

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 1

© 2022 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

From the time I got saved back in 1972, the Holy Spirit debate has had a prominent position in every church I've attended, a prominent position in issues dividing the church. One group says, "We all receive the Holy Spirit the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior", another group says, "Receiving the Holy Spirit is a separate event calling it The Baptism of the Holy Spirit." A spin-off from this is the debate of the "Gifts of the Holy Spirit" especially such gifts as healing, and speaking in tongues, you know "the big league gifts, the gifts of the Apostles." A good question to ponder is this, "were the Apostles the only ones who exhibited these Gifts of the Spirit?" This is an important question because many people believe the Gifts of the Spirit died off with the Apostles. We'll talk more about that later. I attended one church where the Holy Spirit debate literally split the church in half, with half the congregation leaving entirely to start another church. This issue in my opinion has caused more confusion and division than any of the "Debates" we've discussed so far in this series entitled One Accord or Discord... Time for the Church to Choose. If you haven't read the other parts of this series I want to make it clear that although I have my own opinions on the subjects I am covering in this series, I still respect your opinion. The object of this series is not to settle these issues once and for all, or get you to see things my way, but rather to point out how destructive to the witness of Christians of all churches and denominations these debates have been and continue to be.

So once again we'll go to the source of the debate, the Bible. The challenge concerning the topic of the Holy Spirit is that there are so many tangents we could explore in the process that it will be hard to keep it from turning into hundreds of pages of references. I will attempt to present different viewpoints using a few various verses of Scripture and I will use my personal testimony as to what I have experienced in my own quest to conclude on the subject of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Those of you who have read some of my past writings have discovered that I am not a sophisticated writer by any means. I usually keep things short - sweet- and to the point. However in my studies especially when I consult Commentaries, it never ceases to amaze me how some Bible commentators can come up with three pages to explain a five or six word passage of scripture. This happened to me recently. What really concerned me was that if you read this particular commentary by itself there was nothing in it that tied it to the verse it was supposed to be commenting on! The reason I bring this up is to say that there a lot of people have a lot to say about what in most cases is plain and simple to understand if you just read what the Bible says. You'll see what I mean as we continue. Let's begin with the story of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River which was performed by John the Baptist.

[John 1:28-34 \(NKJV\)](#)

²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. ²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" ³⁰ This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ³¹ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." ³² And John bore witness, saying, "**I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him.** ³³ **I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'** ³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

Most people agree that this was the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Little is recorded concerning Jesus as He was growing up except that there are a few things mentioned about Jesus exhibiting extraordinary wisdom and understanding especially the time when he was found by his parents while having a discussion with religious leaders concerning scripture. They were amazed at His wisdom! While this is noteworthy, there is nothing to say that other young children may have also demonstrated unusual wisdom for their age. I know some young children myself whose recall and understanding of Scriptures would knock your socks off!

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 1

© 2022 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

The point is that Jesus did not demonstrate any miraculous powers at this point in His life; it was only until after the Holy Spirit descended upon Him that divine power was revealed in Him. Although Jesus was God in the flesh, He gave up His power in order to become one of us. Up to this point Jesus was in essence, "just another guy" doing life as an ordinary person.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV)

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.
⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

NOTE:

John the Baptist introduced baptism as we know it in the church today. Under the Old Covenant there were many "washings" ([Hebrews 9:10](#)) that may have symbolized baptism, but it had not been done unto repentance ([Mark 1:4](#)), as John administered it. However, the Jews didn't question baptism and even expected it to be a practice of the Christ and of the messenger whom God would send before Him ([John 1:25](#)). John baptized for two reasons: The first was for the remission of sins ([Mark 1:4](#) and [Luke 3:3](#)). The Greek word "EIS" was translated "for" in those verses, and it literally means because of, by reason of, and/or on account of. The second reason was to make Jesus "manifest" (or known) to the nation of Israel ([John 1:31](#)).
Andrew Wommack's Living Commentary.

So here we have Jesus setting a precedent showing us that He as a man could do nothing extraordinary without receiving the power of the Holy Spirit! Are we as modern day disciples of Jesus any different? If Jesus needed the power of the Spirit, it seems logical that we do too. I want to point out another verse centered on the ministry of John the Baptist. One day as I was reading this while again researching the Holy Spirit, something very important jumped out at me; something that challenged the teaching that only the Disciples, later to be called Apostles, would be the one wielding the power of the Holy Spirit. They also teach that this "Holy Ghost Power" as it is also called died out with the Apostles.

Luke 3:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ *or* not, ¹⁶ John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

What jumped out at me in these verses was who was John the Baptist talking to? He was talking to common people not the disciples... the disciples didn't even exist yet... Jesus wasn't baptized yet! Nevertheless, John the Baptist told them that He (Jesus) will baptize them (the people) with the Holy Spirit. A few verses later (see below) "When all the people were baptized" then... Jesus was baptized and the Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove. Note that none of the others had any evidence of the Holy Spirit coming on them at this time keeping in mind that John had just told them that they (the people) **Will Be Baptized with the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 1

© 2022 Wayne J Vasilenko / Selah Life Ministries

www.selahlife.net

Luke 3:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

This is where it ends. Jesus was the only one that came up out of the Jordan that day anointed with the Holy Spirit. There is no mention of a dove descending on anyone else. Perhaps it would happen to them at a different time... perhaps even years later for the others baptized that particular day! This train of thought is substantiated later in the Book of Acts, which we will get to later. So far, it seems we have uncovered some of the points of contention but we have a long way to go. There are many references the miracles performed by Jesus throughout the Gospels, everything from changing water into wine to healings, all the way to raising people from the dead! So what about the disciples... did they perform any miracles at this point?

Luke 9:1-6 (NKJV)

¹ Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. ² He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece.

⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵ And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶ So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

So it looks as though the disciples did indeed have power to perform miracles but note that they did not yet have the power to do so on their own until Jesus gave them special authority. They seemed to be doing ok except when they ran into a demon possessed boy that they couldn't seem to help. When Jesus heard of this there was an interesting exchange that took place recorded in [MT 17:14-20](#). First Jesus seemed upset at the disciples see verse 17, then Jesus took care of the demon and they told the disciples why they had failed. **Jesus told them that it was because of their unbelief or little faith.** Keep this in mind because this relates directly to why many churches and Christians do not see miracles happen today. Is it because these gifts died off with the Apostles or for the same reason the Disciples had a problem at times when attempting to perform a miracle? This is an important thing to consider if you currently side with one group or another in the Holy Spirit Debate. There is another interesting passage in [Lk 12:11-12](#) when Jesus was teaching a large group. He told the people not to be afraid of what they should say if brought before the authorities; He said the Holy Spirit will (future tense) teach you what to say, this is immediately after He said "But he who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God." This indicates that the disciples did not yet have the Holy Spirit if you consider that it was long after this that Peter denied Jesus when they brought Jesus to the mock trial. If Peter was endowed with the Holy Spirit, that couldn't have happened, it would go against what Jesus taught. I seriously doubt that the Holy Spirit of God would have directed Peter to lie saying he didn't even know Jesus! I am going to break here and continue in another study. I encourage you to go over the verses cited so far and when you do... Selah. When we continue we will get into Pentecost and how the Disciples change after receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. I welcome your feedback so far.