” could make us think Christians are tamper proof, and cannot be corrupted, because God has sealed them from the world. This is not true. Christians can be tampered with, and corrupted (Gal. 5:7; Eph. 4:30). One can be corrupted, and lose his or her seal of the Spirit.

### **Conclusion**

The seal with which Christians are sealed is basically a Divine identification process, by which God recognizes His children. The Holy Spirit seals (marks or identifies) faithful children of God.

### **Discussion**

1. Does God seal (mark) those who are His?
2. Does it prove we are sealed with the Spirit if we indicate some fruit of the Spirit?  
Why?

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<sup>28</sup> Rev. 5:1-5 The books were sealed, and no one except the Lamb was worthy to open. Matt. 27:66 The stone on Jesus’ tomb was sealed to validate it had not been tampered with.

**Lesson 7**  
**The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

The study of “The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit” is not just academic, to determine whether or not He can dwell in a Christian; it is a powerfully practical study to see how He must dwell in a Christian. We must work diligently for the Holy Spirit to dwell in each one of us. Let’s see how!

**The New Testament says the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians.**

- Rom. 8:11 “But ye are not of the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you”
- 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:16 “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.”
- 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:19 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim 1:14 “That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”

**What does it mean “to dwell in?”**

We can learn how the Spirit dwells in the Christian by studying how other persons or things “dwell in” another. Notice how the Father, Son, righteousness, and sin and other things can dwell in one. This will give us insight as to how the Holy Spirit dwells in one.

1. The Father dwells in Christians by one’s agreement with God. (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14-18)
2. The Father dwells in the Son by the Son’s agreement with the Father? (John 14:10; 17:20-22)
3. Christians dwell in the Father (and the Father in them) by love, confession of Jesus as God’s Son, and keeping His commandments. (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:24; 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:12-15)
4. Christ dwells in Christians by the Christian’s faith. (Eph. 3:17)
5. Christians dwell in the Son by eating of Him. (John 6:56)
6. Sin dwells in one as one commits sin? (Romans 7:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:18-20)
7. Truth dwells in Christians by their belief and practice. (2<sup>nd</sup> John 2)

We can see that for one thing to “dwell in” another means that they **agree in, participate in, or fellowship the same thing**. If the Father dwells in the Christian, and the Christian dwells in the Father, it means they are sharing in something, such as love, or truth, or righteousness. If we have love, the Father dwells in us (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:12). If we have faith, Christ dwells in us (Eph. 3:17). As one dwells in the Father, He does not sin, because sin does not dwell in the Father (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:6-10). As one fellowships sin, sin dwells in him. For one thing to “dwell in” another means they “participate in, or fellowship the same thing.”

**How does the Holy Spirit dwell in a Christian?**

The Christian is to be the dwelling place of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Study Lev. 26:1-12 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14-18. God set his tabernacle among his people, so He could dwell among his people. God does not dwell in this type of temple on earth today. God dwells in His people. In order for us to be the temple (dwelling place) of God, we must walk in harmony with God. The Holy Spirit “dwells in” a Christian as the Christian allows the Holy Spirit to have fellowship with Him in the righteousness of God. In this manner one’s body is called the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:19-20). This is opposed to

one's body being the temple of sin (fornication). In fact, God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit all dwell in the Christian as the Christian uses his body for their use. We each need to focus on giving all three Divine persons our bodies as a dwelling place for them.

As a human grows up he naturally has the spirit of man (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:11), and then at some point has the spirit of Satan (Eph. 2:2), and then, by God's grace, the spirit of sin can be replaced with the Spirit of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Some are content to merely have the spirit of man. God purposed us beyond this. "...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). Some are content to have the spirit of sin, "the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." (Eph. 2:1-3) These are condemned in their sins (Rom. 6:23). Some strive to be filled with the Spirit of God. They know the Holy Spirit and let Him live in them, and thereby He dwells in them.

**What "indwelling of the Holy Spirit" does NOT mean.  
Indwelling does not mean a "literal" indwelling.**

Just because Christ is said to dwell in a person, it does not mean that Jesus, who is on the right hand throne of God<sup>29</sup>, is personally in somebody. The same can be said about the Father and the Holy Spirit. Even though all three Divine beings are omnipresent<sup>30</sup>, their indwelling has to do with fellowshipping the children of God. Since they are omnipresent they are everywhere, but not with everyone in the sense of indwelling and fellowship (2<sup>nd</sup> John 9-11). All three are said to be with Christians (Phil. 4:5; Rom. 15:33; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:14). But, if a Christian ceases to be faithful, the indwelling ceases. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit do not abide in those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

To illustrate, a boy may grow up and be the "spittin' image" of his father, both in looks and behavior. Just because he reflects that a lot of his earthly father is in him, it does not mean his father is literally in him. Conversely, if the boy becomes delinquent, his earthly father may deny any blame for that behavior, and purport that what is in the boy came from elsewhere.

God wants our behavior to reflect the righteousness of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit's righteousness comes out of us, it's because it was in us. He dwells in us in the sense that his righteous traits are in us.

**Indwelling of the Spirit does not mean one has miraculous capabilities.**

Some believe that since the Holy Spirit is to dwell in them, they have supernatural powers against sin, they can automatically know scriptures, they can instantly understand scriptures, they will automatically do the right thing (God's will) in all matters, and they will make correct judgments in all physical matters of life, including business. It would be like the Holy Spirit personally getting inside of us and "taking charge." The Bible does not teach these supernatural things are involved in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible teaches that one should accomplish righteous things by "walking after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1-17). By this one is striving to have the Holy Spirit dwell in him as much as possible. If one reads and studies the word revealed by the Spirit in the Bible (1<sup>st</sup> Tim.

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<sup>29</sup> Heb. 1:3 Jesus "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

<sup>30</sup> Psalm 139:7 Man cannot flee from the presence of God.

4:13), and prayerfully and faithfully puts it to use, it will give them power in life over sin, and wisdom in decision making (James 1:5). But it does not guarantee they will not have ignorance in some things, and weaknesses of the flesh. Some of the Corinthians who had been washed, sanctified, and justified by the Spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:11) had to be told to “flee fornication” because their “body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:18-19). Our job as Christians is to work at having God’s Spirit dwell in us, and give no place to the devil (Eph. 4:27). This means we must embrace the fruit of the Spirit and put them to practice, and we must displace the unrighteousness of the devil. We cannot wait for a miracle in order for us to accomplish our daily spiritual success. We must “walk after the Spirit” by studying the word, praying, and obeying! By this, the Holy Spirit dwells in us.

### **Conclusion**

As Christians we must have the Holy Spirit dwell in us by knowing and fellowshipping the Holy Spirit. In regard to the fact that God has done all things necessary to make His indwelling possible; God’s gift of Christ, God’s revealed Word, and our redemption, we must not fail to have the Holy Spirit dwell in us.

