

Baptism “With the Holy Ghost and Fire”

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: (Mat. 3:11, KJB)

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. (Acts 1:5, KJB)

Comparing the above account of John the Baptist (Mat. 3:11) with that of Jesus (Acts 1:5) we find that both teach our Lord will baptize *with* the Holy Spirit (Greek = εν = Eng. “in” – but as the case is Instrumental = “with”). Both refer to the filling of the Spirit which occurred at Pentecost (Acts 2:4).

These verses do not mean that baptism *with* the Holy Spirit would do away with baptism in water. The Lord simply used the occasion of John’s baptizing to give the promise of the baptism *with* the Holy Spirit which was soon to come. Long after Pentecost the apostles continued to baptize, and there is no hint in the New Testament that God’s plan ever changed. Rather, the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:14-20; Acts 1:8) expressly states that all converts were to be baptized even “unto the end of the world.” Again, Baptism *with* the Holy Spirit was never intended as a substitute for baptism in water.

When not modified by a clear differing context, the word baptism in the New Testament normally means a literal immersion in water. That is the usual, well-understood designation. Thousands were baptized in water, and the term was commonly used referring only to baptism in water before the term was ever used concerning baptism with the Spirit. Moreover, the familiar term “water baptism,” as used today in most Christian circles, is nowhere to be found in Scripture. There, baptism is a literal immersion, a burial, and the normal use of the term typically refers to immersion in water. Every Christian is commanded to be so baptized.

In Matthew 3:11 John said, “*I indeed baptize you with water... .*” John’s baptizing with water clearly had a significant part in announcing the Messiah’s ministry. Baptism in water primarily pictures Christ’s death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). By so doing, the Christian displays that they believe that Jesus so did. But it further shows that he counts the old sin nature dead and buried and that he is raised out of the watery grave to live the new Christ-life. Finally, it portrays that the one being baptized believes that should he die, God will likewise one day raise them from the dead to live with Him forever. Baptism is thus quite a testimony to one’s faith.

But in the above Mat. 3:11 passage, the Lord Jesus is pictured and announced as mightier than even John, one of the greatest ever born of women (Mat. 11:11). Indeed, Jesus “*shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.*” All four Gospels relate that Jesus was to baptize *with* the Holy Ghost (Mat. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Luk. 3:16; John 1:33). The emphasis the Scriptures place on this statement indicates its importance. Moreover, at Acts 1:4-5 Jesus Himself gave an analogous statement:

and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, 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.

“Baptism *with* the Holy Spirit” conveys a “spiritual” happening regarding the term baptism. Many others such as “filled with the Spirit,” “anointed,” “the gift of the Holy Ghost,” the Holy Ghost coming *upon* someone, receiving the Spirit are also found for events similar to that which happened at Pentecost. “Filled with the Holy Spirit” is the most usual term and is that used in Acts 2:4.¹

Christians may still be baptized *with* or filled with the Spirit today, but here a most important distinction must be made. Baptism *with* the Holy Spirit is uniformly used to denote the *initial*

¹ When the preposition “of” is used with regard to baptism (e.g., “the baptism of the Spirit”) it *always* involves either the baptism of repentance or the baptism of John. Baptism is neither “in order to repent,” nor before repentance, just as baptism is not in order to obtain salvation or before salvation. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist baptized pointing to a repentance which had *already* taken place in the heart.

coming upon: that is, one's *first* filling. After that experience, new such events are usually referred to as being "filled." That the Apostles as well as others experienced more fillings than their baptism *with* the Holy Spirit or the initial filling at Pentecost may be seen at Acts 4:8 and 4:31 (and probably also Paul, Acts 13:9: this occurred around 12 years after his being initially filled; Acts 9:17).² Indeed, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul commanded we Christians to be filled (Eph. 5:18).

In Acts 2:32-33, Peter explains the reason for the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost:

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

It is Christ who sends His disciples as witnesses with the Father's message to mankind, even as the Father sent Him (John 17:18; 20:21). It is Christ who breathed on and in them the indwelling Holy Spirit on Resurrection evening (John 20:22), and now upon trusting in His gospel He gives all such Christians the Holy Spirit to dwell within. It is also Christ who gives the power of the Holy Spirit to those who will witness for Him.

The Baptism With Fire

Now Mark and John mention only the promise, "*He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost,*" while in Matthew and Luke the Baptist adds, "*and with fire.*" Completely misunderstanding this phrase, many today teach the flock of God to seek the so-called "baptism of fire." This is error as may be seen in the following verse where we find that Christ: "will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." Thus we see that far from being a blessed experience to be sought for, the baptism with fire (Mat. 3: 11) is the eternal punishment of the unsaved. This is clarified and confirmed in verse 12: "he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Christ, who will pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people, is also the Christ who has the authority of final judgment. It is Christ who will judge and condemn the unrepentant to eternal Hell.

Remember, the Lord Jesus told us that the Father "hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Thus, when He returns to set up His kingdom, it is Christ Himself who will say to the living unsaved Gentiles on His left hand: "Depart front me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat. 25:41). Matthew 13:41-42 adds that the Son of Man, "shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Those who portray Christ as only a God of love and as the Savior full of grace and mercy but do not also depict Him as the righteous Judge who, in Holiness, will send forth His wrath against rebellious sinners greatly misrepresent Him. The great question has always been: is God a God of love and mercy or a God of justice and righteousness who punishes sin. Scripture reveals that He is both. The two are not hostile to one another. The Christ who will gather the wheat into His garner is the same Christ who will burn up the chaff in everlasting Hell "*with fire unquenchable.*" Thus, Scripture is unmistakably clear: no one wants to receive the baptism with fire.

Our Lord's Prophetic Teaching on the Holy Spirit's Ministry

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. John 7:37-38

What is meant by: "come unto me and drink" (vs. 37)? Verse 38 explains it. "He that believeth on me" – this is what is meant by "drinking": this is what receiving Him means at John 1:12. It is similar to when Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Apostle John were said to "eat" the words of God. This meant that they were to take His words and thoroughly devour and digest them (see: Jer. 15:16; Ezk.

² One reason why more than one filling is often necessary is because believers both grieve and quench the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thes. 5:19).

2:7-3:4; Rev. 10:9-10). Here at John 7, drink simply means to receive Christ into one's heart by putting their faith in Him. Believing on Christ Jesus is the way to receive the water of eternal life. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38): not only by faith does one obtain the water of salvation for himself, the Holy Spirit living within causes them to become an overflowing fountain from which the Holy Spirit pours out rivers of blessing and salvation for others.

Then Christ further explained: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (vs. 39). Here, the Lord clarified that the Spirit, who was present on earth from the Creation till then, would not be given for this kind of ministry until after He was glorified – that is, not until after He received His glorified body at the Resurrection. Thus Christ was alluding to a future event, a future ministry of the Holy Spirit. In John 15:26-27 Jesus made this same promise:

But when the Comforter is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The Holy Spirit was "with" the disciples the night before the crucifixion. He was "in" the disciples the evening after Christ's resurrection (John 20:21-22).

After coming into the Christian, the Holy Spirit will never leave him. At regeneration, the Holy Spirit literally indwells the believer. At times their spiritual life may be underdeveloped, immature, and lacking much fruit brought to perfection – as plants in poor soil – but they can never again become lost. The Spirit seals and abides in them "until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30).

