

## The Holy Spirit, Spiritual Gifts, and Miracles

*Note: When I use the phrases “power from the Holy Spirit”, “spiritual gifts”, “miracles”, and “supernatural acts”, I am referring to the same phenomenon of a person’s ability to defy the known laws of nature.*

In this lesson, I want to discuss six points:

1. Jesus promised the Apostles that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit.
2. As promised, the Apostles were baptized (fully immersed) in the Holy Spirit.
3. Some Christians in the first century received miraculous abilities from the Holy Spirit.
4. The purpose of miracles was to establish the church and confirm the word.
5. The time for miracles was temporary and ended in the first century.
6. How does the Holy Spirit dwell in Christians today?

### **Jesus Promised the Apostles That They Would Receive Power from the Holy Spirit.**

Jesus knew He was going to be crucified, buried, resurrected, and return to Heaven. The Apostles would be left behind to continue the mission of spreading the Gospel and establishing the Lord’s church. Therefore, Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit (which He called the Comforter) who would give them knowledge and the ability to perform supernatural acts to prove what they were saying was true and was from God.

Jesus told His Apostles in John 14:16, 26, 15:26 and 16:7 that He would pray to God and He would give them another Comforter (the Holy Spirit) to teach them all things and bring to their remembrance whatever Jesus had taught them after He was gone.

In Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:5, Jesus told His Apostles, right before He ascended to Heaven, that John baptized with water but they would also be baptized (fully immersed) with the Holy Spirit (endued with power from on high) in a few days. Then in verse 8, He told them they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came on them. Therefore, the **baptism** of the Holy Spirit was for the Apostles, and ONLY the Apostles, receiving the power from the Holy Spirit to perform all kinds of supernatural acts. Jesus said in Mark 9:1 that the kingdom of God (the church) would come with power. It most certainly did!

### **As Promised, the Apostles Were Baptized (Fully Immersed) in the Holy Spirit.**

In Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles (and only the Apostles – Acts 1:26) were baptized (fully immersed) in the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had promised. Read Acts 2:1-13.

The Apostles were the only ones who were described in God’s Word as being baptized (fully immersed) in the Holy Spirit – no one else! I believe this means they were given the full measure from the Holy Spirit to be able to perform all kinds of miracles (supernatural acts), including passing on that ability to others, and had more knowledge than anyone else (Acts

5:12; 19:11). Since Ephesians 4:4-6 states that there is only one baptism (water baptism) today, I can know that the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” does not occur today. Only the Apostles received two baptisms, water baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and the Holy Spirit baptism, a fuller measure of the power from the Holy Spirit. Many people today believe they are baptized with the Holy Spirit – either during water baptism or as a separate baptism. This is error. Many also believe that the outward manifestation of a Christian is the ability to speak in tongues. This is also error. No one today can miraculously speak in a language they have never studied before. Not all Christians in the first century could speak in tongues. Study I Corinthians 12 and 14. Note: Speaking in tongues is not some heavenly gibberish. It is the supernatural ability to speak fluently in a language one has never studied before. Acts 2:1-13 make this very clear. The crowds were amazed when they heard these uneducated Galileans speaking in their own languages (verses 6, 8, 11).

I also believe this means that others who had power from the Holy Spirit (referred to as a spiritual gift) were only given a small portion of the power of the Holy Spirit. A good place to see this is I Corinthians 12 and 14.

The only other unique giving of the power of the Holy Spirit was Cornelius and his family (the first Gentiles). They were not baptized in the Holy Spirit nor did the Apostles lay their hands on them. Rather, as Peter described it in Acts 11:15-18, it was directly from Heaven.

### **Some Christians in the First Century Received Miraculous Abilities from the Holy Spirit.**

In Acts 2, Peter and the other Apostles were preaching to the Jews in Jerusalem and in verse 38 Peter made two statements.

1. The first statement was to ALL people from that point forward when he said to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.
2. The second statement was ONLY to those people there in the first century when he said they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is referring to the power from the Holy Spirit to perform supernatural acts.