The only dwelling place in which God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) dwells on earth is humans. Conversely the only dwelling place in which Satan dwells on earth is also humans. For whom will we be a dwelling place?

### **Discussion**

1. What role should the Holy Spirit have in one’s knowledge, and in decision making?
2. What’s more important; for a boy to grow up to reflect his earthly father’s presence in him, or for a boy to grow up and reflect the Holy Spirit’s presence in him? Explain.

**Lesson 8**  
**How the Holy Spirit Works in a Sinner's Conversion**

The Holy Spirit works in converting sinners by convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Jesus made a promise to His Apostles before He was crucified. He said He would send the Comforter, “and when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (John 16:7-11) The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, the one Jesus promised to His Apostles, and the Holy Spirit is the one who would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

**How does the Holy Spirit convince the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment?**  
The apostles of Jesus needed comfort. Little could they, by themselves, reprove the world of sin, perfectly teach the righteousness of God, and render judgment (condemnation) over evil. With Jesus gone from the earth, the apostles needed Divine help.

These three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment are addressed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convinces the world through the word of truth, which the Holy Spirit showed unto the Apostles, as He guided them into all truth (John 16:12-15). This same word of truth is recorded in the Bible. A sinner is to be converted in the following manner: by hearing the truth of God’s word one is convicted of sins (Acts 2:36-37; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:2); by hearing the truth of God’s word, one is instructed in righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17); and by hearing the truth of God’s word one is taught of God’s judgment, and one is prepared to stand justified before God, rather than condemned (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16).

Converts at Corinth are examples of sinners who were convinced of sin, righteousness, and of judgment to come. Paul wrote, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God.” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:11). Notice they were: (1) washed of their sins, (2) sanctified by righteousness, (3) justified rather than judged (condemned).

The Holy Spirit did not let the apostles down. He supplied what Jesus promised. And the Holy Spirit stills convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment in the same way today....through the word of truth, found in the Bible.

**How the Holy Spirit does not work in a sinner’s conversion.**

The Holy Spirit does not act directly upon people, changing their hearts, to cause their conversion. Someone might be waiting for a miracle to occur. There is no need to wait! The power of God has already been given through the Gospel of Christ<sup>31</sup>. The Holy Spirit has already done what needs to be done for each sinner. It was Divine action. He delivered God’s word to the Apostles and prophets in the first century so each one could be convicted of his or her sins by the word, and each one could be told by the word what to do to receive forgiveness by God. If one believes and obeys this word of truth, the Gospel<sup>32</sup>, he or she

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<sup>31</sup> Rom. 1:16 “The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation.”

<sup>32</sup> Mark 16:15-16 The gospel saves a person if it is believed and obeyed.

is saved. If one believes and obeys the Gospel, he or she is washed<sup>33</sup>, sanctified<sup>34</sup>, and justified in the name of the Lord, and by the Spirit of our God (1st Cor. 6:9-11). By this, the Holy Spirit has done His work of conversion through the power of the Gospel.

The question may arise, “How can man’s nature, which is sinful and fleshly, transform to follow the Spirit of God, without the aid of a miracle?” Or, “How can a natural heart (mind) become spiritual, without the aid of Divine supernatural intervention?” This troubles some who read 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:14, which says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The concern is that “Unless God helps a sinner with a miracle, he cannot possibly see beyond his natural heart to find spiritual truths.” The answer is this. Study the entire passage (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:1-16). If the heart (mind) of man looks only to that which is of this world (natural), it cannot know that which is spiritual. But if the heart will learn what the Spirit of God teaches (the word of God spoken by the Apostles and found in the Bible), his heart will become spiritual. This means if we will receive and know the things which are “freely given to us of God,” we can have spiritual discernment and saving faith. Jesus tells us we can decide if we will have this willingness to know the truth (Matt. 13:9; Luke 8:15). Humans are already made with this ability to decide and to choose, whereas a personal desire and love for the truth is never forced upon us, not even by a miracle. In fact, we are going to be judged by what we choose to love (2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 2:10-12).

There were miracles involved which made the Gospel and conversion available to us. There was the resurrection of Jesus, and the Divine inspiration (which gave the Apostles and prophets the knowledge to record the Gospel in the first century AD). But we each decide whether or not we believe the Gospel, “wherein is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). When we decide to follow spiritual things revealed by God, we can judge spiritual things by that which is spiritual (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:13). These actions to seek, love, believe, and obey the truth are decided by each of us, and these actions are not enacted upon us by a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

### **Who will the Gospel of Christ, which the Holy Spirit revealed, save?**

The Gospel will save those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness”<sup>35</sup>, those who love the truth<sup>36</sup>, and those who are spiritual in their desire for those things which God reveals<sup>37</sup>. These are the ones who will “gladly receive the truth”<sup>38</sup>, believe the Gospel and obey it. The burden to do these things is upon every sinner. And whether or not these are done is dependent upon the sinner. The Holy Spirit completed His part to bring about man’s conversion in the first century. Now it is man’s duty to respond. Peter told the Jews on Pentecost, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation”(Acts 2:30). He was telling them to act upon what the Holy Spirit had revealed. All sinners who believe and obey the Gospel will be saved.

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<sup>33</sup> Ephesians 5:26 The church is cleansed by the washing of the water by the word.

<sup>34</sup> John 17:17 One is sanctified with the truth, which is revealed by the Spirit of truth.

<sup>35</sup> Matt. 5:6 “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

<sup>36</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 2:10-12 .”.them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth,  
that they might be saved.”

<sup>37</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9-15 .”.he that is spiritual judges all things.”

<sup>38</sup> Acts 2:41 “They that gladly received his word were baptized.”

**Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit works in a sinner's conversion. Through the Gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit has reproved the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit converts sinners, so that as Christians they are washed, sanctified, and justified.

**Discussion**

1. How would the Holy Spirit be a comforter to the Apostles? (John 16:5-15)
2. Some people say the Holy Spirit directly speaks to them. What, if anything, would a person need to hear from the Holy Spirit, which is not found in the Bible?

## **Lesson 9**

### **How the Holy Spirit Works in a Christian's Life "Led by the Spirit," "Filled with the Spirit," and "Fruit of the Spirit"**

#### **Introduction**

Indeed the Holy Spirit works in a Christian's behalf. We cannot estimate the amount of continuing work which the Holy Spirit does. We do not know all of what the Holy Spirit is doing; only what He has revealed. We assume, like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit "is working until now" (John 5:17 NAS). Christians must have faith in what the Holy Spirit, along with the Father and Son, is doing for each Christian's life and salvation. We must be careful not to limit the Holy Spirit by our human perspective. He has revealed some of His work.

Much of the Holy Spirit's work has already been completed. Already He has revealed God's word which is recorded in the Bible, through which one is saved, and through which Christians are instructed by God (Eph. 3:3-5). Already He has given the spiritual blessings which come through Christ (Acts 2:38). He continues to grant these blessings to those in Christ.

