

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost in the Book of Acts

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The book of Acts begins with Jesus' final instructions to his disciples. In a very short time, Jesus would ascend into the heavens and never appear in the flesh to his disciples again. These are his last words, the final instructions to those he had commissioned to preach the gospel to every nation.

Acts 1:4-9: *"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, **but wait for the promise of the Father**, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; **but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence**. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. **But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.** And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. Acts 1:4-9*

With his departing words, Jesus promised the disciples that they would "be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." In the remainder of this article, we take a closer look at the six occasions that are recorded in the book of Acts where someone was filled with the Holy Ghost. In each of these instances, we will seek to bring your attention to important truths that are often overlooked or ignored.

I - The Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:2-4: *"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly **there came a sound from heaven** as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And **there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire**, and it sat upon each of them. And **they were all filled with the Holy Ghost**, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

What child of God could read this account without being stirred inside to have such an outpouring of the Spirit today? As God's Spirit was poured out, the believers spoke the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11) in languages they had never learned as the Spirit gave them utterance. Let us look at some important truths concerning this event.

1. A sound from Heaven. *"There came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."* This was certainly a great manifestation as the Spirit of God "rushed" into the place where the disciples were gathered. Notice it was not the disciples that were filled with the sound from heaven, but the house. There is no record in the scripture that this manifestation ever occurred again.

2. Cloven tongues of Fire. *"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them."* This was another great supernatural manifestation. It seems to relate back to the "first day of Pentecost" when God came down upon Mount Sinai in the fire, and desiring to bring the children of Israel into

His covenant with Abraham, He spoke to them with an audible voice. Israel rejected the voice of God that day and never received the covenant promises (Exodus 19:5-6), which God fulfilled upon the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost. The fire did not come on the mountain this time, but upon those who were waiting for the promise of the Father. Luke's account of what happened next seems to indicate that these cloven tongues of fire were a sign that the same "fire" that had been on the mountain had now come to rest upon the church of Jesus Christ. Never again are the cloven tongues of fire recorded in the scripture.

3. They spoke with other tongues. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

There was a direct connection between the disciples being filled with the Holy Ghost and speaking in other tongues. They were heard speaking in many different languages the wonderful works of God.(Acts 2:11) Those who were filled with the Holy Ghost that day had never learned the languages they were speaking in.

4. The Spirit gave the utterance. *'and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'* The tongues they spoke in were a supernatural utterance. The disciples were not doing the "speaking." They spoke as the Spirit gave the utterance. The Holy Ghost was using their breath, mouth, vocal chords, and tongues to speak the wonderful works of God in a language they themselves did not understand.

5. They were filled with the Spirit of God. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..."* Jesus had told the disciples of the comforter who would come saying, *"for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* The disciples received something much more than just speaking in tongues. The Spirit of the Father took up residence in them as His temple. During Jesus' earthly ministry, the Spirit of God had been with some of these disciples to preach, heal the sick, and even cast out devils. The Holy Ghost had been with them, but now he had come to dwell in them.

6. The promise of the Holy Ghost was to everyone that God would call. *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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."* Acts 2:38-39 The baptism with the Holy Ghost was not for just a certain group of people. It is promised to everyone who receives Jesus Christ.

II - The Disciples Filled: Again

Acts 4:31: *"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness"*

1. There are times of being "refilled" with the Holy Ghost. It is very likely that most, if not all, who were assembled together with Peter and John, had already received been baptized with the Holy Ghost. Yet this day, they were all filled again with the Spirit of God. Being filled with the Holy Ghost is not a onetime event.

2. The filling with the Holy Ghost is always a notable occasion. The scripture says, *"the place was shaken."* It is possible that this means the building was literally moved, but it seems more likely that the people in the place were "shaken" by the visitation of the Spirit. It is very clear that what happened was not a dry formal event.

3. You can tell when someone is being filled (or refilled) with the Holy Ghost. *"and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."* The books of Acts does not record how they knew that everyone in this place was filled with the Holy Ghost, but they were certain that it happened. Something took place that caused the early church to recognize that all of these were being filled again with the Spirit of God. This was not an assumption, but a reality.

4. "and they spake the word of God with boldness" On the day of Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost they spoke the wonderful works of God in other languages. The result of this filling with the Spirit was that they went forth and spoke the word of God with boldness in a language they understood.

III - The Revival in Samaria

Acts 8:5-20: *“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. **And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake**, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. **But when they believed Philip** preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, **they sent unto them Peter and John:** Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: **(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:** only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And **when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given**, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”*

1. There was a great revival. *“And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”* This was a great revival in Samaria. Philip was full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 6:5) and God was working mightily through him. Devils were being cast out, the lame and sick were being healed, and joy filled the city.

2. People were being saved. *“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”* People were being born again into the kingdom of God. This was a greater soul winning revival than most have ever seen. Many believed the gospel that Philip preached and were baptized in the name of the Lord.

3. None of these new believers had received the Holy Ghost yet. *“...they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:”* Although they had received Jesus Christ by faith, they had not received the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost is both a separate and a distinctly different gift of God apart from the gift of salvation.

