

Pentecost and the Coming of the Holy Spirit

Part 2--The Events of Pentecost and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

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Introduction

In the book of Acts the physician Luke (an evangelist and co-laborer with the apostle Paul; cf. Ac. 16:10-17; 20:5; 21:18; 27:2; 28:16) gives us an inspired history of the formation and empowerment of the Christian church and the spread of the gospel from Judea, to Samaria, and to the Gentile world. In this history of the apostolic church the second chapter of Acts, which chronicles the coming of the Holy Spirit, serves as the pivotal chapter of the book as well as the turning point in all human history. The coming of the Spirit is the beginning of the application of our Lord's redemptive power to the whole world. That Pentecost serves as a transition point in redemptive history can be seen in Christ's own words to the apostles in Acts 1:8: "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" (cf. Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-20). Before Pentecost the disciples are held back and told to wait. But after the outpouring of the Spirit they are sent forth unto victory. In order to understand this important section of Scripture, we will examine the events of Pentecost from a number of perspectives.

The Circumstances Surrounding the Coming of the Holy Spirit

In God's providence, the arrival of the Holy Spirit occurred at a particular time and place. The time and place were not coincidental to the significant events of that day but were sovereignly chosen for particular purposes. The important circumstances that merit consideration are: the time, the people and the place.

The Time

The account of the coming of the Holy Spirit begins, "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come" (2:1). As we noted in our study of the Old Testament background, Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks was the completion of the waved sheaf of the Passover. The waved sheaf (which was waved on the first day of the week) typified the resurrected Messiah. Pentecost, also called "the day of first fruits" (Nu. 28:26) or "the Feast of Harvest" (Ex. 23:16) typified the first great harvest of Christ. When the Messiah is resurrected and then "waved" or presented before the Father at the ascension (Dan. 7:13-14), He receives and then pours out the Holy Spirit which leads to the great harvest at Pentecost. The timing of Pentecost primarily teaches two things. (1) Jesus, the resurrected first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; Jn. 12:24), causes and guarantees the salvation of the elect (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5). (2) The harvest of Pentecost is the first fruits of a full harvest to come (cf. Ja. 1:18). The great world-wide mission of harvesting souls for the Lord had begun in earnest with power on that day. By the statement "Lo, I am with you always" (Mt. 28:20) our Lord is assuring the church of the victory of the gospel in the world by His presence in believers. He lives in believers in and by the Holy Spirit.

The People

In Luke's account it says "They were all in one place" (2:1). "They" very likely refers to the 120 Christians mentioned in Acts 1:15: "And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)."

In Acts 1:4 the apostles are commanded to wait in Jerusalem for the Promise of the Father. Acts 1:12 ff makes it clear that the apostles did not wait alone but spent their time ministering to the saints. Note that chapter 2 is connected to chapter 1 with the conjunction *and* (KJV, NASB); this indicates that the "all...with one accord" in 1:14 are the same as the "all with one accord" of 2:1. Luke also is connecting the events of Pentecost with Jesus' ascension (1:9-11).

The phrase "with one accord" found in the Majority Text indicates that the believers in the Jerusalem church were "with one mind" (*homothumadon*). They were all focused on the apostles' teaching. There was unity or "like-mindedness" among the 120. The Minority Text reading simply indicates that the disciples were all "*together*" (*omou*) as a group. While it is true that the disciples were all *together* in one place, the Majority Text reading is to be preferred.

When one confesses the extensive ministry of Jesus and the apostles in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, the fact that only 120 Christians were present that day is rather shocking.¹ Prior to the coming of the Spirit, the church was a small island in a sea of unbelief and hostility. With Pentecost that was all about to change.

The Place

The specific location of the assembly of believers is not named. We are told it took place in Jerusalem (Ac. 1:12; 2:5) in a house (Ac. 2:2) likely on the second floor ("the upper room," Ac. 1:13). This large room may have been the same room where the last supper was held (called a "large upper room" in Mk. 14:15 and Lk. 22:12). "The upper room of large dwelling houses was generally used as a dining room, or sublet to poorer people."² A large upper room was an ideal meeting place for the first apostolic assembly. It can be inferred from Acts 2 that the house where the meeting took place was located in the vicinity of the temple. When the sound of the tongues was heard (2:6) by the multitude (that was gathered in the temple precincts for the feast) they came together to observe the apostles' unusual behavior. The fact that over 3,000 souls were saved under Peter's Pentecost sermon indicates the house was within walking distance of the temple complex.