The Holy Spirit also seals (marks or identifies) the Christian (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:16), and the Holy Spirit makes intercession for the Christian (Rom. 8:26-27).

In this lesson we will study three areas of the Holy Spirit's work.

#### **(1) Christians are to be led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17).**

This passage helps Christians determine where they stand with God. Those who are led by the Spirit of God have certain characteristics. They are not condemned by the flesh, but rather they are free from the law of sin and death. They mind the things of the Spirit rather than the things of the flesh, thus being spiritually minded rather than carnally minded. They are spiritually alive unto God through Christ, and they are dead to the deeds of the flesh. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Those who say they are led by the Spirit should have the characteristics listed in Romans 8:1-17. If they do not, then they are not being led by the Spirit, but rather they are being led by the flesh.

How is one led by the Holy Spirit? One is led by the Spirit by following the words through which the Holy Spirit guides. These words are not given by a "voice within us," or through direct revelation to us from the Holy Spirit. These words are given through the Bible. Jesus promised His Apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. "Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." (John 16:13-15). This passage tells us how the Holy Spirit guides. He would reveal Christ's words unto the Apostles who, along with other prophets in the first century AD, would preach and record these words. These words are the Gospel of Christ (Eph. 3:4-6). If anyone follows these words, then they are "led by the Spirit."

Will we "feel" the Holy Spirit, and therefore be led by the way we "feel?" Most have heard expressions such as: "I feel like this is what the Spirit is leading me to do," or "I'm waiting for the Spirit to lead me in this matter." These expressions leave the conclusion that some

people have a direct connection with the Holy Spirit. Somehow the proper decision will instantly dawn on them as it is given directly by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not lead in this way. The Holy Spirit does not give us supernatural feelings or instincts. But He does give us knowledge through the Bible. If we gain this knowledge given in the Bible by the Holy Spirit, then we are led by what we know, and not by how we feel (Prov. 14:12). If we are led by this knowledge of the Bible, we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we can make wise decisions in all areas of life (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 1:8; 2 Pet. 1:3).

Will we be led by the Holy Spirit in a physical sense? Will we have some inexplicable urge to change our course - to turn left instead of turning right, or to take the elevator down instead of up? There may seem to be a Divine undercurrent when certain circumstances occur. Is miraculous Divine intervention the cause of these things? How about when a sinner has a chance meeting with a Gospel teacher? Is this chance meeting Spirit led? It is certainly God's will that Christians teach sinners the Gospel, and Christians should seize every opportunity to teach others. But does the Holy Spirit override a Christian's voluntary decisions, and corral his direction? The Holy Spirit has never operated on "gut feelings," or "navigational overrides." In the Bible certain ones who had gifts of the Holy Spirit were verbally told by the Holy Spirit where to go (Peter in Acts 10:19-20; Paul in Acts 13:1-4). But today, in the absence of these gifts of the Holy Spirit, this does not occur (See Lesson 10). We are not physically corralled by the Holy Spirit. When we make wrong turns which prove to be good turns, and when by chance we meet a sinner who wants to hear the Gospel, we should not conclude it is miraculous navigation employed by the Holy Spirit. If that is the case, then we are not responsible for where we may end up! How many have said job decisions, financial decisions, and even marriage decisions were directed by the Holy Spirit? When those decisions result in disaster, whose fault is it? It is not the Holy Spirit's fault, because every individual makes decisions and introduces himself to others based on what he knows and on what he desires. This is called free will. We must understand opportunities may await us even when we make the "wrong turn." Christians are among a world of sinners so we can let our lights shine (Matt. 5:16). We will have opportunities to teach others. No matter what our circumstances may be, whether or not we "make the right turn," we must have faith and be thankful that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). We are not led by the Holy Spirit in a physical sense.

**(2) Christians are to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18-20).**

Being filled with the Spirit can have two applications in the New Testament.

The first and basic application is for every Christian to have the influence of the Holy Spirit as their guide in life. This is where one is having God rule them as the word of Christ dwells in them richly. Compare Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:15-17 to see how the parallel passages relate these three expressions: (1) "be filled with the Spirit," (2) "let the peace of God rule in your hearts," and (3) "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." The basic application of "being filled with the Spirit" means that Christians are seeking to have more of the righteousness of God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) rule them. Christians may learn God's righteousness through the Bible.

"Being filled with the Spirit" is related to being led by the Spirit. One cannot be filled with the Spirit if he or she is not led by the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit it means they faithfully employ what they have learned from God's word in the Bible. This makes a Christian Godly, Christ-like, and filled with the Spirit. Every Christian should seek this more each day.

"Being filled with the Spirit" is contrasted in the Bible with being "drunk with wine, wherein is excess" (Eph. 5:18). Otherwise put, "Being filled with the Spirit" is in contrast to being filled with the spirit of the world. Most in the world chose the latter. The surrounding verses teach that following the Spirit's word keeps a Christian from sin (Eph. 5:1-20). Verses 8-9 say, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." God does not want Christians to sin. In order to conquer sin God tells Christians to "be filled with the Spirit."

According to Ephesians 5:1-20, we are filled with the Spirit as we "understand," "speak," "sing," and "walk" according to the will of the Lord.

The second application in the New Testament of "being filled with the Spirit" has to do with the imparting of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. It is used this way in Acts 2:4; where the Apostles "were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." These gifts will be studied in the lesson following and includes when they occurred, who had them, and why they were given.

**(3) Christians are to bear the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:13-26).**

Christians who subscribe to being "led by the Spirit" will bear the Holy Spirit's fruit. The Apostle Paul wrote, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-24). It is important to define every one of these, because they are descriptive of the Holy Spirit, of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ the Son. This fruit sets one apart from the world.

The "fruit of the Spirit" needs definition so we can bear it. Here are some definitions along with scriptures to help show their application.<sup>39</sup>

- ◆ **Love** is defined by God's action in giving His own Son as the sinner's sacrifice (John 3:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:4-7).
- ◆ **Joy** is eternal joy or delight found through Christ (Heb. 12:2).
- ◆ **Peace** relates harmony within a person (Phil. 4:7), between peoples (Eph. 2:15), but especially between people and God (Rom. 5:1).
- ◆ **Longsuffering** is the painstaking efforts one would employ in helping another, such as God giving the sinner a chance to be saved, and allowing the sinner time to repent (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9).
- ◆ **Gentleness** has to do with kindness, such as what God had towards sinners to whom He offered Christ (Eph. 2:7).
- ◆ **Goodness** is being good in character and in effect, such as God and Christ are in everything (Matt. 19:16-17). That which is morally honorable, pleasing to God, and therefore beneficial (Gal. 6:10).
- ◆ **Faith** "is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen"(Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17), and one led by the Spirit will keep increasing in faith in God throughout life.
- ◆ **Meekness** denotes one who is gentle or mild, as Christ displays as our master (Matt. 11:28-30).
- ◆ **Temperance** is strength or self-control, as used by Paul in his defense of the

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<sup>39</sup> Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words was used for these definitions and cross references.

gospel, as he spoke before the Roman Governor Felix (Acts 24:24-25).