As alluded to already, John 20:19-22 tells how the Holy Spirit was received into the bodies of ten of the eleven (as well as other disciples, Luk. 24:33), on the day Jesus arose from the dead:³

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

The *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit did not come at Pentecost but on the day of the resurrection of Christ. Pentecost was the day of the enduement of power. Beginning with the day Jesus rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit began to indwell all that heard and trusted in faith the New Covenant gospel message. First Corinthians 6:19-20 tells us:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

And Romans 8:9 says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." We must not confuse the indwelling of the Spirit, which began the day of Christ's resurrection, with the enduement of power from on High for witnessing. This first came on the day of Pentecost to those who waited for the anointing to bear testimony with power as to the person and finished work of the Lord Jesus in redeeming mankind. Acts 2:4 records that the 120 were "filled with the Holy Ghost" for just that

³ On that same day, Jesus had earlier met and taught two disciples on the road to Emmaus that the entire Old Testament was about Him: for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luk. 24:27). On the same evening to which this cited passage refers, these two returned to Jerusalem and reported to the ten (and others, Thomas being absent: Luk. 24:33; John 20:24) that they had seen and talked with the risen Lord. As indicated, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst. After showing them His hands, feet, side, and eating in their presence, He said to them: "all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Then, after repeating to this larger gathering of disciples that the Old Testament was about Him, our Lord opened "their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luk. 24:33-45).

purpose. And many of these were filled again in Acts 4:31 (see: Eph. 5:18). But ever since resurrection evening, the indwelling of the Spirit begins the moment one trusts in Christ.

Indeed, John the Baptist had earlier said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Mat. 3:11). In the Gospel of John chapter one, John the Baptist gives an extended discussion of the coming Savior and at verse 33 he says: "And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." In these verses, John the Baptist had been led to give great emphasis to the fact that Jesus Himself would baptize His people *with* the Holy Spirit. But Christ Jesus later made a similar yet different promise.

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, 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. (Acts 1:4-5)

This was "the promise of the Father," of which they had already heard. Now the phrase "the promise of the Father" with regard to the Holy Spirit indicates that there were Old Testament prophecies about a pouring out of the Holy Spirit. One such was Ezekiel 36:26-27, and another was Joel 2:28.

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

Still another was Isaiah 44:3. It and Joel 2:28 certainly speak of what would happen later at Pentecost. Isaiah 61:1, 11:1-4 and other Scriptures speak of the fullness of the Spirit upon Messiah Jesus. Scripture also indicates there will be a great pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Israel when its remnant will be saved at the close of the Great Tribulation.

Moreover, Jesus gave a clear teaching concerning this fullness of the Spirit (Luk. 11:5-13). This outpouring of the Holy Spirit in power is also referred to as "the promise of the Father" (Luk. 24:49; Acts 1:4, 2:33, 2:39; Eph. 1:13 and 3:6). They should "wait for the promise" of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 24:49 He had commanded them, "...but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." They tarried. Meanwhile, they "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Acts 1:14). They waited and prayed in that upper room until the day of Pentecost, which came ten days later (Acts 2:1).

"Baptized With the Holy Ghost"

Again, the Bible uses the term "baptism" in a literal, physical sense to refer to the total immersion of the believer in water. As shall be enlarged upon later, the term is also used in four other ways as a figure of speech. Although the Bible never actually uses the term "water baptism," physical baptism is performed in water and the term should normally be understood as such unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Throughout the New Testament, literal baptism means the complete immersion of a believer in water.

Months before Christ Jesus began His ministry, we read: "Then went out to him (John the Baptist) Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mat. 3:5-6). Thus, as John had previously baptized thousands, the term "baptism" was already widely used throughout Israel. Physical baptism in water had become a household word. Although Jesus himself water baptized no one, His disciples "made and baptized even more disciples than John" (John 4:1). Surely, the reason our Lord did not water baptize was so as not to confuse the reader when Scripture later referred to Him as the baptizer with the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:11; Luk. 3:16; cp. Acts 1:4-5).

Now it is a mistake to confuse Acts 1:5, the promise that was fulfilled with these apostles on the day of Pentecost, with 1 Corinthians 12:13, which refers to salvation and the new birth. Baptized into the body of Christ by the agency the Holy Spirit which happens at conversion is what 1 Corinthians 12:13 addresses. However, the overwhelming endowment of power imparted by the Holy Spirit for

witnessing concerning the person and finished work of redemption by Christ is entirely another matter.

The reader must come to see that there are two different figurative uses of the term “baptism.” Baptized *by* the Holy Spirit places us into the body of Christ but baptized *with* the Holy Spirit gives the believer power to effectively testify as to the gospel.⁴ Baptism *with* the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:5 means the same as “endued with power from on high” at Luke 24:49. It is the same as receiving “power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you” at Acts 1:8, the same as “filled with the Holy Ghost” in Acts 2:4, the same as the gift of the Holy Ghost in Acts 2:38-39, and the same as “the promise of the Father” at Acts 1:4 (also Luk. 24:49 where again “upon you” is used as at Acts 1:8. This promise of the Spirit coming *upon* the believers is given in the OT at Joel 2:28 and Isa. 44:3).

With so many eyewitnesses still alive during the ministry of the apostles, the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection was so overwhelming that no one dared to dispute it in that region and time. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the risen Savior. Our Lord now repeats to them what He had said in the high priestly prayer at John 17:18: “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I so sent them in the world.” Resurrection evening Jesus says to them, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). If they are to be *sent like Jesus*, then they must have the same anointing of the Spirit as our Lord had when He was filled with the Spirit at His baptism (cp. Luk. 3:22 and 4:1).

John 20:22 goes on to say that “*he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*” The disciples they were already Old Testament saved. At this moment the Holy Spirit came to live *within* them, and they now become partakers of the New Covenant. Christ Jesus had foretold this to them concerning the Holy Spirit, “For he dwelleth with you and shall be in you” (John 14:7). He was with the disciples that night before the crucifixion, but on Resurrection day He came into their bodies as their permanent possession. This is the same thing Promised in John 7:37-39:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

This means that the Spirit was not yet given as Jesus did not yet have a “glorified” resurrection body! Now it is time. From this time forward, every person who repents and commits themselves to the gospel of Christ Jesus has the Holy Spirit abiding within (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20).

But it is both implied and intended that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is to bear fruit as a result of His power pouring forth from the Christian. That did not happen to the disciples until *after* they tarried 40 days in Jerusalem at which time they were endued with power from on High on the day of Pentecost. It simply must be recognized that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (which began for ten of them on resurrection evening, 8 days later for Thomas) and the fullness of the Spirit (a special enduement of power from on High which was poured out at Pentecost) were two separate experiences for the eleven disciples.

Matthew 16:19, addressed to Simon Peter, has also caused much misunderstanding.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The Roman Catholic Church takes this as meaning that Peter was being authorized to be the head of a worldwide church, the vice-regent of God on earth and founder of the papacy. But this egregious error is laid bare and clarified when we compare it to a similar statement made by our Lord at Matthew 18:18: “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

⁴ Darby and Scofield’s teaching on this goes against that of Moody, Torrey, Spurgeon and other great soul winning teachers.