4. No one has received the Holy Ghost if he has not first fallen on them. *“...they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:”* Philip and the apostles could tell by what they saw, or had not seen, that none of the believers in Samaria had received the Holy Ghost. They knew this because the Holy Ghost had not “fallen” on any of these new believers. The Holy Ghost is not received by faith. The Holy Ghost is not received when you receive Jesus Christ by faith. The Holy Ghost is received through a baptism which falls on a person when He comes to fill them.

5. The Holy Ghost falls on people when He comes to fill them. *“For as yet he was fallen upon none of them:”* The baptism of the Holy Ghost does not begin within a person, it comes from “above.” The belief that you receive the Holy Spirit when you receive Christ by faith is an error. We receive Christ by faith. We receive the Holy Ghost when Jesus baptizes us with the Spirit of God. In that baptism, the Holy Ghost will always fall on a person when He comes to fill them.

6. You can always tell when a person receives the Holy Ghost. *“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money...”* Everyone around can tell when a person receives the Holy Ghost. Such is the glory, power, and manifestation of that baptism. There was a definite manifestation that the early church looked for as evidence that a person had received the Holy Ghost. What that evidence was, is not mentioned in this passage, but it is clear that they knew when the Holy Ghost fell on someone and when he had not.

IV - Saul Receives the Holy Ghost

“Acts 9:17: *“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”*

1. Paul did not receive the Holy Ghost at his conversion. Paul received the Holy Ghost three days after he believed upon Jesus Christ and surrendered to Him. When Ananias came to him, he accepted him as *“Brother Saul”* and told him he had come that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Paul had already surrendered to Jesus Christ three days before he met Ananias.

2. The baptism with Holy Ghost did not only come through the ministry of the Apostles. *“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias...”* (Acts 9:10) Ananias was not an Apostle. He is referred to simply as a disciple, yet God sent him to Saul so that he would receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

V - Gentiles are Filled with the Spirit

Acts 10:44-46: *“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”*

1. Speaking in tongues was recognized by the early church as the evidence that someone had received the Holy Ghost. *For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”* Peter and those with him knew these had received the Holy Ghost because they spoke in tongues and magnified God. This was certain evidence that these Gentiles had been baptized with the Holy Ghost. There is no record that anyone understood the tongues these were speaking in.

2. The Holy Ghost fell on them. *“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”* These who received the Holy Ghost that day knew nothing about speaking in tongues. They were not told to say what came into their mind or repeat words they had been given to speak. It was the Spirit of God who gave the utterance. Again, it is recorded; *“the Holy Ghost fell on all them.”* It did not *“rise up within them,”* it *“fell upon them”* from heaven.

4. They had already received Jesus Christ when the Holy Ghost fell upon them. *“And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:8-9). It may seem to some that these received Christ and the Holy Ghost at the same time, but Peter says that when God gave them the Holy Ghost He had seen that their hearts were purified by faith in Christ. (Christ will take your sin away in a moment of time!)

VI - The Believers at Ephesus

Acts 19:1-6: *“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, 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. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. 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. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

1. The early church knew that receiving the Holy Ghost was subsequent to receiving Jesus Christ by faith. *"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"* It is evident that these disciples who Paul met in Ephesus had only heard the gospel in part. Paul, however, was convinced that they were believers when he asked, *"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?"* This was not an unusual situation for Paul or the other ministers of Christ. The believers at Samaria had not received the Holy Ghost when they first believed in Christ. Paul himself had not. The truth is most believers do not receive the Holy Ghost the same hour they receive Christ.

2. They knew they received the Holy Ghost because they spoke with tongues and prophesied. *"...the Holy Ghost came upon them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied"* *"Speaking with tongues"* is again the evidence that these had received the Holy Ghost. This was how the early church recognized that a person had been baptized with the Spirit of God. When the Holy Ghost did come into these believers, they spoke with tongues and prophesied. The Spirit of God, as he always does, took control of the tongue and gave evidence that He had come in, as they yielded their bodies to him. There is no evidence that anyone understood the tongues they spoke in. But they also began to speak the works of God in a language they understood. They *"prophesied."*

3. The Holy Ghost will always come upon you before He comes within you. *"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them."* The Holy Ghost came on them. It is clear that the early church could always tell when the Holy Ghost came upon a person. There was a visible manifestation and they would speak with other tongues. This was not something they worked up. It always falls from heaven. There is no passage in the scripture that tells us the Holy Ghost is in a person before He first comes upon them. The belief that you receive the Spirit of God when you receive Christ by faith is an error. It is based upon this error that some teach that every believer has the Holy Ghost within them, but need only to receive their *"prayer language."* Because of this error some seek to give people ways to *"prime the pump"* to cause that which abides within them to begin speaking in tongues. It is impossible to *"prime the pump,"* because the Holy Ghost must fall upon a person before they receive him. Speaking in tongues is not the baptism with the Holy Ghost. Speaking in tongues is only the initial evidence that someone has been baptized with the Holy Ghost.