The fruit of the Holy Spirit comes only from being planted within by the Holy Spirit. From merely a human standpoint we cannot, of ourselves, turn on or fake this joy, peace or goodness, etc. This fruit must be planted in us through the work of the Holy Spirit. It must be learned of Him! This fruit cannot be explained in the absence of the Holy Spirit and His work in us!

### **Conclusion**

The Holy Spirit works in the life of a faithful Christian. Each Christian must examine himself or herself, asking, "Am I bearing the fruit of the Spirit?" We can be "led by the Spirit" and "filled with the Spirit," by believing and obeying what the Spirit has revealed for us in the New Testament of the Bible.

### **Discussion**

1. How do we determine which fills us: The Holy Spirit or the spirit of the world?
2. Should children of God be carnally minded one day, and spiritually minded the next, constantly going back and forth between the two? Explain
3. How can Christians be led by the Spirit every day?
4. Can the Christian close his Bible and wait to see where the Spirit leads him? Why?
5. How does singing, as taught in Ephesians 5:18-19, fill one with the Spirit?

**Lesson 10**  
**The "Gifts" of the Holy Spirit. (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12-14)**

Some Christians, especially the Apostles and prophets in the first century of the church, had gifts of the Spirit. These were miraculous abilities given to them through the Holy Spirit. For example, the Apostles miraculously spoke other languages when the Holy Spirit filled them (Acts 2:4). Non-Christians were amazed when these gifts were manifested (Acts 2:4-8). Christians in the first century were commanded to desire gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:1).

These gifts served their purpose at the beginning of the Gospel, and are no longer given today. In this lesson let's see what they were, the purpose of these gifts, who had them, and how long they would take place.

**What were the gifts of the Holy Spirit? (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:1-11)**

These are gifts which were supernatural. They were abilities which were beyond what humans could do naturally.<sup>40</sup> When Paul wrote the church at Corinth, he said he would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. If Christians today do not want to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts, they should read the words of Paul.

The gifts of the Spirit came from the Holy Spirit. They were powerful, they glorified God, they promoted Christ, and they were given to profit all. There were nine in all; here is a brief definition of each.

1. Word of Wisdom (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:8). Thayer explains, “Knowledge of the Divine plan, previously hidden, of providing salvation for men by the expiatory (“atoning” - cl) death of Christ...The ability to discourse eloquently of this wisdom.”<sup>41</sup> In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:6-8 Paul spoke of the wisdom he had through the Holy Spirit. This gave him knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, which was previously hidden from the world by God. Formerly the knowledge was contained by God in a mystery. Through this gift of wisdom Paul could now understand the mystery of the Gospel. Without this gift of the Spirit, the mystery would remain unknown to man.
2. Word of Knowledge (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:8). “A deeper, more perfect and enlarged knowledge of this religion;<sup>42</sup> such as belongs to the more advanced” (Thayer). Paul’s knowledge of God’s will came supernaturally through the Holy Spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8-9).
3. Faith (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:9). This was not the saving faith each Christian is required to have (Rom. 5:1). This faith miraculously stepped up the capabilities one had, which surpassed human abilities (Matt. 17:14-21).
4. Gifts of Healing (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:9). The ability to miraculously cure physical handicaps or diseases. These healings were not marginal improvements in health; they were dramatic! There was no doubt that the cause of the healing was supernatural. No follow-up treatments or therapy were necessary. Peter healed a lame man in Jerusalem (Acts 3:1-10).
5. Working of Miracles (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:10). The ability to perform supernatural feats. Undoubtedly miracles exceeded nature, and human abilities. A test for determining if something is a miracle is to rule out the process of nature as being the cause. Although amazing, it is not a miracle when flowers bloom and when children are born. Indeed the creation of nature required miraculous Divine action, and the laws of nature are governed by God. However,

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<sup>40</sup> What humans do naturally includes giving birth or demonstrating extraordinary strength when one’s adrenalin kicks in. These do not require a miraculous “gift.”

<sup>41</sup> Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1977, *wisdom* (“*sophia*” - Greek), p 582.

<sup>42</sup> Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1977, *knowledge* (“*gnosis*” - Greek), p 119.

miracles bypass the laws of nature. If something is accomplished which bypasses the laws of nature, it is a miracle. Miracles were self-evidenced. People did not have to be told they saw something supernatural. Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-42). Paul caused blindness to come upon Elymas, who tried to turn one away from the faith (Acts 13:6-12). Paul withstood deadly viper bites (Acts 28:3-6).

6. Prophecy (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:10). The ability to speak the mysteries of God for man's edification, exhortation, and comfort (1<sup>st</sup>. Cor. 14:2-3). Basically, one who prophesied spoke the will of God which the Holy Spirit directly gave him (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21).
7. Discerning of Spirits (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:10). The ability to know if one was speaking the truth. Peter knew Ananias was lying (Acts 5:1-3).
8. Tongues (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:10). Actual languages of the earth spoken by those who had never studied them. It was not indiscernible babbling. When the Apostles spoke in tongues, they were able to miraculously speak in foreign languages (Acts. 2:4-11). When a tongue was spoken it had to be done in an orderly fashion (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:26-33); it must be because someone would be there to understand it, otherwise the one speaking must remain silent (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:27-28). Tongue speaking took place on Pentecost (Acts 2:4), at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48), and in churches (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:26). It was done so unbelievers might hear it, and believe the message to be from God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:22). Tongue speaking was highly promoted at Corinth. But Paul taught the Corinthians to be limited in their use of tongue speaking.
9. Interpretation of Tongues (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:10). The ability for one to know and tell what was said in a language naturally unknown to the person (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:26-28).

#### **What was the purpose of the “Gifts of the Holy Spirit”**

One purpose of the gifts of the Spirit was to confirm the word. The Apostles and prophets were mere men, but the Gospel message was from God. How would the hearers of their message be impressed that the message was from God and not from mere man? It was through the demonstration of spiritual gifts which they and certain others had (Mark 16:15-20; Heb. 2:1-4). A demonstration of obvious supernatural power confirmed that the word was from God. Those who saw the gifts were amazed. (Acts 2:7; 3:3-10; 5:11; 13:11-12) It gave them the opportunity to believe the Gospel of Christ, which, outside of God's prophets, was nowhere to be found.

Another purpose of the gifts of the Spirit was to teach and edify the church with the Gospel of Christ. At this time there was no complete written word as we now have in the Bible. The word was carried in “earthen vessels,” which means it was carried by the Apostles and prophets (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:7). The Apostles and prophets spoke the gospel so people could understand all of God's will (Eph. 3:3-6; 5:17). These gifts would help each Christian to fully develop in Christ, and help each Christian to unite with other members of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-14).