The subtle but significant difference between the two is found in the pronouns “thee” and “thou” at Mat. 16:19 as compared to the pronoun “ye” in Mat. 18:18. Now there is a built-in problem in today’s English grammar. Both the second person singular and second person plural read “you are” (Southerners solved this dilemma with the plural “you all”). In translating the Bible, Tyndale brilliantly resolved it by rendering all the “t” pronouns (thy, thou, thee, thine) as *always* being second person *singular* and all the “y” pronouns (ye, you, your) as *always* being second person *plural*.

Following Tyndale’s lead, the King James translators continued this practice throughout the entire Bible. Thus, whereas our Lord is speaking directly to Peter in Mat. 16:19 (“thee” = singular), the plural “ye” in the Matthew 18:18 companion passage shows that He is giving *all* the disciples the authority to “bind and loose.” Therefore, they had to also have been given the “keys of the kingdom” in order that they could so do. Hence, we see that the keys were not Simon Peter’s exclusive possession as the Roman Church would have it. The same promise was given to *all* the disciples!

Furthermore, the context of these verses should obviously be taken with the John 20:23 passage: “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Again we find the plural “ye,” therefore all the disciples were given authority to remit or retain sins, not just Peter. Besides, many Scriptures teach that no one except Christ Jesus has the authority to forgive sins (e.g., Mk. 2:5-7; John 5:22; Isa. 43:25 cp. John 1:1).

Before leaving the phrase “baptized *with* the Holy Spirit,” our reader must grasp that effective witnessing can only be accomplished as the born-again are endued with power from the Holy Spirit. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me...” (Acts 1:8). It is only as the Spirit empowers the Christian that souls come under conviction.

“Ye Shall Receive Power, After That the Holy Ghost Is Come Upon You”

Acts 1:8 is of tremendous importance in defining that which happened at Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they simply received power to witness for Jesus. The same thing is stated at Luke 24:49, “But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” In both these passages, the promise of witnessing power is given in connection with the Great Commission.

No one should fail to understand what is recorded here. The disciples were not told to tarry for the gift of tongues. The preaching of the Gospel with compelling, convicting power is that which was promised. There were miracles in connection with Pentecost, the sound of a rushing mighty wind and visible tongues of fire that sat above the heads of the 120 – yet, in a real sense, these were almost incidental. These were neither that which was promised nor that for which they waited. Those accompanying miracles were not foretold. What they were to wait for was power from on high. They were to receive power to witness for Jesus.

Throughout the forty days following the resurrection, Jesus had pressed upon His disciples the command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Further, the command was not only to them but to all Christians who should follow, “even unto the end of the world,” as well as “to every creature.” The Lord firmly joined together the duty to preach the Gospel and the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, no one has the authority to separate them. The one great requirement for being able to witness with convicting power is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

There are many errors and misunderstandings regarding the meaning of Pentecost. But we observe that the disciples were not waiting for the origin of the church. The “general assembly church of the first-born which are written in heaven” will be called out at the rapture. It will include all the saved of all ages – beginning with Able. The Word of God never says when the church began, never speaks of its “origin” or “founding.” That is not what the Scriptures are speaking about at Pentecost. Rather, the disciples are commanded to wait until they are endued with power from on high by the Holy Ghost’s “coming upon them” after which they were to witness concerning Jesus’ person and finished work in redeeming fallen man and thereby carry out the Great Commission (Mat.28:18-20; Mk 16:14-20).

The disciples were not waiting to speak in tongues. The speaking in different real earth languages was simply a powerful witnessing tool (as the Lord had promised). The tongues of fire that sat upon each of them and the supernatural ability to speak in the languages of those who were gathered at Jerusalem for Pentecost were given so they could effectively witness and win souls. And so they did.

The disciples were not waiting for a so-called “second work of grace.” There is not the slightest hint that the carnal nature was destroyed in these disciples at Pentecost or that they were “sanctified.” No, they had been given the task of carrying the Gospel to the entire world. Now they were commanded to wait upon God for an enduement of power which would enable them to fulfill this task. The meaning of that day of Pentecost is as simple as that. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me... .”

When the disciples were “baptized with the Holy Ghost” at Pentecost as promised in Acts 1:5, they were simply overwhelmed by the mighty power of God to enable them to witness. This is what it means to be “filled with the Holy Ghost” (the more usual, more literal term used throughout the book of Acts but also referring to what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2:4). Thus, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be baptized *with* the Spirit means the same thing. At Pentecost, God fulfilled His promise to “pour out of my Spirit” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-18). This enduement of power from on high for witnessing is “the gift of the Holy Ghost” of Acts 2:38. It is promised to all whom “the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39).

That which happened at Pentecost was that the disciples were girded with power to witness for Christ, and the result was that around three thousand souls came to Christ. Joel prophesied that Pentecost was included in “the last days,” therefore the enduement of power on that day is promised and available throughout this age for all Christians.

Regarding the church, Dr. C.I. Scofield gives a note at Ephesians 3:6 which says, “That the Gentiles were to be saved was no mystery (Rom. 9:24-33; 10:19-21). The mystery ‘hid in God’ was the divine purpose to make of Jew and Gentile a wholly new thing – ‘the church, which is his [Christ’s] body.’” However this misses the real point, which is: “That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”

The mystery revealed here is *not* that there will be a *new* body, but that the Gentiles will be admitted along with godly Jews into the *same* body. Indeed, that is the sense of nearly all the preceding second chapter. It tells us that the Gentiles have now been brought near to God by the blood of Christ and been made partakers of the same blessings with Jews: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). The church, then, is not merely a New Testament body. It includes all the saved of all ages. Thus, it was not formed nor begun at Pentecost.

Misunderstanding Pentecost leads to a Misconception over the Origin of the Church

Many scholars believe that a new dispensation began at Pentecost. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit was *with* and alongside the saved, but did not permanently dwell *within* them. As Jesus said in John 14:17: “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” He was *with* the Old Testament saints; but at some time in the future, He would be *in* them.

The event that brought about this change was Jesus’ Cross and His Resurrection. Since then, the Holy Spirit dwells within the body of every one who trusts in Christ’s gospel. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Romans 8:9 adds, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelt in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” So the Holy Spirit now dwells in every born again child of God. But this did not begin at Pentecost! No, the permanent indwelling of the Spirit began on the day our Lord rose from the dead!

This was foretold in John 7:37-39:

In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

That is, the Holy Spirit could not yet be given in the sense of permanently indwelling the body of the believer and flowing out from them until Christ was glorified. The day Jesus rose from the dead “the same day at evening” Jesus came to the disciples in His glorified body. Ten of the eleven were hiding behind shut doors “for fear of the Jews” (Thomas being absent, John 24:24). The risen Savior spoke peace to them and showed them His hands, side, and feet (John 20:20; cp. Luk. 24:39-40).

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:21-22).

When Jesus first chose these men they were already Old Testament saved (as saved as Moses, Abraham, Elijah etc.). Now our Lord appears to the fearful 10 (Thomas being absent, John 20:24) and breathed on (Greek = ἐν = in/at: Locative case) them saying: “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.”

Again, this was not a prophetic utterance as some have would have it. The Greek here is unmistakable. It is the Aorist tense (a tense not present in the English language), imperative mood. Tense is the quality of the verb which has to do with action – both the time and kind of action. The aorist indicates a *finished* action in *past* time. The imperative mood indicates a *command*. Thus, Jesus the Creator is commanding them to: “Receive the Holy Spirit right here and right now.”