I can know this is true because Peter said in Acts 2:16ff that what was happening right there at that time (the people hearing the Apostles miraculously speaking to them in their own languages and the beginning of the establishment of the Lord’s church) was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. God had told Joel in Joel 2:28-32 that in the last days, He would pour out of the Holy Spirit on all nations and people would prophesy, see visions, and dream dreams. In other words, there would be miracles and they would be very common – not just an occasional thing.

However, not everyone that was baptized in the first century received the gift of the Holy Spirit (miraculous abilities) as Peter said in Acts 2:39, “...as many as the Lord shall call.”

From the following passages, I can know that only those the Apostles laid their hands on received the gift of the Holy Spirit (miraculous abilities).

In Acts 8:9ff, there were Samaritans who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, just like Peter commanded in Acts 2:38, but did NOT receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (miraculous abilities). When the Apostles, Peter and John, laid their hands on them, then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit (miraculous abilities). When a man named Simon, who had already been baptized, saw that by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the gift of the Holy Spirit was given, he tried to buy this gift which means he had been baptized but also had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit (verse 13). To me, it sounds like Peter did not give Simon the gift because he might have used it for his own gain. He needed to grow spiritually.

In addition, in Acts 19:1ff, Paul asked a group of Christians if they had received power from the Holy Spirit when they were baptized. This would have been a useless question if everyone that was baptized received power from the Holy Spirit. They said they did not know anything about the power of the Holy Spirit being given. Paul found out they were baptized in John's name. He taught them about Jesus and they were baptized in the name of Jesus. Then he laid his hands on them and THEN they received power from the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. Why would Paul need to lay his hands on them in order for them to receive power from the Holy Spirit if everyone received power from the Holy Spirit when they were baptized?

Apollos in Acts 18 was described as "mighty in the scriptures", "instructed in the way of the Lord", and "being fervent in the spirit". He "spoke and diligently taught the things of the Lord" but he was preaching error! This was about 20 years after Christ's resurrection, but Apollos was teaching only John's baptism. Aquila and Priscilla had to pull him aside and correct him. He clearly did not have the Holy Spirit telling him what to speak.

One more example is Cornelius and his family in Acts 10. They received power from the Holy Spirit BEFORE they were baptized.

In Romans 1:11, Paul wanted to see the Christians in Rome so he could "impart some spiritual gift to you." So, even though the church in Rome had baptized believers, not all of them had spiritual gifts.

### **The Purpose of Miracles was to Establish the Church and Confirm the Word.**

The reason some people were given power from the Holy Spirit to perform supernatural acts in the first century was to (1) help establish the church and (2) to confirm the Word.

Paul said in Romans 1:11 that he wanted to visit them so he could lay his hands on some of them and impart spiritual gifts to help establish them.

Mark said in Mark 16:20 that the Apostles went out and preached everywhere and God worked with them confirming the word with signs (supernatural acts).

Spiritual gifts were very beneficial for the church in the first century. The church was brand new. Being able to speak in “different kinds of tongues” helped spread the Word of God. Just like in Acts 2:6-11 when Jews from all over speaking different languages were amazed because they heard the simple, uneducated Galileans speaking perfectly in their own languages. Having the spiritual gift of “discerning of spirits” helped the church know if someone was teaching a false doctrine. Elders should not be novices so the spiritual gift of “knowledge” would help in that area. Being able to prophesy gave edification, exhortation, and comfort according to I Corinthians 14:3. Gifts of healing would have attracted people and given the church the opportunity to teach those who brought their sick.

### **The Time of Miracles was Temporary and Ended in the First Century.**

Peter said in Acts 2:39ff that the promise, of the power of the Holy Spirit, was to the Jews there on the Day of Pentecost. It was also to their offspring. This does not refer to perpetuity but to one generation of children which was considered about 40 years. And it was to both the Jew and Gentile – “all flesh”. If Micah 7:15ff is referring to the period of miracles, this works out perfectly. Micah said God would show wonders for the same period of time the Israelites were in Egypt – 40 years. It was A.D. 30 when Peter was preaching in Acts 2 and 40 years from there would be A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed, effectively ending Judaism and the age of miracles.