In all, the use of Spiritual gifts was to demonstrate the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Corinthians were warned to be mature in their usage (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:20). They must not assert self or confuse others (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:26-33). Today's “holy rollers” who jump, scream, mumble and mutter confusions are not showing that the Holy Spirit is in them. They are demonstrating just the opposite.

#### **Who had the Gifts of the Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit did not give His gifts or assistance in the same way to every person. In fact, only Jesus Himself had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Among men, the Apostles had the gifts and they had the ability to impart some gifts to others. It was up to the Holy Spirit as to how many gifts and which gifts the Apostles would impart to others (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:8-11). Some who had spiritual gifts were said to be “full of the Holy Spirit,” and others could see the power of the Holy

Spirit in them. (Peter in Acts 4:8; Stephen in Acts 7:55).

Among men, only Apostles could impart the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Notice Philip had the gift of prophecy and miracles at Samaria, but he could not impart these gifts to others because he was not an Apostle. Apostles had to arrive to accomplish this. When the Apostles Peter and John arrived, they laid hands on Christians, who received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:12-19)<sup>43</sup>. So we see among men who received gifts of the Holy Spirit. It was the Apostles, and those upon whom the Apostles laid their hands. No one else received the gifts, and none other than the Apostles could impart them by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The Duration of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.**

The gifts of the Spirit were necessary, and they were to be in effect until the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel became completely available (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8-13). Once the good news was confirmed and recorded as scripture (Heb. 2:1-4), the miraculous gifts would no longer be needed. Paul said love (charity) would never fail, but spiritual gifts such as prophecies, tongues, and knowledge would cease or vanish away. So, at the point at which the knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel was complete, Christianity had matured beyond the need for gifts of the Spirit. The gifts were only needed during the infancy (childlike stage) of Christianity. However, faith, hope, and charity (love) would always be needed. The Gospel was completely revealed and recorded as the first century of Christianity drew to a close (Jude 3-4). This was when the gifts ceased.

The Corinthians thought, like some today, that we must have modern “gifts of the Holy Spirit” to show a higher level of religious maturity. The brethren at Corinth preferred to emphasize the “gifts of the Holy Spirit” to demonstrate their success as Christians. They missed the true marks of maturity. God wanted them to emphasize faith, hope, and love. The gifts were used, rightfully, in the childlike stage of church history. We would not be “stepping up” our faith to use them, but rather we would be “stepping down” in faith. Centering on “faith, hope, and love” are marks of those full-grown in Christ.

Do we have gifts of the Spirit today? We must ask, “Who would be capable of having them? Are there any living Apostles? Are there any living people upon whom the Apostle laid their hands.” No! “Is there any ‘new’ revelation which needs to be confirmed?” No! By the qualifications given in the New Testament, there is no one today who meets the qualifications to receive the gifts of the Spirit. Today there is no reason for the gifts, and there are no personnel qualified to use them.

### **Conclusion**

Gifts of the Holy Spirit were miraculous abilities given to man by the Holy Spirit. The gifts were used to confirm the Gospel of Christ spoken by the Apostles and prophets of the New Testament, and the gifts edified Christians in the infancy of the Gospel. Spiritual gifts lasted until the completion of the writing of the New Testament around the close of the first century. With that completion we have the confirmed and recorded will of God through Christ. The need for gifts of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled and concluded at that time.

### **Discussion**

- 1) The gifts of the Spirit included the ability to perform miracles. Would the common birth of a baby be one such miracle? Why?
- 2) Some claim to have gifts of the Holy Spirit today. They will likely have stories or personal experiences to support their claims. When asked for proof of their “gifts” they never perform

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<sup>43</sup> Acts 19:1-7 shows the Apostle Paul laying hands on the Ephesians and imparting the ability to speak in tongues and prophesy.

their “gift.” Never! Why is this? It is because they cannot do what the Lord has not authorized. But, in all sincerity, they may try to justify themselves.

- A. They may say, “You are wrong to try the Lord.” Answer: “We believe the Lord. We are not trying the Lord. We are trying you!” (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:12)
- B. They may say, “If God wants to give someone a miraculous gift, who are you to deny it?” Answer: “False apostles and false teachers need to be identified and refused.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:12-15) God did not leave us ignorant concerning spiritual gifts, or without the ability to examine those who make such claims. By the authority of God we can deny that others have such gifts (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8-13). Certainly we cannot deny that God can do what He wants. But God told us in the Bible what He wants in regard to gifts of the Holy Spirit, and it is necessary for us to uphold His will.
- C. They may say, “I am not lying about what happened! Are you calling me a liar?!” (after telling a story about a healing, or a story about supernatural strength being exhibited - like one man picking up an automobile to save someone). Answer: “Yes, something extraordinary may have happened. Let’s examine why it happened.” No one is necessarily arguing with good results, or that something extraordinary may have happened. What is being questioned is the cause. If the results were good, then give God the praise! When God has providentially accomplished something through natural means, it is God that should be thanked (James 1:17). But just because we have not found the explanation does not mean we should call it a miracle. It may be that we have not found the natural explanation, yet! This is not unusual because man, who has yet to scratch the surface on explaining God’s natural creation, may never be able to explain something caused by nature. But we must not misrepresent God. Phenomenal things happen. Sometimes they are hard to believe, helpful, exciting, and even entertaining! But they are not because someone has a gift of the Holy Spirit.

**Lesson 11**  
**Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:22-37)**

This subject strikes fear in the hearts of many, when they read that “the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men” (Matt. 12:31). To blaspheme means, “to speak reproachfully, rail at, revile, calumniate.”<sup>44</sup> The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed. In this lesson we will study the context in which Jesus made that statement and study its meaning.

**The context of Matt. 12:22-37 shows the Pharisees’ desperation to discredit Jesus.** There was a man brought to Jesus who was possessed with a devil, which caused the man to be blind and dumb. Jesus cast the devil out of the man, making him both see and speak. When it was told to the Pharisees, they said, “This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.”<sup>45</sup> Even in the face of a great miracle, the Pharisees chose not to accept the righteousness of God through Jesus. Jesus used three lessons to prove He did not cast out the devil by the power of Beelzebub.

First, why would Satan cast out Satan? This would mean that Satan was divided against himself. Satan, who prides himself on success, would never operate on this basis. If Jesus did do it by the Spirit of God, then God’s kingdom was coming to them, and the Pharisees were resisting it.

Second, the Pharisees own children boasted success in casting out devils. What Jesus did was greater against Satan than what the Pharisees’ children had done. If the Pharisees were correct about Jesus, what would this prove about the Pharisees’ children?

Third, how could Jesus win the possessed man for the sake of God, unless He first removed Satan. Jesus said, “How can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except He first bind the strong man?”