The External Signs

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was immediately preceded and accompanied by sensible signs exhibited to both the ears and eyes of those assembled. The two signs were wind

¹ There is one distinct possibility, however, that the 120 did not comprehend the whole body of believers in Jerusalem. "Indeed, as there is reason to believe that this last was a fortuitous assemblage, representing a much larger body of believers..., it seems most probable that *all* here designates that body...a full and fair representation of the aggregate body" (J. A. Alexander, *Acts* [Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1963 (1857)], p. 41). Against this view one could argue that if all of the apostles were assembled in one place, together with Jesus' mother and brothers (Ac. 1:14), would not a far greater number of believers be present on that occasion?

² F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text With Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990 [1951]), 105.

and tongues of fire. “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them (Ac. 2:2-3).

The Rushing Wind

On Sunday morning when the day of Pentecost had fully arrived, the 120 believers heard the sound of a violent wind from heaven. The word suddenly indicates that although the disciples expected the coming of the Spirit they were surprised by the Spirit’s sudden, dramatic arrival. The wind is described as rushing, mighty or violent. The sound is what we would call a blast of wind. The word “suddenly” (*ophno*) is used in Acts 16:26 in connection with an earthquake. The coming of the Spirit was an impressive event.

We are told that the sound of the wind was from heaven. This description informs us that the violent wind blast was not a literal wind gust but a supernatural act of God. Note the use of the phrase “as of” (KJV, NKJV, ASV) often translated “like” (NASB, RSV, NIV). Indeed, we know from other portions of Scripture (1 Kings 19:11) that it is the exalted Christ who pours out the Spirit. He does this from the right hand of God in heaven. Interestingly the word translated “rushing” is a passive participle. This indicates that the wind itself is not the operative agent. The active agent is the power of the Messianic King.

When Luke describes the sound of a mighty gust of wind in Acts 2:1 he uses the word *pno* (rendered breath in Acts 17:25). This word in Greek (like its Hebrew counterpart) can be used to convey a double meaning of wind and or spirit. In John 3:5-8 Jesus uses the same Greek word (*pneuma*) for wind and the Holy Spirit (cf. Ezek. 37:9, 14). One cannot see the wind. However, its sound and effects are readily evident. Thus, the phenomenon of wind was especially appropriate to indicate the effusion of the Spirit.

Luke says that the sound filled the whole house. There is no indication in the text that this special sign was heard by anyone other than the people of the house. It may be that the tangible signs were directed only to the believers in that they were the distant recipients of the Spirit baptism.

The Tongues of Fire

The audible sign was immediately followed by a sign exhibited to the eyes. “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each one of them” (v.3). The scene in the upper room involved the appearance of a body or mass of fiery tongues that was then distributed as separate tongues of fire on each believer present. The tongues of fire were not literally fire but merely looked like (“as if,” *h \searrow sei*) fire. Many commentators connect the appearance of fire to the baptism of fire that John the Baptist says the Messiah will dispense (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16). This view, however, is untenable given the fact that the baptism of fire mentioned by John is directly connected to the fire of eternal judgment (cf. Mt. 3:12). The visible sign of fire likely refers to God’s special presence. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush (Ex. 3:2-5; Dt. 5:4). He appeared to the Israelites in a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:12-22; 14:24; Nu. 14:14). When Elijah offered sacrifice at Mt. Carmel it was consumed by fire (1 Ki. 18:38). Indeed, Scripture identifies God as a consuming fire (Dt. 4:24; Heb. 12:29).

