

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 2

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In Part 1 of the Holy Spirit Debate we brought out the fact that this particular 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. What about the Old Testament; there are many illustrations of people being empowered by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament! One would assume someone has to be right and someone has to be wrong concerning the Holy Spirit issue, but is that necessarily true? Maybe we just have a misunderstanding concerning the function of the Holy Spirit as He relates to us in the New Testament. Remember in the last part of this study I mentioned 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 handing out the fish and bread! You would think that he and the rest of the disciples would be bold by that time, but what happened after the crucifixion... They all went into hiding fearing for their own lives! After the resurrection we know that Jesus was seen by many as He continued to teach both the disciples and others for forty days. What takes place next is interesting in that it was directed to the disciples whom had been with Him for years and by this time there was no doubt they were "Official" disciples of Jesus... true believers (maybe not... more on this later)! Read for yourself what transpired:

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 this final statement just before He ascended 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 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. 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 to do the job! They needed power they did not yet possess.

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 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 to the point of the ascension of Jesus back into Heaven. We also know that Jesus told them that "at a later date," they would receive the power necessary to do so. The disciples did as instructed and waited in Jerusalem. 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.

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Part 2

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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 to the Max 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 first got saved was totally against the gifts of the Spirit being active today as the Pentecostals and Charismatic's of that time were preaching. I listened to both sides and 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 believed the Bible and I knew that although there seems at times to be contradictions, in reality there are 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 opinions about different subjects in the Bible. And in some cases these opinions can grow into doctrines and even into different religions if people do not investigate the scriptures on their own opting instead to just believe what they are told by others.

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.

Acts 1:12-15 (NKJV)

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James *the son of Alphaeus* and Simon the Zealot; and Judas *the son of James*.¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said...

And so the "Day of Pentecost" finally arrives. It is not stated as to how many others were with the disciples when the Holy Spirit Baptism 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. According to the Biblical record that is presumptuous at the very least. When the people accused them 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* maid-servants I will pour out 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.

The Holy Spirit Debate

Part 2

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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 Disciples as well.

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. 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 we've 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 that I referred to earlier in this teaching. If you don't know what I mean by that, ask around and you'll soon know what I mean. I will just say that "Dallas Men" have in my opinion, an extreme doctrinal view concerning some subjects. I am not taking sides right now but I do want to illustrate the inherent danger in taking sides without searching Scriptures for yourself. You may get a biased opinion and miss out on 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 don't 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 near future. The particular teaching in the church I was just talking about got to a point in 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 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 was at and what happened during the course of the study. I want to show how different groups can take things out of context and can distort the truth trying to give their belief system credibility.

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 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.

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Part 2

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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.

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, 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! 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 if the Baptism of the Holy Spirit wasn't 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 8:14-16 (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.**

Acts 8:17 (NKJV)

Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (After they were saved) 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."

Remember, the Disciples themselves could not do these things without the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This concludes this topic... for now.