Jesus well demonstrated that neither the Pharisees’ logic or their hearts were credible. There is a great irony concerning the Pharisees. In their own eyes, the Pharisees were exemplary righteous people of God, who praised God and the Holy Spirit. Jesus proved just the opposite.<sup>46</sup> Instead of being righteous before God, they were evil, and their words proved it. Jesus had made a blind man see. These Pharisees could see, yet they were blind!

Also, Jesus had made the same man speak. These Pharisees could speak, but they spoke sinfully! By their desperation to discredit Jesus, they were infringing on a point of no return. Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is a point of no return. Up to this moment, through envy and self promotion they attacked Jesus, cutting Him down to the lowest point possible. They said Jesus was evil, being empowered by Satan. Their slanderous words about Jesus were malicious and self serving. The Pharisees did not intend to slander the Holy Spirit, but they were not holding back in slandering Jesus. But unwittingly they indirectly called the Holy Spirit a devil, because the Holy Spirit was the empowerment of

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<sup>44</sup> Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 1977, *blaspheme* (“blasphemeo” - *Greek*), p 119.

<sup>45</sup> Beelzebub (also spelled Baalzebub) was literally “lord of flies”(Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, 1978, p 88), a name which once referred to a god of the Philistines in Ekron (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 1:1ff). The Jews in the time of Jesus used the name in reference to Satan.

<sup>46</sup> Matt. 23 Jesus later contradicted the Pharisees self image with explicit description. He called them self-righteous, self serving hypocrites who were not headed to heaven.

## *Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit*

Jesus' actions (in casting out the devil). The Pharisees had come woefully close to directly attacking the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave a grave warning. "The blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven men."

Jesus further gives a related warning about the use of the mouth, because the mouth bespeaks a man's heart. If they said evil things it meant they had an evil heart, and at judgment they must give account before God for every idle word (Matt. 10:34-37).

### **What is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?**

Basically, it is deliberately calling the Holy Spirit, "Satan," "the devil," or "unclean" (Mark. 3:28-30). Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is deliberately assigning the Holy Spirit as being "evil."

### **Who blasphemes the Holy Spirit?**

For most people this is practically unimaginable. Some worry they have done it. If it bothers one, thinking he or she may have offended the Holy Spirit, then it is not them. For those who are guilty will never care what the Holy Spirit thinks. If one is the least interested in what God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit thinks, it is not them (Matt. 7:7-8). If one does not know of God, as the Athenians, it is not them, and they can still repent (Acts 17:23-30). It is not those who have commonly sinned against the will of God, for God says they can be forgiven. Even those who crucified the Christ could be forgiven (John 3:16; Acts 2:38-39). It is not those who have blasphemed God through ignorance, because Paul did, and he was forgiven (1st Tim. 1:13). It is not those who have resisted the Holy Spirit, for Stephen prayed forgiveness for those who had done this (Acts 7:51, 60). Those guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit may not have even included the people whom Jesus warned, although they came woefully close. In all these cases the door of salvation is still open, and forgiveness is offered through Christ. Otherwise, why give the warning if there is no hope? One may be guilty of numerous sins, which condemns one's soul and causes him to be in a lost state, but it may not involve the unpardonable blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The above mentioned cases can take place without being guilty of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit to which Jesus said, "it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

### **Conclusion**

The one guilty of "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit," the unpardonable sin, is someone who has a deliberate mindset, which in calculated fashion, blasphemes against the Holy Spirit. They purposely disrespect God's Holy Spirit, and slander him. For them, no pardon will ever be given. Can we judge who has come to this point? No. Can we prevent ourselves from coming to this point? Yes!

**Lesson 12**  
**The Holy Spirit: Then and Now (A Summary)**

There is a difference in what the Holy Spirit does now among people in comparison to what He did around the time of the first century of the church. This is a review lesson so we can clearly see what to expect and know what to do in respect to the Holy Spirit. Passages of scripture will be supplied with new points being made in this lesson. Otherwise refer to the previous lessons for points made in this summation, as they were omitted for the sake of flow and space.

**The Holy Spirit Then, in the first century of the Church.**

Around the time of the first century (AD), the Holy Spirit was making His presence abundantly known. What an interesting and eventful time. The Holy Spirit caused the virgin Mary to conceive the Christ child. He was present when John completed the water baptism of Jesus. Holy Spirit baptism was upon the Apostles on Pentecost, and again on the household of Cornelius, who were Gentiles. As a result the Apostles spoke in tongues and prophesied, and Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues. This baptism proved that God allowed Jews and Gentiles to repent and be saved through Jesus Christ.

It was exciting for some to witness these actions of the Holy Spirit and to be promised the gift of all blessings through Jesus. Additionally some rejoiced to be sealed (marked or identified) by the Holy Spirit, knowing that He bears witness with the Christian's spirit, verifying that each Christian is a child of God. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for Christians who pray to God concerning their infirmities. For the Holy Spirit knows that Christians cannot fully pray as they ought, so He makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Through the Holy Spirit the Apostles and prophets had remarkable capabilities witnessed by those who heard them. The Apostles and prophets could speak God's previously unrevealed gospel, and they could confirm this gospel with signs and wonders. This new gospel had to be confirmed with miracles because there was no written record of it. They spoke in unstudied languages, they healed handicapped people, and they raised the dead. Christians, whom the Apostles had laid their hands upon, had certain gifts of the Holy Spirit such as: tongues, wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, miracles, and healings. By these gifts they were able to grow in the word of God, and by this word they were built up in faith. Again the signs and wonders confirmed that what was being taught was from God through the Holy Spirit. Unbelieving visitors at worship services could see an assembly of those who were saved, joyful in Christ, in orderly worship, learning more of the will of God, and living by it. The demonstration of the Holy Spirit's gifts were not a side attraction, used to lure audiences. They were used to the extent that it would edify the body of Christians and confirm the word. The goal was not entertainment but rather it was salvation and growth through the New Testament of Christ. We do not see where faith healings, miracles, and tongue speaking were advertised as a show. But we see where Christ was promoted constantly.

Not everyone was excited about what the Holy Spirit was doing in the first century. Many opposed Jesus' works and miracles, as He was led by the Holy Spirit. Many opposed the teaching of prophets such as Stephen, thereby resisting the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51). Many opposed walking after the Spirit because they preferred walking after the flesh. Yet many of these people in the first century knew that events (enacted by the Holy Spirit) were being done. It was notable in their lives. But they chose to resist the work of the Holy Spirit,

and often persecuted those who were Christians.

### **The Holy Spirit Now**

Some people adamantly believe the Holy Spirit does all the things today which He did around the time of the first century. The Holy Spirit does continue to work today. But He does not do everything He did in the first century. The Holy Spirit may end a work.<sup>47</sup> In parallel, God ended His work with creation (Gen. 2:2). Jesus ended His earthly service to the Father (John 19:30). We do not see these “ended” works recur today. It should not disturb us if the Holy Spirit had a work in the first century which does not recur today.