Luke says that the tongues appeared on each one of them. Therefore the phenomenon should not be restricted to the twelve apostles. “The whole assembly was collectively a

representation of the body of believers, now about to be reorganized upon a Christian basis, and perpetuated as the Christian Church.”³ Although each person receives the baptism, the church is baptized at one moment as single body, a spiritual organism. “[T]he coming of the Holy Spirit ushers in a new era, for he comes to take up his dwelling with men not temporarily but forever.”⁴ “[A] new day dawned in human history, a new departure was initiated in the economy of God. Taking the Bible as the history of God’s dealings with men, there had never been anything like this before, though everything had looked toward it, waited for it, and hoped for it.”⁵

The Result of the Spirit’s Coming

The sensible signs of the Spirit’s coming (the wind and tongues of fire) are followed by a description of the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit and the sign of the Spirit’s presence: the miracle of speaking in tongues.

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The crucial event and the turning point in Acts is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Given the fact that there is much errant teaching today on this subject it is important for us to comprehend the meaning and significance of this event. Indeed, one of the great dividing lines among professing Christians today has reference to Spirit baptism. Those of Pentecostal or Charismatic persuasion teach that the events of Acts 2 are normative for all subsequent generations of Christians. In other words when a person believes in Christ he receives the Spirit but is not yet baptized with the Spirit. If such a person really wants power for Christian service he then needs to seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This seeking is done in a variety of ways: prayer, fasting, laying on of hands, coaching by a Spirit baptized believer, etc. Charismatics teach that the baptism of the Spirit is a *second work of grace* that comes after a person is already saved.

The other major position regards the coming of the Holy Spirit as a unique redemptive historical event that is organically connected to the work of Christ. In other words, Pentecost is no more repeatable than the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. While the effect is of course permanent (i.e., the Spirit is now present and active) just as the power of our Lord’s resurrection has permanent effects, the events of Acts 2 are non-repeatable. There are a number of reasons for adopting the latter viewpoint.

(1) The Bible speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit as a special redemptive historical event. Of the seven times the expression “to be baptized in the Holy Spirit” is used in the New Testament, six refer to the historical event of Pentecost (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Ac. 1:5; 11:15). Acts 1:5 makes it clear that every reference to the baptism in the Spirit found in the gospels refers explicitly to the outpouring on Pentecost. Jesus said, “For John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

On a number of occasions Jesus predicted the outpouring at Pentecost. “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (Jn. 14:16). “But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name...” (Jn. 14:26). “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you;

³ J. A. Alexander, *Acts*, 44.

⁴ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 77.

⁵ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1988 [1924]), 31.

but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (Jn. 16:7). John’s inspired commentary on Jesus’ discussion of “living water” is explicit. “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:39).

The event was even prophesied in the in the Old Testament Scriptures. In Peter’s Pentecost sermon where he explains the outpouring of the Spirit, he specifically says that Pentecost is the direct fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32: “*This* is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Ac. 2:16). “The Jews present at Pentecost know that Joel prophesied the coming of the day of the Lord ‘in the last days.’ In these last days of fulfillment, God grants His blessing to His people who repent from sin. These days inaugurate the messianic age in which God pours out His Spirit on His people.”⁶ The fact that Pentecost is predicted as a special redemptive event in the Old Testament, the gospels and Acts 1 is one indication that the coming of the Holy Spirit unto the church was a unique, one time event. Pentecost is an inauguration with an abiding power and effect. This assertion will be explicit in the next point.

(2) The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit comes to permanently reside in and minister to the church. Jesus told the disciples, “I will not leave you orphans” (Jn. 14:18). “It is to your advantage that I go away” (Jn. 16:7). How could the church be better off without Jesus’ physical presence? The answer is that He will send the Holy Spirit to take permanent residence in the church in His place. “If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (Jn. 16:7). Note, the Holy Spirit comes to abide forever (i.e., He comes and stays). “He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (Jn. 14:16). When Jesus wanted to reassure the disciples that they indeed can carry out the Great Commission, He spoke to them of His abiding presence. “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mt. 28:20). The “I am with you always” does not refer to our Lord’s omnipresence which applies to everyone in and with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit belongs to Christ (Heb. 1:9; Rev. 3:1) and proceeds from Him (Jn. 1:23; 15:26; 16:7; Lk. 24:49; Ac. 2:33). Thus, Paul calls the Holy Spirit, “The Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9), “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal. 4:6). The apostle can even say that “Christ lives in me” (Gal. 3:20).