In Zechariah 13, God said “in that day” the miraculous would cease – such as prophets and unclean spirits.

Paul talked about the cessation of miracles in I Corinthians 13 when he said that they only knew in part and prophesied in part at that time. In other words, they did not have the full revelation of the mystery of God yet. But once the Word of God was complete, prophesying, speaking in tongues, supernatural knowledge, etc. would cease. The complete revelation of God was given by A.D. 70 – again this works out perfectly. Note: Some believe the book of Revelation was written around A.D. 95. I believe it was written around A.D. 67. Why would John have written in code and not even mentioned the destruction of Jerusalem in the past tense? In addition, four times John said he was writing about things that were going to happen very soon – i.e. A.D. 70, the destruction of Jerusalem. Finally, in Revelation 17:10, John gives us a pretty good idea when he was writing. He said that there were seven kings (emperors of Rome) during that time. Five had already fallen, one was in power now, and the seventh had not come yet but when he did it would only be for a short time. This works out perfectly with Roman history. Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.), Octavius Augustus (27 B.C.-A.D. 14), Tiberias (A.D. 14-37), Caligula (A.D. 37-41), and Claudius (A.D. 41-54) had already ruled and fallen. Nero was reigning when John wrote this book (A.D. 54-68), and Galba would follow but only rule seven months (A.D. 68). This would put John writing in A.D. 67 and warning Christians about the Romans coming to destroy Jerusalem and the persecutions to come specifically and for Christians in general for all time.

Also, very strong evidence that miracles have ceased is that I do not see any today. I have never seen anyone who was dead decaying in a tomb for three days being raised from the dead

like Lazarus. I have never seen missing body parts being replaced like Matthew 15:31 says “the maimed made whole”. I have only seen fake “faith healers” on television slapping someone in the forehead who is in a wheelchair and telling them to stand. Certainly not evidence like in Acts 4:16 where Christ’s enemies said, “indeed a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.”

Finally, since I know the power of the Holy Spirit was given to a person by the laying on of the Apostles’ hands (with the exception of the Apostles themselves and Cornelius and his family), and the Apostles are all dead, there is no longer a mode of transmission.

We have had the complete revelation of God’s Word for almost 2,000 years now. There is no longer any need for the miraculous. Similar to what Abraham told the rich man in Luke 16:31, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” If people today will not believe the New Testament, they will not be persuaded with a miracle.

### **How Does the Holy Spirit Dwell in Christians Today?**

From this study, I believe when Peter said, “and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”, he was referring to the miraculous and he was only speaking to those in the first century—not to us today (A.D. 30-70). I know that no one today has the power of the Holy Spirit to perform supernatural acts (miracles). However, many New Testament passages talk about the Holy Spirit being in the Christian. Some passages are referring to the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles but not all of them. Each passage needs to be studied in its context. So, how does the Holy Spirit dwell in Christians today? Many people today believe they have the Holy Spirit literally inside of them. If the Holy Spirit (deity) is literally inside me as a Christian, what is He doing there? I cannot feel, hear, smell, touch, or taste Him, and I cannot perform any miracles. Here are different beliefs I have heard about the Holy Spirit literally dwelling inside Christians:

- He speaks to me.
  - What things would He reveal to me that are not already in God’s Word? If He is revealing things to me, then II Timothy 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:3 are lies and the Holy Spirit would be in direct violation of Galatians 1:6-9. These verses tell me that the written Word of God gives me all things that pertain to life and godliness and is sufficient to make me complete and equipped for every good work and if anyone teaches differently than what is in God’s Word, he will be destroyed. If I need the Holy Spirit literally inside me in addition to the Word of God, then the Word of God is not only not sufficient but is completely useless! Just let the Holy Spirit tell me all the truth. Then I don’t have to spend hours and hours making a concerted effort to correctly dissect God’s Word like II Timothy 2:15 says.