The force of the aorist tense is that it happened then and there, not at some time in the future (i.e., not at Pentecost). But the full force as to what just transpired was that the Creator actually breathed *into* them the Holy Spirit, not just merely on them. By so doing, our Lord brought them into the New Covenant. This was only fitting. As the bearers of the New Covenant message, they must also rightfully be made partakers of that covenant by receiving the Holy Spirit as their permanent indwelling possession. And so they were. Thus, any so-called dispensational change happened at the resurrection, not at Pentecost! The Holy Spirit from that time forward dwells within the body of all born-again believers upon their acceptance of the gospel.

Yet even so, these now New Covenant believers were still not ready to witness as to their Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection. Instead, Christ told them to remain in Jerusalem until “the promise of the Father” came “upon” them and clothed them with power from on high. This would enable them to effectively witness concerning Him (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4–5 and verse 8). Also note that it was not knowledge of the Resurrection that made these disciples the bold, fearless witnesses we find in the Book of Acts as some would have it. No, with full knowledge from early that morning that Christ had risen they were still afraid and hiding behind closed doors. Of course, such awareness was helpful but it did not suffice. The Holy Spirit coming *upon* them changed all that. Selah!

What brought about the difference, and what was the true significance of that Pentecost? Jesus explained it very simply: “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” (Acts 1:8). They waited in the upper room till they were endued with power from on high. It was when the Holy Spirit came *upon* them (not *in* them) in power that they spoke fearlessly to the crowd and about three thousand souls were added to them that day.

Hence, Pentecost was not the day of “the descent of the Holy Ghost” as many well intended brothers in Christ would have it. Insofar as “moving His headquarters from Heaven to earth,” in “a new ministry” the Holy Spirit had done that on the day of our Lord’s resurrection.

Those who were filled with the Spirit in Acts 2:4 were merely filled again in Acts 4:31. That is, they were again endowed with power for witnessing. Pentecost was simply the day the Holy Spirit began to fulfill the ministry of which Jesus spoke in John 16:7-11:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

This began as the disciples started out filled with the Spirit to obey the Great Commission. But the church was not begun by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, as many good men have thought.

A Misunderstanding of the Baptism of the Spirit and of 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 Has Led Many to Wrongly Believe that the Church was Formed at Pentecost

Further in a study of the Book of Acts, the earnest student will find that the great endowment of power received at Pentecost is referred to in other places as: “baptized with,” “filled with,” “the gift of the Spirit,” they “received” the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit fell “on” or “upon” (Greek = ἐπί = epi) them. It is certain that Jesus told His disciples, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1:5).

Those supposing that “being baptized with the Spirit” at Pentecost meant the formation of the church simply do not understand the meaning of the word baptism as used in the Bible.

There are five different baptisms recorded in Scripture. One is a *physical* baptism by immersion in water. The others are the “*figurative*” baptisms of suffering (Luk. 12:50) and Israel’s being “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:2) as well as the “*spiritual*” baptisms on the chart below. Since many confuse these latter two as being the same event, the following is offered for clarity.⁵ Like water baptism, they consist of four elements: there is a baptizer, a baptizee, a medium in which to be immersed, and a purpose for so doing.

COMMENTS	BAPTIZER	BAPTIZEE	MEDIUM IMMERSED IN	PURPOSE
Baptized <i>by</i> the H.S. at the new birth 1 Cor. 12:13	Holy Spirit	us	Christ’s Blood Rev. 1:5; 1 Joh. 1:7; Eph. 2:13	To put us into Christ Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:26-27
Baptism <i>with</i> the Holy Spirit Luk. 3:16; Acts 1:4-5	Jesus	us	Holy Spirit	Power to witness for Christ – Acts 1:5 & 8, Luk. 24:49

The careful student will see that to be baptized with the Holy Spirit for soul-winning power, as at Pentecost, is an entirely different matter from being taken by the Holy Spirit and placed into the body of Christ, as in 1 Corinthians 12:13:

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

It should be obvious that the meaning here is regeneration. Every born again believer is made a member of the body of Christ, the Church. Every one of us has been made to drink in one Spirit and has been put into one body by this same Holy Spirit who regenerated us.

⁵ Note: in 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Greek Textus Receptus NT reads “en” (transliterated “en,” English = in) but as it is the Instrumental case (i.e., the means) it should be translated “by” as it is in the 1611 King James Bible (and in the 1539 Cranmer’s Great Bible, the 1560 Geneva, the 1595 Bishop’s Bible, the NAS, NIV).

There exists a widespread misunderstanding that the church began on the day of Pentecost. That is remarkable, particularly since the Bible never says anything of the kind. Perhaps this idea comes from at least three errors.

1. A misunderstanding of what the church is.
2. A misunderstanding of Pentecost and just what transpired.
3. A misunderstanding of some Scriptures, particularly 1 Corinthians 12:13, and the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

Why the Church Could Not Have Been Formed at Pentecost

The Roman Catholic Church has led the world astray as to the meaning of the word church. With regard to that word, the Encyclopedia Britannica article on the Roman Catholic Church, written by a Catholic scholar, reads: "By it we mean the visible body or organization which Christ Himself set up to perpetuate for all time the authoritative teaching of the truth which He came on earth to reveal to mankind." Then he says, "A more technical definition would be as follows: 'the church instituted by Jesus Christ is the visible society of men who, having received baptism, united in the profession of the same faith and in one communion, and are seeking the same spiritual end under the authority of the Roman pontiff, the successor of St. Peter, and of the bishops who are in union with him:'"

All the major Protestant denominations which have an episcopacy or hierarchy are in that regard patterned after Rome. The idea of one world-wide society visible to men being called a church is utterly foreign to Bible usage. In God's Word, church never refers to a denomination or an organization. It never refers to all the denominations joined together. The church, the body of Christ, including all the saved, is another matter. To understand what the Bible teaches, we must rid ourselves of the idea of a denomination or a group of denominations in connection with the word *church*.

The Greek word *ekklesia* (ekklhsia), translated church in the New Testament, simply means a called-out assembly. Thus Israel, gathered out of Egypt at Mount Sinai, is called "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38). And it was a church: not a Christian organization and not a local New Testament church, but it was a called-out assembly.

So a local congregation of Christians is, in a specialized sense, a church. The word is used referring to local congregations about ninety times in the New Testament. Still, it does not refer to a building or home but to the born again individuals who meet there. This may be seen in 1 Cor. 14:23: "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place... ." Obviously, here the "place" is a building of some kind, but the "whole church" are the people who gather there.

But that "general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23), "the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), includes all the saved from the beginning. They will be a called-out assembly at the rapture, and hence this body of all the saved of all ages is called "the church."

This church could not have been formed at Pentecost because the word church (*ekklesia*) from Hebrews 12:23 and Acts 7:38 must include all the Old Testament saints.⁶ Of course, these were not present at Pentecost. Furthermore, the Old Testament saints will also be called up to meet the Lord in the air at the rapture, for: "The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air..." (1 Thes. 4:16-17). As the Old Testament saints are among "the dead in Christ," they will take part in the rapture. The above verses prove they are part of the "called-out assembly" (*ekklesia*) or the church, which is Christ's body.