The reason that virtually all commentators and theologians regard Pentecost as the birth of the new covenant church is because it is at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit comes and resides permanently in the new covenant people of God. Christ has one body “a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21) in whom both Jews and Gentiles “are being built together for a dwelling place in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). When warning the Corinthian believers to avoid fornication Paul writes: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you” (1 Cor. 3:16)? This indwelling of the Spirit constitutes each believer, every separate church, and the Church collectively the temple of God.”⁷ The Spirit’s coming to stay or abide permanently with Christ’s church explains why Pentecost is such an earth-shattering event; why it was prophesied as “the great and awesome day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31).

(3) Perhaps the greatest reason why Pentecost should be regarded as a unique (non-repeatable) historical event is the manner in which Scripture connects Pentecost with the glorification of Christ. In the gospel of John, Jesus promised the people that “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (7:38). (What passage or passages our Lord had in mind we are not exactly sure. Some possible passages are Isaiah 58:11b, “You shall be like a watered garden. And like a spring of water, whose waters do

⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, 89.

⁷ Charles Hodge, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 59.

not fail.” In Zechariah 14:8 we read, “And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem.” The very next verse describes the kingship of Christ. Ezekiel 47 speaks of waters that flow from the temple giving life to every thing in its path [vs. 9; cf. Isa. 33:21; 55:1; Joel 3:18]). This verse reminds one of Jesus’ words to the Samaritan women, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (Jn. 4:14). When will the heart of believers become rivers of living water? John tells us in 7:39. “But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

There are a number of things in Jesus’ and John’s statements that demonstrate the once-for-all character of Pentecost. Note that the exalted Christ is the source of the living water (“the water that I shall give him”). The Spirit’s arrival is organically connected to the Savior’s redemptive work and cannot be separated from it. The outpouring is an aspect of our Lord’s exaltation. Peter’s Pentecost sermon makes this point clear. “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Christ] poured out this which you now see and hear” (Ac. 2:33). Jesus came, suffered His whole life, experienced excruciating agony on the cross and died as a vicarious atonement for His people. This happened once and will never be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 9:12). Then as a reward for His redemptive obedience the Savior was exalted by the Father (Mt. 28:18ff; Ac. 2:33ff; Phil. 2:9ff). This exaltation includes the resurrection, ascension and *outpouring of the Spirit*. The once-for-all nature of Pentecost is demonstrated by Peter’s repeated use of the historical aorist (the verb “poured out” as well as the participles “being exalted” and “having received” are all aorist).⁸ Peter was talking about an historical fact not an ongoing process. Therefore, the complex of exaltation events (the resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Holy Spirit) is part of salvation history, *never* to be repeated. The coming of the Spirit reveals and proves that Christ successfully completed His redemptive mission on the earth and thus now in His exalted state lives and ministers in the church. “In this sense the gift (baptism, outpouring of the Holy Spirit) is the crowning achievement of Christ’s work. It is his coming in exaltation to the church in the power of the Spirit. It completes the once-for-all accomplishment of salvation. It is the apex thus far reached in the unfolding of redemptive history. Without it, the work that climaxes in Christ’s death and resurrection would be unfinished, incomplete.”⁹

Our Lord teaches that everyone who believes in Him will receive Spirit baptism. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (Jn. 7:38). According to Jesus (in the new covenant era) salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. The gift of the Spirit cannot be separated from union with Christ and saving faith. In other words, the Lord did not teach people to seek Spirit baptism directly as a second work of grace but simply to believe in Him. Spirit baptism is a normal aspect of salvation and not an addendum to the Savior’s work.

(4) Any idea that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is something that is separated from or needs to be added to the work of Christ is a denial of the sufficiency of our Lord’s perfectly achieved salvation. When Jesus died on the cross He eliminated all the guilt and penalty of sin for the elect. Not one sin remains. The Messiah’s sacrifice was perfect. Also, everyone who

⁸ “The fundamental significance of the aorist is to denote action simply as occurring, without reference to its progress....It presents the action or event as a ‘point,’ and hence is called ‘punctiliar’” (H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Macmillan, 1969 [1927]), 193.