- If the Holy Spirit is telling my dear Pentecostal friend to eat a gluten free diet but He is not telling me anything, doesn't that make the Holy Spirit a respecter of persons which God's Word specifically says He is not?
- When I have a thought or emotion related to a spiritual matter, how do I know that is the Holy Spirit nudging me and is not just my own mind and heart? How can I tell the difference?
- How can I know whether the Holy Spirit guided me to some decision in my life and it was not just time and chance as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:11? How can I tell the difference?
- If the Holy Spirit tells me one thing but tells someone else a different thing, then what do I do? It does not seem right that I can tell the other person they are wrong and that was not the Holy Spirit speaking to them because they could say the same thing to me. This is the real danger with this belief. It gives everyone claiming to be a Christian a license to do whatever they want because they can simply say they "feel like" the Holy Spirit spoke to them. With the written Word of God, we have a set standard to go by in black and white that never changes.
- He helps me not to sin.
  - If the Holy Spirit is literally inside me to keep me from sinning, then why do I continue to sin?
  - When I do sin, is it my fault or the Holy Spirit's fault?
  - Does the Holy Spirit leave me while I am sinning and then enter me again when I repent, because deity cannot be in the presence of sin according to Habakkuk 1:13. Where is this taught in God's Word?
- He helps me be a better Christian.
  - If the Holy Spirit is literally inside me to make me a better Christian (like a spiritual steroid), then He is affecting my free will which is against everything that the Bible teaches.
- He protects me.
  - If the Holy Spirit is in me to protect me, then why do I have just as much pain and suffering as everyone else?
- He gives me faith.
  - Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God—not a spiritual steroid from the Holy Spirit.
- As a preacher, He leads me so I know what to say.
  - The Holy Spirit did tell the Apostles and the writers of the Bible what to say but that ended in the first century (I Corinthians 13). If the Holy Spirit tells preachers today what to say, then why are there so many preachers teaching so many different doctrines that contradict each other to the point that there are thousands of so-called churches?

So, if the Holy Spirit is not literally inside Christians, then what is the meaning of all the verses that say He is in us? Many passages in God's Word talk about:

1. Christians are in God. I Corinthians 8:6, I Thessalonians 1:1, I John 2:5 which tells us how we can know Christians are in God – if we keep his Word.
2. God is in Christians. I Corinthians 3:16, I John 3:24, I John 4:12-16
3. Christians are in Christ. I Thessalonians 1:1, II Corinthians 5:17, John 15:4, Colossians 1:28, 2:7, 10
4. Christ is in Christians. II Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Colossians 1:27
5. Christians are in the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 14:2, Galatians 3:3, Revelation 1:10
6. The Holy Spirit is in Christians. Romans 8:9-11, I John 3:24 (miraculous gifts). The Greek word by is ek, not dia

It is a logical impossibility for these scenarios to be true – if we take them literally. If I am literally in God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit then they cannot literally be in me. If box A is in box B, then box B cannot be in Box A. In addition, it is inconsistent to think some of these scenarios are literal while others are figurative. Most people understand that 1-5 are figurative, but want to make 6 literal. This is inconsistent and poor hermeneutics.

The Holy Spirit gave us the written Word of God that we have today. II Peter 1:21 tells us that holy men of God spoke (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (in their case miraculously). If we read, study, and obey God's Word, given to us by the Holy Spirit, then we have the Holy Spirit in us.

God has given us everything we need to get to Heaven. He gave us His complete written Word. He gave us the life of His only begotten Son. He gave us the plan of salvation. He gave us free will to choose whether to obey Him or not. He gave us an avenue to talk to Him through prayer. He gave us evidence of His existence in everything we see around us. However, He did not give us deity literally inside our mortal bodies (which would be a miracle and would kill us – Exodus 33:20) to add to or take away from the written Word or to affect our free will or manipulate us in any way.

In summary, God's Word teaches that the Apostles received the full measure of the power of the Holy Spirit (baptized in the Holy Spirit) to complete the work Jesus gave them to do. The Holy Spirit gave many people spiritual gifts through the laying on of the Apostles' hands. He gave some Christians in the first century these spiritual gifts to help establish the church and prove that what they were saying was true and from God. The age of miracles was temporary (A.D. 30-70). Once the completed Word of God was revealed, there was no longer any need for miracles. The Holy Spirit today is only in Christians in a figurative way when we study and live the life of a faithful Christian.