⁶ True, *ekklesia* or "assembly" is used regarding the mob at Ephesus (Acts 19:32, 39, 41). Of course even though it was a called-out assembly, it was not in any way a church in the Bible sense.

Again, Acts 7:38 and Hebrews 12:23 show that Old Testament saints are written in Heaven just as much as New Testament saints (despite all ultra-dispensational objections to the contrary). Any point of origin for the church which leaves out part of the body of the called-out assembly, which will be raptured, is completely erroneous. The Lord Jesus loves the church and gave Himself for it. Scripture is clear that the church includes all who have accepted Him. As Galatians 3:8 tells us, God revealed the gospel to Abraham.

Someone may object that Jesus promised, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). Hence, they think the founding of the church was then future. But here Jesus spoke not of the origin of the church but rather of the long process of *construction*. He was indicating that He would be building His church – a continuing undertaking. Indeed, He is still building that body which will be called out at the rapture.

Again, speaking of this body which is continually building by the addition of new converts, Ephesians 2:19-22 says:

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

That building "groweth unto an holy temple." It is still being "builded."

When the believers from all ages are called out to meet Christ in the air, they will literally be a called out assembly, the church. They are now that in hope. But that body must involve all the saved of all ages, not just those since Pentecost – for Abel, Abraham, Moses, Elijah and David surely have the same right.

When Christ was glorified and raised from the dead, the same day He breathed upon the disciples and commanded, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:19-22). That very day they did "receive the Holy Ghost." However, as shall soon be shown from scripture in this work, this did neither happen to every Christian living at that time nor to all from that time forward as many teach. From that moment forward, He personally came to dwell in only those believers who heard and believed the New Testament gospel message.

For these, the Holy Spirit now dwells in their bodies. First Corinthians 6:19 and 20 read:

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Romans 8:9-10 reads:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. 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.

First Corinthians 3:16 and 17 says:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

At John 14:17 our Lord said that the Holy Spirit "dwelleth with you (speaking before the Cross), and shall be in you" (shall is future tense, meaning after the Resurrection). Now that promise was fulfilled before Pentecost. As has been shown, all the apostles and other Christians who waited at Pentecost for the enduement of power already had the Spirit of God dwelling within them (cp. Luk. 24:33-40). The dispensational change already mentioned at John 16:7-11 regarding the Holy Spirit occurred the day of the resurrection, not at Pentecost.

Again, the *fullness* of the Holy Spirit is not the same and must not be confused as being the *indwelling* of the Spirit. No New Covenant Christian ever needs to now pray for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell within. He does. That is part and parcel of the gospel. He is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Christ, as represented by the Holy Spirit, now manifests Himself within all New Covenant Christians.

Being Filled With the Spirit is Not “a New Work of God”

Before Pentecost other people had the power of the Holy Spirit come **upon** them. John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). The Baptist’s mother Elizabeth “was filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luk. 1:41). Zacharias, John’s father, was “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Luk. 1:67). Moreover, we are not only told that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit but also that he should go before Messiah “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luk. 1:17). This implies that Elijah was filled with the Spirit in the same fashion as these New Testament Christians.

Further, we read in many Old Testament Scriptures that the Spirit of the Lord came *upon* various people so they could prophesy or speak for God with power as well as perform great deeds (See: Exo. 35:3 1; Num. 11: 25-26, and 29; 1 Sam. 10:6 and 9, 16:13; Judg. 14:6, 19, and 15:14, 2 Ki. 2:9, 15). Thus, we see that the coming of the Holy Spirit *upon* people to fill, anoint or empower them was *not* a new thing at Pentecost.

“They...Began to Speak with Other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance”

Much confusion, misunderstanding, and false doctrine have centered around the matter of “speaking in tongues.” Surely after the Day of Pentecost in Acts, the first occasion in which the Holy Spirit was poured out after the giving of the Great Commission and Christ’s ascension, we should find a typical and definitive case of “speaking in tongues” – and we do. The word *tongue* in the Greek New Testament is *glōssa* (γλῶσσα); it means the literal tongue. Thus by inference, *glōssa* means a language or speech (as speaking in English or other languages).

Samaria – Acts 8:5-24

After Philip the Deacon preached Christ to the city of Samaria with attesting miracles following, those that believed were water baptized. The apostles at Jerusalem then sent Peter and John down to look into the matter. In seeing this multitude of new converts, the two apostles prayed that they might “*receive* the Holy Ghost” (Acts 8:15-17). Now the *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit is not intended by this.

Ever since Jesus breathed on the disciples resurrection evening (John 20:21-22), the Holy Spirit has come into every convert when they respond to the gospel by repenting and accepting the Lord. Moreover, repentance and believing in Christ Jesus are two facets of a single experience – they are a dynamic duo. Further, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and then regenerates their “dead” spirit whereby they are then said to be “born of the Spirit” (John 3:6). Therefore, having believed Philip’s preaching of the gospel, these Samaritan’s already had the Holy Spirit dwelling *within* them. But they had not yet *received* the Holy Spirit coming *upon* them in power. Scripture undeniably teaches that the two did not happen to them at the same time.

That which the disciples received in John 20:21-22, these Samaritan converts received at conversion. What the disciples received at Pentecost – the *fullness* of the Spirit, the *filling* of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit coming *upon* them, the *gift* of the Holy Spirit – they had not received. They already had the work of the Holy Spirit regarding salvation and sealing “unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 1:13, 4:30). They did not yet have the anointing power from the Holy Spirit for witnessing to the gospel of Christ. The Spirit had not yet “fallen upon” them. They had not received the fullness of the Spirit. So Peter and John prayed “that they might *receive* the Holy Ghost.” After they had prayed, the apostles “laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

Why was it necessary to send for Peter and John? Was it that the fullness could only be conferred by an apostle and thus Philip could not so bestow? Surely this was not the answer for when Ananias, who was not an apostle, laid hands on Paul he was both filled with the Spirit and healed immediately (Acts 9:17).

The best answer would seem to be that, as the half-breed Samaritans were greatly despised by the Jews, the church centered in Jerusalem would never accept them as brothers in Christ on only Philip's word. He had not been hand picked and taught those three years by the Lord. But who there could deny the testimony of Peter and John – thus, no schism would have existed within the new body of believers. This is why there was a delay in the Samaritans salvation and their being filled – why they had two experiences rather than only one.

Still, we must answer the question: what did Simon see when the two apostles laid their hands on the Samaritans whereupon the Holy Spirit came upon them (vs. 18)? Of course we cannot say with certainty for the scriptures do not tell us. However, it must be acknowledged that after seeing Philip perform notable miracles (vs. 7) he did not offer him money for that power. But what Simon saw happen when the Spirit came upon the new converts impressed him far more than Philip's gifts – and for this power he offered money.⁷ So what did Simon see?

Again, we do not know for sure but if we are to be honest with ourselves, the only conclusion one can draw from scripture is that only something very similar to the events that occurred at Pentecost could have caused Simon's response. It is undeniable that whatever happened was most dramatic. Indeed, so much so that Peter and John – both of whom experienced first hand the mighty wind, tongues of fire, and the speaking in tongues at Pentecost – were themselves obviously convinced and satisfied that the Samaritans had also received “the gift of God” (vs. 20).