⁹ Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 20.

believes in Christ receives His perfect righteousness as a free gift by imputation. Thus, when God looks upon the believing sinner He sees the perfect righteousness of the Son of God. Our Lord's merits render all believers as sinless, perfect and absolutely righteous before God *judicially* in the heavenly court. This biblical reality raises an important question. If Christ's merits are not enough in God's eyes to receive the gift of the Spirit what more is needed?

If one does not recognize the unique and foundational nature of Pentecost and thus makes Spirit baptism an addendum to the work of Christ or some kind of spiritual bonus for elite Christians, one must logically assert one of two unbiblical ideas. One can argue that Jesus did not achieve a perfect redemption and therefore the Holy Spirit must come and finish what our Lord left unfinished. This assertion, however, explicitly contradicts the New Testament which says the gift of the Holy Spirit is a consequence of Christ's perfect work. That is, the Messiah sends out the Spirit because He defeated sin, Satan and death and on the cross. Pentecost (as we have noted) is an aspect of the Son of Man's glorification. The Spirit *applies* a perfect redemption already completed.

The other alternative is that Spirit-baptism is based in part on human merit. It is something for the spiritual elite. It comes through human achievement. Spirit baptism is for people who have correct knowledge; or seek the baptism in a proper way; or are holy enough; or fast and pray enough; or are coached in the correct ritual by a Spirit-baptized elder; or get zapped in a revival meeting; or walk to the front of the church to receive the laying on of hands, etc. Charismatics would of course deny that they tie Spirit baptism to human merit. But when one examines this teaching and practice one can only conclude that they have taken the control of the Holy Spirit out of pierced hands of the glorified Savior and ultimately placed the control in the hands of sinners. They are subtly denigrating the Lord's perfect redemption.

If a second work of grace (the baptism in the Holy Spirit) is necessary for spiritual fullness as Charismatics assert, then why does Paul declare: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are *complete in Him*..."(Col. 2:9-10). Paul's teaching is supported by Peter's: "[Christ's] divine power has given to us *all things* that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us..." (2 Pet. 1:3). Both apostles assume that we receive everything we need when we believe in Jesus. The coming of the Holy Spirit should never be considered as a special add-on to the work of Christ but rather as something Jesus Himself provides as part of His redemptive mission. There is an organic and inseparable connection between our Lord's death and the gift of the Spirit. To deny this point is to misunderstand an aspect of the gospel itself.

(5) After Pentecost (with the exception of Ac. 8:14-17 discussed below) believing in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit are simultaneous. When Peter preached the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34-48, they received Spirit baptism the moment they believed. That Peter equated their baptism in the Spirit with their salvation is clear from the fact Peter immediately "commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Ac. 10:48). At the first church council or presbytery meeting, Peter recalled this event and said that God gave "them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, purifying their hearts by faith" (Ac. 15:9). For all the believing Gentiles in Cornelius' house the gift of the Holy Spirit was not a post-conversion experience. The Gentiles did not seek a second blessing or ask how to receive the Holy Spirit. They believed in Christ and that was enough.

A passage which has been often used as a proof text for receiving Spirit-baptism subsequent to belief is Acts 19:1-7. The use of this passage by Pentecostals is based on a faulty translation in the King James Version: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"

(v.2). The passage literally says, in the Greek, “The Holy Spirit did you receive, having believed?” The New King James accurately translates the passage: “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” This passage is actually an excellent proof text against the Charismatic doctrine of receiving the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace after salvation. Why? Because Paul’s question assumes that in the normal course of events, salvation and Spirit-baptism occur at the same time. The fact that the disciples of John the Baptist had not even heard of the Holy Spirit indicated that they had not received Christian baptism and were still Old Covenant believers and not yet Christians. The problem for these followers of John the Baptist was not that they needed a second work of grace but that they needed to believe in Jesus Christ. After believing and being baptized they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Why was it necessary for the Apostle Paul to lay hands on these men? The laying on of hands in Acts 19:6 (like that in Ac. 8:17) is related to the unique authority of the apostles. Otherwise there would have been no need for the Samaritans to wait for the apostles (Ac. 8). “It seems he did it to show them as Jews that it was no longer John the Baptist’s teaching they were to follow but the teaching of the Apostles.”¹⁰

