

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 2 Revised

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In Part 1 of “The Holy Spirit Debate” it was brought out that this topic is one of the most divisive of all the church debates. We mentioned that some groups say that we receive the Holy Spirit when we accept Jesus as our Savior, while others say it is a separate event. One would assume someone has to be right, and someone has to be wrong. But what about the Old Testament; there are many illustrations of people being empowered by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament long before Jesus came to earth! Perhaps we simply have a misunderstanding concerning the function of the Holy Spirit as He relates to us in the New Testament vs. the Old, or perhaps the problem is contextual in nature! In the last part of this study, we referred to Peter and his denial of Jesus. Peter had walked and talked with Jesus for three years, he witnessed Jesus performing miracles first hand; Peter even had a hand in the feeding of the multitudes, personally handing out the fish and bread! One would think that he and the rest of the disciples, especially those in His inner circle would be bold and secure in their faith by that time, but what happened after the crucifixion... they went into hiding fearing for their own lives... why?

We know that many saw Jesus, numbering into the hundreds after the resurrection as He continued to teach the disciples for an additional forty days after His resurrection. What takes place next is interesting in that it is primarily directed to the disciples whom had been with Him for years. By this time there was no doubt they were "Official" disciples of Jesus... Apostles... “true believers” (maybe not... more on this later)! The following is what transpired before His ascension:

[Acts 1:4-5](#) (NKJV)

⁴ And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the “Promise of the Father,” which, *He said*, “you have heard from Me; ⁵ for John truly baptized with water, but you ***shall be*** baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus went on to make the following final statement just before He ascended back to Heaven:

[Acts 1:8](#) (NKJV)

⁸ But you ***shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;*** and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

While researching for this study, I looked up this account in [Mt.28:16-20](#) and it amazed me that even at this point it says the disciples had doubts as to what they were experiencing! Jesus was standing in front of them resurrected from the dead, speaking to

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them, and they still had doubts! No wonder they scattered after the crucifixion! The disciple's faith was "wishy-washy" at best even after years spent walking and talking with Jesus face to face! It's no wonder that Jesus told them to wait to receive "Power from on high" as recorded in Luke's Gospel... they certainly needed something more than what they had at that point in order to fulfill their continuing mission! **They needed power they did not yet possess.** Keep in mind... these are the eleven remaining Apostles Jesus is speaking to, His "inner circle!"

[Luke 24:46-49](#) (NKJV)

⁴⁶ Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

So what have we learned from the bible so far? We know that the disciples, despite their intimate relationship with Jesus still lacked the faith and "**power**" to continue the ministry of Jesus up to the point of the ascension of Jesus back into Heaven. We also know that Jesus told them that they (***at a later date in Jerusalem***) **would** (**Future Tense**) receive the power necessary to do so! ***Selah*** The disciples did as they were instructed and waited in Jerusalem to receive this power that Jesus said they **would** receive. We pick up the story once again in the Book of Acts... Before I continue, I would like to insert part of my own testimony on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Ever since I had an interest in God and the Bible, which was at a very young age, I always had the feeling that I wasn't getting the whole story. Some of the things I heard or read over the years seemed open-ended or incomplete somehow; maybe distorted would be a better way to describe it. I realized early on, that certain subjects were preached as indisputable fact, while others seemed to be swept under the rug as they say. This was especially true concerning the subject of the Holy Spirit. I had developed friends or acquaintances over the years that were on opposite extremes of this debate. The church I attended when I was *Born Again* was totally against the gifts of the Spirit being active today as the Pentecostals and Charismatic's of that period (1972) preached. I listened to both sides and thus was not yet *hardened* in any particular doctrine. All I can say is that I really wanted to know the truth, so I kept an open mind and was always willing to listen to anyone on the subject. I did however begin to notice a pattern; it seem as though the opposing sides each had a habit of concentrating on certain verses of scripture while all but ignoring others. This raised a flag for me, because I wholeheartedly

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believed the Bible and I knew that although there seems at times to be “contradictions,” in reality, there is none. Keep this in mind as we continue this study.

At this point, I wish to remind you that the point of this series is to illustrate the fact that there are varying (and often justifiable) opinions about different subjects in the Bible. However, in some cases, these opinions can grow into doctrines, and eventually into different religions if people do not investigate the scriptures on their own, opting instead to simply believe what they are told by others. The following is and often overlooked fact: The Disciples, waiting in Jerusalem (as they were told,) *were not there alone*. In addition to themselves, Mary, the mother of Jesus, His brothers, and a host of others were there with them. The total number was about a hundred and twenty according to the passages below.

Acts 1:12-17 (NLT)

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the Zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. ¹⁵ During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. ¹⁶ “Brothers,” he said, “the Scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus. This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. ¹⁷ Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us.”

And so the "Day of Pentecost" finally arrived. It is not stated as to how many others were with the disciples when the Baptism in the Holy Spirit event occurred, but it would be reasonable to assume that there were still a substantial number of others present if not all of the aforementioned one hundred and twenty. I have heard some argue that it was only the Disciples in the room when the Holy Spirit came upon them, however, according to what we read in the Biblical record, that is presumptuous at best. Here is another interesting dissertation from Peter when the people accused them all of being drunk, Peter quotes the Old Testament:

Joel 2:28-32 (NKJV)

²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out

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My Spirit in those days. ³⁰ "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. ³² And it shall come to pass *That* whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

Notice verse 28 refers to "*All Flesh*" receiving the Holy Spirit, so it seems as though Peter is including the others who were there in addition to the Apostles in attendance.