Now before continuing into our issue, we must address Acts 2:38 because several denominations insist that it contains the “formula” that all individuals must follow in order to obtain salvation.

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.

The formula they gather from the verse is that in order to be saved today, one must: (1) first repent, (2) then be baptized in the name of Jesus [“in the name of Jesus *only*” is insisted on by some], (3) only after this baptism will sins be remitted (forgiven, pardoned), and then (4) the Holy Spirit is given at which point the person becomes saved.

Now of course Acts 2:38 is an absolutely true, verbally inspired holy scripture, but it was never intended to be taken as a formula. One clear proof that it is not a recipe to be adhered to is the Samaritan revival. The happenings recorded in Acts 8 did not follow the so-called steps given above. Furthermore, as the reader will see, none of the other salvation experiences recorded in the Book of Acts follow the verse's order. Again, the wonderful verse is not, and never has been, a formula.

⁷ Acts 8:5 and 12-13 clearly state that Simon believed the gospel of Jesus and submitted to water baptism (cp. Mk. 16:16a). His failure must be seen as that of a new convert who, coming out of sorcery, has little knowledge of the things of God and has hardly grown in sanctification at all. Many new Christians fall into gross sin soon after their salvation experience. Peter's stinging rebuke quickly brought Simon to repent as shown by his reply (vs. 24). Not yet knowing the fullness of his new status as a son and priest with the Creator and thus not being aware that he can go directly to the Lord on his own behalf (cp. Heb. 10:17-22), his shame made him feel unworthy and so in deep humility Simon asks Peter to intercede for him. From Peter's words in vs. 20, Simon seems to have been close to committing “a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16: cp. Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-11 and Uzza, 2 Sam. 6:1-9)

That Simon is truly born again and is still a child of God may also be gathered from Peter's reproof. Peter did not say “repent and re-believe in Jesus again.” He said to repent of “this thy wickedness” which was obviously with regard to obtaining “the gift of God” with money. Simon had not renounced his faith in the Lord Jesus (note: he was told to pray directly to God for himself – Peter did not instruct him to pray to a mediator, kiss Peter's ring, or do penance).

Instantly Filled With the Holy Spirit When Saved?

Again, the fullness of the Spirit or the Holy Spirit coming upon a convert as an anointing for witnessing and soul winning is an entirely separate matter from salvation.

It is true that the Holy Spirit Himself is the regenerator and so one who is saved is “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5, 6). And since that day the resurrected, glorified Jesus breathed on (Greek = into) the ten disciples (again, Thomas was not present) and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22, cp. John 7:37-39): the Holy Spirit now dwells in the body of every born again New Covenant person.

The night before Jesus died, the Holy Spirit was said to be *with* the disciples (meaning Old Covenant saved). But Jesus promised that “he dwelleth **with** you” ... “**shall** be **in** you” (John 14:17). So now every New Testament convert has the Holy Spirit abiding within his body, and that began simultaneous with conversion (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19-20; Rom. 8:9).

Now the dwelling of the Holy Spirit living in a Christian (beginning at the moment of regeneration) is one thing, but to be clothed with power for witnessing is an entirely different matter. Although Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” the evening He rose from the dead, they were still commanded to “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Before Pentecost the disciples waited and continued steadfastly in prayer in the upper room, (Acts 1:14) until the Holy Spirit came upon them in power.

Philip had a great revival in Samaria and many were saved. But Peter and John still had to come down from Jerusalem – “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)” says Acts 8:15-16.

Saul of Tarsus Transformed into Paul the Apostle

Saul of Tarsus trusted Christ and was clearly saved on the road to Damascus. But it was not until after three days of fasting and prayer and the coming of Ananias (a layman, not an apostle) who laid hands on him that Paul was healed and “filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 9:17). Immediately afterward, Paul was water baptized whereupon he then boldly “preached Christ” (not tongues or baptism).

The indwelling presence of the Spirit of God is a permanent part of the believer’s salvation. But the enduement of power is necessary for a particular time and purpose. When the fullness of the Spirit is needed again it may be granted, even as the disciples prayed in Acts 4:31 and were again *filled* whereby they once more witnessed with power.

Peter’s Testimony to Gentiles in the House of Cornelius the Centurion

Over and over, we have seen that salvation and the fullness of the Spirit are not the same experience, and they may not occur at the same time. But in the case of Cornelius, his family and his friends – they trusted in Christ and the Holy Spirit also instantly “fell on” them (Acts 10:43-48, 11:15-17). The observant reader will note that this is also called “the gift (*dŵrea* = *dōrea*, a person as compared to “gift” from the Greek *carisma* = charisma, which refers to the supernatural enablement gifts of the Holy Spirit as in 1 Cor. 12) of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 10:44) as well as “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 11:16).

It is most noteworthy that after hearing them speak in tongues and magnify God, Peter compared the event at Cornelius’ house to that which had happened to those who accompanied him from Joppa as well as himself on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 10:46-48, 11:15-17). As with the new converts at Samaria and Paul, Cornelius and those with him were afterward water baptized (Acts 10:47-48; cp. 8:12-13, 9:18 and also the Ethiopian eunuch 8:36-39). Indeed, water baptism is the only scriptural place to take converts immediately *after* their conversion.

Why were they filled with the Holy Spirit immediately? In light of all that has been said heretofore, surely part of the answer was that, seeing their hearts, God foreknew they would immediately begin to witness to the gospel concerning Jesus and thus needed the anointing. In any case, such was not unprecedented. At Jesus' baptism, He prayed and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him at once with no delay (Luk. 3:21-22). In answer to many years of prayer for a son by his father and mother, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luk. 1:15).

Provided one has a heart that is willing to witness, there is no biblical reason why any born again person may not be instantly filled with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, why would God so empower a convert that He foreknows has no intention of spreading the gospel.

Again, it is interesting to note that in this case Cornelius and his household were filled with the Spirit *before* being baptized. Unlike the order at Acts 2:38, the order here was (1) faith in Christ after hearing of Him, (2) then the Holy Spirit fell on them, (3) followed by speaking in tongues, and (4) being water baptized.

Baptism in water is a simple act depicting that the new convert believes in and identifies with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection into newness of life (Luk. 3:21-22; Acts 1:5, 2:38, 19:3-6; Rom. 6:4-11). It further declares that the one being baptized believes that should he die, like Jesus, he will one day rise from the grave (represented by the water) into newness of resurrection life. This order reveals that baptism is not essential to the fullness of the Spirit.

Moreover, the heart's surrender seems to be all that is necessary to receive the fullness of the Spirit. Truly, the Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who simply ask (Luk. 11:13). Of course to so receive, they must first obey Him – meaning they must repent and believe the gospel (Acts 5:32; Mk. 1:15). This is exactly what Paul did: he repented, put his faith in Jesus, and obeyed the command to go to the city of Damascus. Three days later, Ananias came, laid hands on Paul (Saul) and he was filled.

In retelling that which had happened at the home of Cornelius to the converted Jews at the Jerusalem church, Peter said they were “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (vs. 16) and that God had given them “the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 17, the gift here is that which Peter mentioned in Acts 2:38-39 and is the same as “the promise of the Father” at Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4; cp. Acts 2:33). Peter recounted that “the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning” Acts 11:15). Thus, the promise that had been fulfilled in part at Pentecost had now been fulfilled again.