In the epistles where apostles explain Christ’s redemptive work there is an explicit rejection of the Charismatic doctrine of subsequence. Note how Paul connects the reception of the gift of the Spirit with belief in Jesus. “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith” (Gal. 3:2)? Spirit baptism occurs the moment a person is justified by Christ. “The gift of the Spirit and justification are two sides of the one coin.”¹¹ “[It] is by reason of their believing response to the proclamation of ‘Jesus Christ crucified’ that the Galatians initially received the gift of the Spirit and even now continue to experience His power.”¹²

The apostle says that all Christians have been baptized in the Spirit. “For by [lit. *in*] one Spirit we were *all* baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have *all* been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). Paul, writing to believers many years after Pentecost, stresses the fact that although Christians have many different spiritual gifts, they all have one thing in common: they have been brought into the one body of Christ by the baptism in the Spirit. “No matter how great may have been the previous difference, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, by this baptism of the Spirit, all who experience it are merged into one body; they are all intimately and organically united as partaking of the same life.”¹³ For Paul there are *not* two separate groups of believers (ones baptized in the Spirit, the others not). A person is either Spirit baptized or is an unbeliever. (Note the apostle’s use of the “all.” All Christians without exception receive the gift of the Spirit.) “Verse 13, then, plainly teaches (1) that all believers share in the gift of the Spirit, and (2) that they do so from the time of their incorporation into the body of Christ. This verse is the hard rock which shatters all constructions of the Holy Spirit baptism as an additional, post-conversion, second blessing experience.”¹⁴

This teaching is supported by Romans 8:9 where Paul says, “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” “The force of the criterion which the apostle here establishes needs to be appreciated. If a person does not have the Holy Spirit he is not a believer. *Every* believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit...”¹⁵ In Romans 8 (which contains a discussion of

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Charismatics: A Doctrinal Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 99.

¹¹ J. D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: 1970), p. 108 as quoted by F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand River: Eerdmans, 1982), 132.

¹² Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 132.

¹³ Charles Hodge, *I and II Corinthians*, 254.

¹⁴ Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 31.

¹⁵ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), Part 1, 288.

Christians and the Holy Spirit) the apostle never mentions the Spirit baptism as a second work of grace, but rather assumes that all true believers are already indwelt by the Spirit. In fact, one can carefully search all the epistles; study every single verse associate with the Holy Spirit and one will not find a shred of evidence for the baptism in the Holy Spirit being a second work of grace that occurs separate from conversion. In the epistles the exact opposite is the case so we have seen. The epistles do teach the continual need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The repeated fillings of the Spirit, however, are not the same as Spirit baptism. (See the section that discusses this topic below.)

The fact that the epistles teach that belief in Christ and Spirit baptism occur at the same time and thus *never* instruct believers to seek Spirit baptism raises an important question. If the didactic passages in the epistles are so clear on this issue, how do Charismatics come to the conclusion that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a second work of grace that comes sometime after conversion? The answer is primarily found in a failure to allow the clear didactic portions of Scripture in the epistles to guide their understanding of the foundational historical sections in the book of Acts. If the epistles (which are given to us by God to explain redemptive history) teach that the norm for believers is salvation in Christ and Spirit baptism at the same time, then obviously there must be something unique about what occurred in the Acts of the Apostles. What was unique about apostolic church history was that: (a) there was a change in the administration of the covenant of grace from the Old Testament period to the new covenant era of God's kingdom; and, (b) the outpouring of the Spirit was organically connected to the resurrection-ascension-enthronement of Christ and thus had to occur at a specific time and could only occur once.

The fact that a change from the Old to the New Covenant occurred during the life of the apostles explains why for the apostles and many believers in the first generation of Christians the baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred after conversion. Every person who was saved prior to Pentecost came to Jesus by the spiritual operation of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, no one can be saved without a supernatural work upon the soul by the Holy Spirit. However, the Spirit did not come in full measure until the Messiah was glorified (Jn. 7:39; 14:26; 16:7; Ac. 1:5). The disciples who followed our Lord before Pentecost and who were still alive when the gift of the Spirit was poured out had the unique experience of living through two different covenantal administrations. But for these people who come to Christ after Pentecost (with one notable exception, Ac. 8:14-17) salvation and Spirit baptism were coterminous. We should not expect the unique experience of the believers who lived in both the Old and New Covenant eras to apply to us any more than should we expect to witness the resurrection or ascension.