What Paul said about Receiving the Spirit of God

Paul makes the following statement in the eighth chapter of Romans. He has spent most of this letter showing the work of Christ to free the believer from sin through the *"justification"* of the cross. Here Paul begins to show the work of the Spirit of God in the *"glorification"* of the believer. *"...Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. **And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. **But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"***** (Romans 8:9-11).

I often tell people that when our theology meets a scripture that clearly contradicts our theology, the problem is with our theology and not with the scripture. Here is one such passage. Probably most teachers would tell you that you receive the Spirit of God when you receive Jesus Christ. This belief holds that both are received by faith, so in fact (some believe), believing you have received both means that you have received both. Numerous scriptures refute this, error many of which we have seen in this writing. There are others who believe that you have not received Christ if you have not been filled with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Many of these hold that the *"Spirit of Christ"* and the *"Spirit of God"* are one and the same. Therefore, they believe, you have not received Jesus Christ if you have not received the baptism with the Holy Ghost. This belief also contradicts the scripture. In the passage above, the apostle Paul refers to the

Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God as being different. He also makes the point that the situation of one who has received the Holy Ghost is different from the one who has received only the Spirit of Christ. Again, in both cases, much of our theology contradicts scripture. Who do we believe, God or man? Let us take a look at three different situations Paul describes.

Situation 1

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

The truth of this statement is self evident. If a person has not received the spirit of Christ, they do not belong to God. They are not a child of God. They are lost. Even if they speak with tongues or raise the dead, they do not know God.

Situation 2

“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Paul’s statement ***“the Spirit is life because of righteousness”*** is a confirmation of all that he has written to this point in the letter to the Romans. Christ came to destroy our sin by nailing it to his cross. (*Romans 6:6*) His obedience to death nullified Adam’s *“effect”* in the believer. Where Adam had brought sin into man through his disobedience, Christ took away the sin and brought in righteousness. (*Romans 5:19*) A child of God is not still a sinner. They have received life and righteousness through Christ Jesus. However, Paul says, even though the spirit is life, *“the body is dead because of sin.”* Paul does not say that the body is sinful, but rather ***“the body is dead BECAUSE of sin.”*** The body of a child of God is not sinful. Sin is always a problem in the heart and spirit of a person. The body is just the house a person lives in. Adam’s transgression affected more than just the spirit of man. According to the scripture, Adam was not only made in God’s image, but also crowned with glory and honor. (*Psalms 8:5*) Because God is a Spirit, it was not Adam’s body that was in the image of God, but his inner man. The body of Adam, being crowned with glory and honor, was a flesh and bone *“temple”* where the power and glory of God was manifested. This was lost in the transgression. Because of Adam’s sin, the human body lost the Spirit of God working through it. For a child of God, this is a troubling estate. Christ has come into them in glorious life and righteousness. Yet all they would do in service for God is restrained because of the *“deadness”* of their body.

Situation 3

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

In this statement, Paul not only clearly establishes that receiving the Spirit of God is distinct and separate from receiving the Spirit of Christ, but he tells us what the Holy Ghost will do in the believer. He ***“shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*** The Holy Ghost *“quicken”* our bodies to do the works of God. It is only through the working of the Holy Ghost that God manifests His glory and power in our mortal bodies.

A Modern Day Error

I must admit that I am distressed by the wounds that the Pentecostal and full gospel movements have inflicted upon itself through ignorance of the things of the Spirit. There are, and probably always will be, those who resist the Holy Ghost, and fight against every manifestation of the Spirit. Those who do so from the outside through unbelief can do no great harm to a move of the Spirit of God. It is those who embrace the baptism with the Holy Ghost in doctrine, but actually seek nothing more than what Paul calls a *“fair shew in the flesh”* that do the greatest harm. When you hear a minister boast that they have seen more people filled with the Holy Ghost than anyone in history, it is a signal that something is wrong. When you hear them tell the people that the Holy Ghost is *“received by faith,”* and instruct them to simply speak whatever comes into their minds,

you can know that the minister himself is spiritually ignorant. When he tells those who obey his instructions that they have received the Holy Ghost, you know that reality has been lost, and pretense has taken its place. When you see people who can open their mouth and instantly began to speak in tongues without any move of the Spirit of God, you know they have been the victim of some pastor or evangelist who only wanted to make a *"fair shew in the flesh,"* just as those who wanted to circumcise the people in the churches at Galatia (Galatians 6:12). When you see churches that are filled with *"tongue talkers"* that are no different than the world, you know they have not received what the hundred and twenty received on the Day of Pentecost. Far too many preachers today think they have found shortcuts to give the people the Holy Ghost without the necessity of seeking God until the Spirit falls on them from heaven. What they have really accomplished is to insure that the Spirit will never fall on those who believe them. It is sad but true that if you are satisfied with something less than that which is real, that is exactly what you will have. Let us instead be counted with those who seek God for that which *"comes suddenly from heaven"* and falls upon the people in a mighty baptism from above!