I am going to end this study using an illustration that I heard preached from the pulpit of a very large Church that I used to attend. This was not the main reason that I chose to look for another place to worship but it did get my attention when I heard it. This particular church favored the "Expository Teaching Method" which means they went through entire books of the Bible, not necessarily in order, but through complete books of the Bible. *There is nothing wrong with this type of teaching but it does force "Doctrine" out into the open when it comes to some of the debate topics covered in this series.*

The Pastor of this Church was a hard core "Dallas Man" as was the Pastor of the first church I attended (over 50 yrs ago) that I referred to earlier in this teaching. If you don't know what I mean by that, ask around and you'll soon find out what I mean. I will just say that some (not all) "Dallas Men" have in my opinion, an extreme doctrinal view concerning particular subjects, especially concerning the Holy Spirit. I am not taking sides right now nor am I condemning graduates of Dallas Seminary. However, I do want to illustrate the inherent danger in taking sides without searching the Scriptures for oneself as you may be getting a biased opinion, even from well meaning people without realizing it. And as a result, you may miss important *Biblical Truths* that could have a profound effect on you and your walk with the Lord. I found out the hard way that if you hang around with Christians that do not believe in miracles, guess what... you ain't gonna' see miracles! (Pardon my English) Have you ever wondered why the Church seems so powerless these days? Have you wondered why you don't hear about Healings and Miracles like you read about in the times of the early church? Keep these thoughts on the "back burner." We will have separate studies on miracles and the power of the believer in the future. The particular teaching in the church I was just referring to concerned [1 Corinthians 12 & 13](#).

As many of you reading this may know, these particular passages are in the center of the debate as to whether or not the gifts of the Holy Spirit exist today in the church. I am

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not going to dissect these verses now because there is so much here that is debated, but I just wanted to show where the study in this particular church was at and what happened during the course of that study. I want to illustrate as to how different groups can take things out of context, or skip over entire passages resulting in distortion of the truth. People sometimes do this while attempting to give their particular belief system credibility while ignoring other possible interpretations of scripture, which are just as valid in that quest.

[1 Corinthians 12:28-31](#) (NKJV)

²⁸ And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. ²⁹ *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? ³¹ But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

In the course of the study, at this point, the Pastor deviated to the Book of Acts to re-enforce the doctrine he espoused that the Apostles were the only ones demonstrating the "Gifts of the Spirit" such as Healing. His doctrine taught that we all receive the Holy Spirit the moment we are saved...there is no second event called "The Baptism of the Holy Spirit." He cited the following to "prove" his point of view.

[Acts 19:1-7](#) (KJV)

¹ And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, ² He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. ³ And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. ⁴ Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ⁵ **When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**

The Pastor concentrated on verse 5 and did not comment on verses 6 and 7 (see below)

⁶ **And when Paul had laid *his* hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.** ⁷ **And all the men were about twelve.**

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Ironically both sides of the Holy Spirit debate use these verses to justify their position. However, the Pastor pulled out verse 3 pointing out that the disciples referred to here were not disciples of Jesus, but of John the Baptist! ³ *And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.* This is why the Pastor said they did not yet have the Holy Spirit. Before I counter this with another scripture, once again the question I ask is, "Why on earth did Paul ask the question in the first place?" He asked, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed!" I have never heard anyone question this much less explain this until more recently in my personal Christian walk! I would guess you could surmise that Paul assumed they were Disciples of Jesus... that would make the Pastor's doctrine work, but it still doesn't explain why Paul asked the question in the first place *if* the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was not in fact a subsequent event to salvation. I am just putting the argument out there...

If we use these verses to prove the Pastor's doctrine, how do we then explain the next set of Scriptures?

Acts 8:14-17 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. *They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Emphasis Mine

One could say that the Samaritans had not been Born Again, but that is mere speculation as it relates to this passage as it is contradictory as well. It says that they had, "received the word of God..." who is the "Word of God?" (See John 1:1) Isn't it interesting how a capitol letter opposed to a lower case letter can cause so much confusion. The Greek rendering of "word" is logos, which can be translated, word, saying, account, speech, **Word (Christ)**, or thing, according to, James Strong, *Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary*, (Austin, TX: WORDsearch Corp., 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "3056".

It would be interesting to know why the lower case was used in this case concerning "word" as opposed to a capital letter when the context fits both. Was this also a result of bias during translation? This does not hurt the credibility of the Bible at all as both renditions of "word" could in fact be valid.

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Acts 8:17 (NKJV)

Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Again... after they were saved according to this passage!) ^{Emphasis Mine}

Here we have another event involving believers **baptized in the name of Jesus** who have not yet received the Holy Spirit! As you can see, the arguments concerning the Holy Spirit Debate can become confusing in a hurry, especially if you mix in Religion, Doctrine, or simple lack of knowledge. I am sure the debate will continue because both sides are "dug in" securely in their particular beliefs. ***Once again, the question is whether the Spirit we are following is bringing the Church together, or tearing it apart.*** Are we doing what Jesus told us to do or are we just going to continue debating? I am going to leave you with the words of Jesus, what He told us to do. As you think about the debate concerning the Holy Spirit, consider His words.

Mark 16:14-18 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Note: The NIV makes a notation that Mark 16:9-20 does not appear in "The earliest most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses." However, it does appear in 17 other translations including those predating the KJV. This Includes the Wycliffe Translation, being the first English translation dating back to the 1300's, more than two centuries before the King James Version came into existence. Consider that when accessing that notation.

Remember:

The Disciples themselves were powerless without the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This concludes this topic... for now.