Perhaps one of the reasons that Charismatics make *all* of the events in Acts normative for today is the common notion among evangelicals that Acts is simply a collection of examples of early Christian piety that need to be emulated and imitated today. While it is true that we need to imitate the piety of the apostles and that Acts does give historical examples that are normative for today, the foundational nature of this apostolic history should not be ignored. Luke documents the glorification of the Messiah (i.e., the ascension and outpouring of the Spirit), the establishment of the New Covenant church and the foundational work of the apostles and supernaturally gifted evangelists in taking the gospel from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria and the end of the earth (Ac. 1:8). While the work of missions continues today (and will not cease until our Lord returns) our base of operations and starting point is not the Old Covenant people of Israel in Jerusalem. The events in Acts with the amazing signs and wonders, the special appearance of Jesus, the special authority of the apostles, the writing of inspired epistles from

God, the ability to supernaturally survive poison snake bites, etc., were all unique to the foundational ministry of the apostles and their close associates. If one keeps this point in mind, he will not make the common mistake of using foundational events in Acts as a basis for current church practice. Snake handling Pentecostals would have a much longer life span if they understood the truth.

Keeping the foundational character of the book of Acts and the explicit teaching regarding Spirit baptism in the epistles in mind will aid our understanding of the major Charismatic proof text: Acts 8:14-17. (Remember that Scripture cannot contradict Scripture and the clearer portions of the Bible must be used to interpret the less clear. If Paul says that everyone who is a Christian has already received the baptism of the Spirit [1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:2] then there must be something unique or unusual regarding Acts 8:14-17). In Acts chapter 8 Luke records the activities of Philip the evangelist. Philip was the first person to preach the gospel to the Samaritans. After Philip performed “miracles and signs” and preached the gospel, many Samaritans believed in Christ and were baptized with water (vs.12-13). Luke informs us that after the apostles were aware that the people of Samaria had received God’s Word regarding the Messiah they sent Peter and John to them. Luke gives us the reason in verse 16: “For as yet He [the Holy Spirit] had fallen upon none of them.” Peter and John pray for the Samaritan believers to receive the Holy Spirit (v. 15), and the Samaritans do so when the apostles lay their hands upon them (v. 17).

There are a number of reasons why this instance of receiving the Spirit *after* salvation is unique and unrepeatable today.

a) Note that the presence of the apostles was required before the Holy Spirit was sent. If Luke was giving the church a perpetual pattern to follow regarding receiving the Holy Spirit after salvation (as Charismatics assert), then why was the *personal presence* of the apostles required? If what occurred was the same as today could not Philip the evangelist (an ordained preacher of the gospel) and a mighty miracle worker himself, prayed for the believing Samaritans and laid hands on them? That the presence of the apostles was required is proven not only from the fact that Philip could *not* do the job himself but also from the context where Simon (the “ex-sorcerer”) asks the apostles for power to give the Holy Spirit. “When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” (v. 18). Simon understood that the apostles had a unique authority. God delayed the reception of the Holy Spirit by the believing Samaritans for a reason. He wanted the Samaritans to recognize that the apostles were the authoritative leaders in the church. Also, it was necessary for the apostles to see that the Samaritans were accepted by God and full partners in the kingdom. (At that time in history there was a great religious and racial hatred of the Samaritan by the Jews and vice versa.)

b) Note that Philip the evangelist did not instruct the Samaritans to seek, or plead, or empty themselves in order to receive Spirit baptism. They did nothing but wait for the apostles. If this passage was normative for today it would teach us not to seek the baptism of the Spirit but to wait for the presence of an apostle. Since the apostolate died out around 1900 years ago (when their foundational work was completed) this section of Scripture proves too much and is worthless as a proof text for Charismatic apologists.

The foundational nature of the apostles’ mission and their unique authority also explains why God arranged for the apostle Peter to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and witness their reception of the Holy Spirit. God sent an angel to Cornelius to instruct him to send a man from Joppa to get Simon Peter to come and preach to them (Ac. 10:5 ff.). Jesus then prepared Peter to

preach to the Gentiles by giving him a vision (Ac. 10:10 ff.). As the apostle was preaching the gospel “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word” (Ac. 10:44). Note the response of the Jews who witness this historic event: “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also” (Ac. 10:45).