What does the Holy Spirit do today? Today, the Holy spirit continues to grant the blessings of Christ to every sinner who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit continues to seal every faithful Christian and bear witness that they are the children of God. The Holy Spirit continues to make intercession for Christians who pray to the Father. The Holy Spirit communes (fellowships) with Christians, just as the Father and Son do. We know the Holy Spirit continues in these things because it is promised to every person who is in Christ.

Today, the Holy Spirit does not cause virgins to conceive, as He did with Mary. He does not directly speak to people so they can know God’s word and prophecy, as He did with the Apostles and prophets. He guided the Apostles into all truth and left no gospel truths unrevealed. These truths are written in the New Testament, and those who seek God’s truth can read and understand it. The Holy Spirit does not give gifts such as tongues, wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, miracles, and healings to Christians as He did in the first century. They have ceased and vanished as promised. That was the design. When the Apostles, and those upon whom the Apostles laid their hands died, the gifts ceased.

### **What do we miss seeing which the 1st Century church saw.**

We miss seeing some of the events which the Holy Spirit enacted in the first century. We also miss seeing some of the things which took place before then. In this life we will not see a flood judge the wicked of the world. We will not see the parting of the Red Sea or the halting of the waters of the Jordan River. We will not see the tumbling of the walls of Jericho. We will not see a child born conceived not of a man. We will not see Jesus live on the earth nor will we see Him crucified. We will not see the Apostles speak in tongues or perform signs and wonders. We will not see these things, but by faith we know we profit from them. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2nd Cor. 5:7).

Someone might ask, “If God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit gave gifts unto the church, and we are the church today, then why do we not have all the gifts given to the early church?” Some even demand that the Holy Spirit give us what He gave the first century Christians. But those things, He chose to put in the foundation of the church, not in us (Eph. 2:19-22). The early church also got to see the judgment of God instantly pronounced and miraculously executed upon Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). We do not see anyone miraculously discern who the hypocrites are, and pronounce their immediate deaths. The Holy Spirit chose the early church period as the time in which He would bestow gifts and judgments through the Apostles and prophets.

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<sup>47</sup> The Holy Spirit may end a work. In parallel, God ended His work with creation (Gen. 2:2). Jesus ended his earthly service to the Father (John 19:30). We do not see these “ended” works recur today.

Should we, as Christians, be disappointed or somehow ashamed that we do not have gifts of the Holy Spirit? Certainly not. We do miss seeing some things, but we are not missing out on anything we need. We are not lacking any eternal blessings. If we are in Christ, we are led by the Spirit, we are the children of God, and we have all the riches of God by being His heirs (Rom. 8:1-17). The blessings we have in Christ are innumerable and incomparable. Who could be disappointed or ashamed because they received all these blessings but did not personally see or perform a miracle?

### **Conclusion**

Today, we need to put our faith in the word of God which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit through the Apostles and prophets and recorded in the Bible. Our job as Christians is to live by the Gospel, which has the power to save, to sanctify, to justify, and to build us up (Rom. 1:16; John 17:17; Rom. 5:1; Acts 20:32). Today, we need to believe everything the Holy Spirit has completed in the past and trust those things He is now doing for us (The same is true in respect to the Father and the Son). We must not childishly waste our time demanding or promoting abilities which are not for us (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8-13).

### **Lesson 13**

## **What About Phenomenal Experiences Attributed to the Holy Spirit?**

Stories and experiences are told by people concerning phenomenal happenings which they believe the Holy Spirit caused. People have overcome illnesses, supposedly come back from the dead, employed unbelievable strength, or supposedly heard the Holy Spirit speak to them. Since they have personally experienced something extraordinary, they say the Holy Spirit must still be working as He did in the first century.

### **Experiences do not determine whether or not something is truth.**

Human experiences and the telling of them may be based on human perspective, and not on the power of God (Study carefully Prov. 14:12; Jer. 10:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:5). Human experiences can be misleading. Study Jacob's false conclusion about Joseph's death (Gen. 37:31-35). Saving faith is not founded on human experiences, "For faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). In order for something to be confirmed as truth, it must be found in the word of God.

### **But how do you explain everything that happens?**

Something extraordinary may happen to us. If it is truly good, it is from God (Jas. 1:17). But is it a miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit? No! What causes these things to happen? Sometimes we do not know. It perverts God's word to contradict it by our interpretation of life's experiences. Remember that our minds, our bodies, the world, and Satan can work to deceive us (2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 2:10-12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:13-15). We are not to trust our own feelings and experiences, but rather we are to trust the word of God. Whom will we believe? Will we believe man (ourselves) or will we believe God?

We have not discovered the cause to everything that happens naturally. Indeed, we should be in awe of God as we discover His wondrous creation.<sup>48</sup> We can trust and thank God that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). However, just because we do not know the natural explanation for something, it does not mean we should call it a miracle. Keep in mind that God providentially accomplishes many works through natural means. Who is man, that he can identify what, how, and when God applies His providential hand? And man, who has yet to scratch the surface on explaining God's creation, may never arrive at the natural cause for everything he witnesses. We must not draw a conclusion which God disallows. Extraordinary events are not proof of a miracle, and they are not done because someone has a gift of the Holy Spirit. In fact, if we explain something as a miracle and then atheists are able to prove it was a natural phenomenon, we have destroyed the believer's credibility and fueled greater skepticism among unbelievers.

### **What is NOT the issue.**

The issue is not how powerful God is. Some might inquire, "You mean you do not believe God can perform miracles?" The proper response to this is that we must believe every mighty work of God revealed in the Bible (John 20:30-31). However, we are not taking anything away from God if we say miracles do not happen among men today as they did in the New Testament.

God expends His power, or reserves His power according to His will.<sup>49</sup> For us to speak of

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<sup>48</sup> Psalm 19:1 "The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."

<sup>49</sup> There are numerous miracles God did for others, which He does not do for us: Enoch (Heb.

a time, like the present, in which He is not empowering men with miraculous gifts, is not to water down the eternal power of God. The issue is not how powerful God is, but rather when and how God designed gifts to be used by Christians.

The issue is not whether or not God can heal. God can heal. We should pray to God for all our needs, including healing the sick (James 5:13-18; 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:14-15), but we should not look for a miracle. Everyone that benefits from healing needs to thank God, because natural healing is made possible by Him. But in any event, miracles have not taken place as they did in the first century. The question is not, “Can God heal?,” but rather the question is, “Does God heal through gifts of the Holy Spirit today?”