That which so astonished the six circumcised Jewish brethren that had accompanied Peter from Joppa was that these gentile converts were given the same evidence as they had received; thus, making the gentiles equal with themselves (cp. 10:23, 45, 11:12). The gentiles had received the Holy Spirit by simple faith – without becoming Jewish proselytes, without being circumcised, without keeping the Law or any other ordinance or ritual.

Now many good brothers insist that as these new converts in Cornelius' household were gentiles and as it is the first time gentiles are saved in the Book of Acts, this is the pattern or formula for the salvation of all gentiles from that time forward – that is, for today's “dispensation.” They tell their flocks that the order of events there is the same for salvation today, that is: (1) hear the word of God and believe, vs. 44, (2) then receive the Holy Spirit, vv. 44 & 47, and (3) be baptized in water, vs. 48.

However, by so teaching they completely miss the fact that when Acts 10:44-47 speaks of the Spirit falling *on* them “as on us at the beginning” (11:15) it is referring to the Pentecost experience Peter and the six that went with him from Joppa had (called “the promise of the Father,” “baptized with the Holy Spirit,” coming “upon,” and “being filled”: Acts 1:4, 5, 8, and 2:4). It is not speaking about the salvation experience of Cornelius and his household.

The falling *on* experience for them happened so quickly after they believed Peter's testimony regarding Christ's person, resurrection, and finished work on the Cross (Acts 10:34-43, of which they

had *already* heard, 10:37) that they would have only recognized one experience.⁸ That is, the Holy Spirit came *into* them, quickened their “dead” spirit, and then filled them to overflowing such that He came upon them from the inside out (whereas in the Old Covenant He came upon them from without) so fast that they could not differentiate two separate works.

Moreover, they leave out of their formula the actual third step, which was that Cornelius and his household spoke in tongues and magnified God (10:46, cp. Acts 2:11 – Pentecost). This they do not allow in their formula as it offends part of their doctrine. Nevertheless, this is in the Bible and to avoid it they now invent some *ad hoc* explanation for why they omitted it.

Indeed, in saying that these were the first gentiles saved in the Book of Acts and therefore serve as a pattern for today, these teachers have completely overlooked that they were not the first so converted. The first recorded gentile saved in Acts was the Ethiopian treasurer to the Queen, a eunuch. Although possibly a Jewish proselyte, he was still a gentile of Ethiopia (8:26-40).

Converts of Apollos Learn of the Fullness of the Spirit

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.

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.

On his third missionary journey, Paul passed through Galatia and Phrygia and returned to the great city of Ephesus. As we read above, there he finds certain disciples to whom he asked, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

Now after the Resurrection, one who was saved would normally have learned about the fullness of the Spirit. It was a matter in which the new Christians should not have been confused. It is unfortunate that confusion is rampant throughout today’s Church. Regrettably, there exists much unnecessary misunderstanding as well as false teaching concerning the fullness of the Holy Spirit that was given on the Day of Pentecost. Some teach that Pentecost was the origin of the church and miss the point entirely by supposing that it was some dispensational matter.

But the Bible neither mentions nor hints that the church originated at Pentecost. God says nothing about Pentecost being the birthday of the church. Christian leadership should not to miss what God does say by insisting on what He does not say. Indeed, some have supposed that Pentecost meant *a second work of grace*, the burning out of the old carnal nature, or the dying of the sinful disposition in those already saved. But again, the Bible says nothing of any of these. To be sure, there is a Bible doctrine of sanctification, but it is not taught in connection with Pentecost.

Still others stress that “tongues” (miraculously imparted real earth languages, Acts 2:4-12) were and still are the initial evidence of salvation and/or the fullness of the Spirit. These miss the fact that God had promised soul-winning power, and this power was given when on the day of Pentecost about three thousand souls there were added unto the Church.

Now chapter 18 verses 24-28 tell us of an eloquent Jew of Alexandria named Apollos who was instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, and mighty in the scriptures. This man came to

⁸ When the soldier took a spear and pierced Jesus’ side: “*forthwith came there out blood and water*” (John 19:34). The **blood** depicted that **atonement** for sin was completed (blood showing He was really human: that it flowed out manifested He was now dead), the **water** depicted that the Holy Spirit’s **power** and presence had been purchased for **every** Christian.

Ephesus before Paul's return and boldly spoke in the synagogue where he was heard by Aquila and his wife Priscilla. At this time Apollos knew only the baptism and message of John the Baptist, which was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luk. 3:3), to repent "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat.3:2), and that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the World" (John 1:29). Now this was a true God honoring message, but John was slain before the Cross and resurrection of Christ. Hence, as they are the very heart of the New Covenant gospel, John's message was not the New Testament message.

Now John the Baptist did not offer a different plan of salvation from that of Jesus. Such is completely unfounded. In Acts 10:43 Peter said to Cornelius: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Therefore the Old Testament plan of salvation was exactly the same as that of the New Testament, faith in the Messiah. Even the New Testament clearly teaches this for it is said that God proclaimed the gospel to Abraham – that through Abraham's seed (singular! i.e., the Messiah, cp. Gal. 3:16) all nations would be blessed (Gal. 3:8; cp. Gen. 22:18). There has always been but one plan of salvation, for a perfect God devised the correct and perfect plan before the foundation of the world. The difference is that the Old Testament saints looked *forward* to the coming of Messiah Jesus: the New Testament saints *look back* in time to His finished work of the Cross. Thus, even though John was the last Old Testament prophet, he would still not have preached a different way of salvation.

The problem before us is that, without the Cross and Resurrection in his message, John the Baptist's converts were saved, but they were Old Testament saved. This means that, like him, they did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit for their permanent possession, which all New Covenant believers do possess. As already addressed, the Spirit was only *with* or walking *alongside* Old Covenant saints (John 14:17; the "with" here is the Greek "par" = par, which is short for paraklhtos = Eng. "parakletos." It means an advocate or comforter who walks along ones side as a helper).

Now as John's disciple, Apollos was himself still only Old Testament saved when he converted the Ephesian 12. This changed when Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos aside and gave "him the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). Now armed with the gospel of the Cross and Resurrection, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in him. Apollos thereby became a partaker of the New and better Covenant (Heb. 8:6). He now had a far more powerful and complete message at Acts 18:28.

This was the same problem Paul encountered when he met the "about" 12 Ephesians.⁹ They too were saved but still had not heard the New Covenant gospel, and therefore did not have the indwelling Holy Spirit. This would have been true of many saints during the first years after the Resurrection. From their conversation, Paul perceived something was not quite right or else he would not have asked the question: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed" (vs. 2). Aware of the potential problem, in effect He was asking, "are you Old or New Covenant saints."

When they told Paul all they had received was John's baptism, he knew that the extent of their knowledge was the same as John's, which was only that the Messiah had come (cp. John 1:29-36). They did not know that Christ had died, been buried, and had risen from the dead, ascended back to heaven and that he had sent the Holy Spirit with a new message and ministry (John 14:16-20, 16:7-14). Paul then instructed them further concerning Christ Jesus and, having believed the gospel, they were *again* baptized – only this time it was "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:3-5).