There are substantial reasons why the events of Acts 10 are unique, foundational and tied to the special authority of the apostles. The presence of Peter the apostle (who brought along a delegation of Jewish believers as witnesses) was *required* by God. The apostle specially devoted to “the circumcision” (Gal. 2:7-8) and representatives of Jewish Christianity had to witness the Gentiles pass directly into the new covenant church without first passing through directly into the new covenant without first passing through the outer court of Judaism. They had to witness the reception of the Holy Spirit by the Gentiles. God was instructing the apostles and the leadership of the Jewish church that *from now on* Gentiles were no longer to be considered unclean. That as far as membership in God’s kingdom and the body of Christ is concerned there is no longer Jew or Gentile. All who believe receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, are united with Christ and receive all the benefits of adoption into God’s household. This point is supported in two ways. First, note that Peter’s response to the Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit is to baptize the believing Gentiles with water. Water baptism not only is a sign and seal of regeneration but also is a badge of church membership. Gentiles are not second-class Christians but full members in Christ’s body.

Second, the Gentiles’ reception of the Spirit is repeatedly used as proof by Peter that there can be no distinction in the church between Jews and Gentiles. It is the ultimate proof against all Judaizers. In Acts 11 Peter returns to Jerusalem and is immediately confronted by Jewish Christians for going into a Gentile’s house and eating with them (vs. 2-3), Peter relays the events and concludes by saying, “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God” (v. 17)? The same historical event was relayed by Peter at the first church council, a council specifically called to deal with the question of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the church. “And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith’” (Ac. 15:7-9). “Peter’s argument is here the same as 10, 47. 11, 17, to wit, that doubt was precluded by the act of God Himself, who had decided the whole question by dealing with those Gentiles precisely as he did with the converted Jews, bestowing the same spiritual influence on both, and with the same moral effect.”¹⁶ “The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in both Jerusalem and Caesara demonstrates God’s acceptance of the Gentile believers.”¹⁷

The events of Acts 8 and 10 do not teach that the events of Pentecost with the post-conversion reception of the Holy Spirit are normative for all church history. They rather teach us about the manner in which God taught the first churches which were Jewish about the full reception of Samaritans and Gentiles into the kingdom of God. Further, the Samaritans and Gentiles learned about the leadership of the Jewish apostles (i.e., their unique authority). One could describe the first conversion and baptism of the Samaritans and Gentiles as unique extensions of the once-for-all Pentecost event. They were foundational in the sense that

¹⁶ J. A. Alexander, *Acts*, Part 2, 77.

¹⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, 545.

Samaritans and Gentiles *before that time* never had full kingdom status without first becoming Jews. Once their status had been *publicly established by God in the presence of apostolic witnesses* there was never again a need to repeat the exact events of Acts 8 and 10. Such a repetition is impossible since the apostolate ceased with the death of John the beloved.

Acts 10 is not a viable proof text for Charismatics at any rate because: a) The Gentiles received Spirit baptism the very moment they believed (Ac. 10:44). The baptism of the Spirit was not a second work of grace but was coterminous with salvation. Note the response of the Spirit. “They glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’” (Ac. 11:18). b) The Gentiles did not seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter did not instruct the Gentiles of the necessity of seeking a secondary experience, he merely pointed them to Christ and that was enough. Indeed, in none of the accounts in the book of Acts do we find apostles or anyone else instructing new believers about how to receive Spirit baptism. It is interesting that Charismatics who claim they have rediscovered important teachings found in the book of Acts (lost by the church for almost nineteen centuries) really do not follow the teaching in Acts. Instead they import their theological presuppositions upon the text of Scripture. c) The coming of the Holy Spirit was sudden and *unexpected*. In Charismatic churches people who come to the front of the church and “accept Jesus as their personal savior” are then given detailed instructions on what they must do to receive Spirit baptism. In the book of Acts the baptism in the Spirit is sovereignly bestowed by Christ apart from human technique or merit.

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