The issue is not whether or not someone has seen or experienced something which is extraordinary. One may say, “I know what happened, and I know it was a miracle.” The fact that something happened is often inarguable. But how, and for what purpose did it happen? If one insists on calling something a miracle, then where is the apparent need (to prove one as an Apostle, or to confirm one’s new revelation from God)? Never in the scriptures were miracles randomly or mysteriously thrown into peoples’ lives without Divinely revealed purpose. This would leave questions and guesswork as to what the miracles mean. The issue one needs to address is the cause and the purpose of miracles, and see that just because something is extraordinary, it is not necessarily a miracle (See Lesson 10).

**Comparing what happens today to what happened in the New Testament.**

The miracles in the early church were dramatic, numerous, and consistent. Those who witnessed miracles did not have to be told that what they were seeing was a miracle! There was no argument that a miracle had taken place. Even the enemies of God admitted that the miracles of the Apostles were genuine (Acts 4:16). There were no failures, no exaggerations of natural events mistaken for a miracle, and miracles were not a “hit-and-miss” operation. If a miracle was attempted by those who had the gift, it was successful.<sup>50</sup> It was not dependent upon the recipient’s faith as so many today claim.<sup>51</sup>

Today’s religious crowd does not see such power, frequency and fail proof consistency. One who is just beginning to seek the truth of Jesus Christ might witness demonstrations of so-called “faith healing, tongue speaking, and miracles.” By necessity he must be told that what he is seeing is a supernatural work of God because otherwise he would not have concluded this. He may be told to accept what he sees as a miracle, or else “he is not receptive to the Holy Spirit,” and surely he would not want to deny that God has the power to perform miracles. For some reason or another he may refuse to admit that what he has witnessed pales in comparison to the miraculous wonders spoken of in the New Testament. In all sincerity he may come away doubtful, suspicious, confused, and even disappointed because what he has seen is honestly not equal to the events of the New Testament. It is

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11:5) did not see death; God parted the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites (Exodus 14:21-22); Mary gave birth while she was still a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25); and Peter raised Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:36-43). None of these happen today!

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 17:14-21 does not apply here because it occurred before Pentecost, the appointed time in which time the Apostles were empowered by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8).

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5-6 Jesus did not do a miracle when He knew it was useless in the face of unbelief. But He never attempted a miracle and then blamed failure on the recipient’s “unbelief” as do some today. If Jesus attempted a miracle, He was successful. The same was true of those who had the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

not convincing beyond doubt. However, he may remain silent because he does not want to object to things “supposedly” done by God or for God. If he objects, it makes him look faithless or ignorant, and it may defile a friendship. On top of that it may be that he desperately wants what is being offered (miraculous healing, or miraculous empowerment), even if he is not sure if God offers it. If he subscribes that what he has witnessed, his newly found “faith” will be erroneously based on human experiences, the wants of his heart, or ignorance rather than being based upon God’s proved word.

This is no accident that truth seeking, God fearing, Christ serving people are not seeing gifts of the Holy Spirit happen today as they did in the New Testament. God tells us in the Bible there is no design for these things to take place today. And we must admit there is no comparison of what we see today to what happened in the first century of the New Testament. Peter healed a man in Jerusalem who was lame from his mother’s womb. The lame man immediately received strength, and he walked and leaped (Acts 3:1-10). Peter did it again in the name of Jesus at Lydda (Acts 9:32-35). Who can do this today with never a doubt or failure? Who can raise the dead without failure (Acts 9:36-42)? Who can speak in an actual language of the earth without first studying it and practicing it (Acts 2:4-11)? Where are these events, so those who diligently follow Christ may examine them and “try the spirits” (1 John 4:1). Where are these “gifted” people, so all of us who are Christians can utilize them in the Lord’s work?<sup>52</sup> Mostly what we have is hearsay. Yes, we do hear of sensational recoveries from disease, people being able to speak in earthly languages they have not studied, and people given up for dead that were somehow resuscitated. They are always just stories, always of events which are in the past and always far removed from examination. We are never able to see a repetition of the claim. This is no accident that it always happens this way. Truthfully, we do not see the gifts of the Holy Spirit demonstrated as they were in the New Testament. This is no accident, it is God’s will. Christians must not feel shame for doubting the “miraculous” claims of others. Not only must Christians doubt these claims, they must faithfully deny them in wholesale fashion.

Imagine a Christian comes to town. He meets a beggar who was crippled from his mother’s womb. Then the Christian commands the cripple to rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ. And immediately the cripple is strengthened, leaps up, and continues to walk and leap. Then the same Christian accuses two other Christians of being “liars,” and the liars miraculously drop dead. Then he lays hands on some Christians who in turn can perform healings and miracles themselves. This remarkable Christian goes on to cure a man afflicted with palsy for eight years. The man is made whole! And within no time the Christian raised a woman from the dead! This is no myth. This all happened with the Apostle Peter. A similar account could be given of the Apostle Paul. These men had the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Those like them, who had the gifts of the Holy Spirit, did miracles which were 100% successful, supernatural, and convincing. They were not putting on side shows; they were confirming God’s word. We have to imagine works this great, and by faith we can trust they occurred (as recorded in the New Testament). We have to imagine this because we do not see anything that even compares to these great works today. What we do see is the Gospel of Christ which is found in the Bible. And we see how it powerfully converts and saves those who believe and obey it!<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Acts 8:14-18 The Apostles Peter and John were sent for, so they could impart the Holy Spirit to others at Samaria. Who would we send for today? Such ones do not exist.

<sup>53</sup> ...the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation..."

**Are we limiting or resisting the power of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by saying miracles are not being performed today?**

Not at all. When Paul told the Corinthians not to use tongue speaking in some instances, he was not limiting or resisting the power of God. Instead he was trusting God's will (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:28). Today when we say miracles and gifts of the Spirit are not in use at all, we are abiding by the will of God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8). God can do what He wants, and He has told us what He wants us to do. He wants us to trust in the word of God and live by it. He has not instructed us to use gifts of the Spirit nor has he empowered anyone to use them. If we believe this, we are not limiting or resisting the power of God, but rather we are showing respect for His power and trust in His will. Nothing in God's will is failing because the gifts of the Spirit are not in use today. They were used when God willed for them to be used (who can question His will?), and as a result the Gospel of Christ is complete, powerful, and successful today as God designed.

**Conclusion**

Today's phenomenal experiences are not miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Just because we have not discovered the natural explanation for something, we should not call it a miracle. By this we are not limiting the power of God, but rather we are showing respect to how He instructs us to do His work.

God's work of soul winning takes place today without modern gifts of the Spirit. As Christians, we can teach the lost the confirmed word of God in the Bible; we can be examples of Godly living; we can be Christ-like; and we can bear the fruit of the Spirit. Others will see the light of Christ in us, and those with good and honest hearts will seek out the truth in the Bible, believe it, and obey it (Luke 8:11-15).

**Discussion**

- 1) Which is more remarkable: the one who sees a miracle in action and believes, or the one who hears the word of God and believes? (John 20:29)

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- 2) What harm is there in labeling extraordinary experiences as miracles?