They were now partakers of the New Covenant as well as the *indwelling* Holy Spirit. But Paul was not finished with them! After this, the Apostle then "laid his hands upon them, the Spirit came on (ep = upon) them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied" (vs. 6).

⁹ As shall be seen, the Scofield Bible, a useful reference Bible, again misses the mark in discussing these disciples of Acts 19:1-7. The Scofield note says, "Paul was evidently impressed by the absence of spirituality and power in these so-called disciples. Their answer brought out the fact that they were Jewish proselytes, disciples of John the Baptist, looking forward to a coming King, not Christians looking backward to an accomplished redemption."

This took place only about a year after Paul first came to Ephesus while on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Now whereas it is true that these gifts of the Holy Spirit are often greatly abused and even counterfeited (both by people and the Devil) in today's places of worship, there are also some who overreact and strongly oppose these gifts. Most such Christians point to the Church at Ephesus as being the ideal NT assembly, yet they do not seem to notice that at least 12 among its first members spoke with tongues and prophesied. As no corrections concerning this church are found in the letter to the Ephesians, we conclude that, unlike the Corinthian Church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit were under His control and being carried out in an orderly manner at Ephesus.

A Summation

For some time it has been a popular teaching in many Bible colleges and seminaries that doctrines should not be formulated from books such as Acts but only from the 21 Pauline and General "doctrinal epistles." Whereas there is a measure of truth in this, nevertheless there are also doctrines founded in the Old Testament that are still applicable for us (e.g., "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," Lev. 17:11 etc.) as well as in the teachings of Christ Jesus as recorded in the four gospels.

Moreover, as an historical account covering about 33 years after the Resurrection (30 AD to the end of his *first* imprisonment = 63), the Book of Acts well serves us as a check of any proposed doctrine formulated from these epistles. That is, if the doctrine is clearly contradicted by the actual historical accounts recorded in Acts (or the gospels and OT) the doctrine put forward must be abandoned. To put it more directly, the test for any doctrine or experience is: where is a "this is that" (Acts 2:16).

When the 120 disciples were challenged for an explanation of the events taking place by the onlookers on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:12-13), Peter responded with "this is that" from Joel to show that all was "kosher" as it was in accord with scripture. The lesson here is that all doctrine as well as spiritual experiences must be checked out by the rest of the inerrant Word. If it fails to be substantiated, it is to be rejected – and Acts serves as the best place to check on the opinions derived from the so-called doctrinal epistles of the New Testament.

Now this brings us to the question at hand. A doctrine found in much of the literature is that ever since the New Covenant was established, there is only one experience at salvation involving the Holy Spirit. This dogma insists that new converts are not only immediately permanently indwelt by the Spirit but that at that same moment they also receive the "fullness" of the Spirit – they are filled with the Spirit automatically when they are born again. But if this is true, we can only wonder why so few of these "Spirit-filled" believers ever witness to the lost concerning the gospel of our Lord. Argue with those from other denominations – yes. But witness as to the person and finished work of Christ to an unbeliever, no.

For the explanation of this enigma, let us now examine this doctrine with that which we have learned from our study of the historical account in Acts. Something immediately seems amiss for we found that four of the five examples written there record two experiences separated by time, not one¹⁰. As already noted, only those at the household of Cornelius were saved and filled so quickly afterward so that they would only experience one happening.

Thus, the proposal that since Pentecost all new converts are instantly automatically filled with the Spirit has been scripturally examined and found wanting. The main attempt to escape the conclusions reached herein has been the concept that the period involving the Book of Acts was a kind of "dispensation of suspense" – a unique span of 33 years which does not apply to any thing happening since. But Scripture does not substantiate this. It is nothing more than an *ad hoc* premise formulated in an attempt to escape the obvious teaching of God's Word. The doctrine has

¹⁰ The four were Samaria, Paul, the Ephesian "12," and the 11 disciples of whom all but Thomas were already indwelt for forty days (John 20:21-22, cp. Acts 1:3 ff.). We conclude that Thomas became indwelt when the risen Christ confronted him eight days later (John 20:26-28).

been exposed by two or more witnesses (Deu. 17:6-7, 19:15; John 8:17) as fallacious, and thus it should be renounced.

Here, it should be added that our earlier contention (i.e., 1 Corinthians 12:13 addresses salvation but Luke 3:16, 24:49, Acts 1:4-5 as well as that which happened to the 120 on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 deals with receiving the fullness of the Spirit – the initial filling) is substantiated by the two Greek prepositions *en* and *epi*. Almost without exception, when speaking about the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, the Greek preposition *en* (transliteration = *en*, Eng. translation = in) is used.

However, when dealing with the Spirit's coming upon, filling, or being received by the believer, some form of the Greek *epi* (transliteration = *epi*, Eng. translation = on or upon) is almost always given. This strongly implies that they are completely different matters and thereby corroborates our main thesis.

Let us be clear here: we are not basing our position upon the unsound, sandy foundation of two prepositions. What we are saying is that *after* being already convinced of our view, further study on the five examples given heretofore revealed that the two Greek prepositions far more often than not agreed with our thesis.

Another important point needs to be addressed here. Before the Cross (thus, still Old Covenant times) Jesus told the woman of Samaria that to worship God one must worship in spirit (John 4:24). Many denominations teach that in Old Testament days the Holy Spirit did not quicken the spirits of the redeemed. He never came *in* them to so do. He only came *upon* them or walked with them. The problem with this doctrinal position is: if the Old Covenant saints had dead spirits, in light of what our Lord said above, how could Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, etc. have worshipped the Creator? Yet, they clearly so did. If this be doubted, one need only to read the Psalms. Indeed, such saints had a walk with God that few, if any, of us in the New Covenant have – yet this is the “better” covenant (Heb. 8:6). So what is the answer? The answer is that our good brothers are simply mistaken.

Therefore, upon conversion in Old Testament days, the Holy Spirit came *into* the believers and quickened their “dead” spirits. But as sin had not yet been permanently dealt with by the blood of Christ, He could not remain in them. The blood of bulls and goats could only temporarily “cover” sin and sins, but it could never pay for and forever settle the sin issue between God and man (Heb. 10:4, also 10:19, 9:12-14). Moreover, on the mere basis of the shed blood of animals the OT saints could not approach past the edge of the brazen altar of sacrifice at the Tabernacle or Temple. So after bringing their spirits to life so that they could worship the living God, the Holy Spirit had to depart and only to walk along side them or come *upon* them for special God appointed tasks.

All Christians Are Baptized Into One Body

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

When one is born again, along with all the other children of God, he becomes a member of the body of Christ. Several terms are used in God's Word describing this group. It is called “Christ's body.” It is also referred to as that “general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:23). It is “the household of God” (Eph. 2:19). It is a “building fitly framed together” that “groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” and “an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22). It is also said to be a spiritual house” built up with “lively” or living stones (1 Pet. 2:5).

A Final Word

Unfortunately, the heresy whereby it is claimed that one must speak in tongues in order to be saved has put the term “baptized with the Holy Ghost” in bad standing among most knowledgeable

Christians. But it is a good Bible phrase and, as such, it must be retained. Indeed, it is one of several terms used in scripture for the enduement of power given at Pentecost so that the Christian can effectively witness to the person and finished work of the Creator come in the flesh, even the Lord Christ Jesus. We must not “throw out the baby with the bath water.” Selah.

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