

Acts 19:1-7

"We've Got Spirit, Yes We Do; We've Got Spirit - How About You?"

The very moment I lifted my head after repeating the 'Sinner's Prayer' with a colleague from work, I saw a cross.

It wasn't a vision. It was the cross that has sat atop Mt. Rubidoux in Riverside since 1907. Still, you'd have to admit that it was pretty cool.

Nothing supernatural manifested itself. Over the next several days, however, I was gripped by a powerful desire to read the Bible & talk to God. I told others, especially my family, that I had, as I put it, "Become a Christian."

I ran into Ricky Lazar, a guy I had known for years. No kidding, he looked at me quizzically. Finally he said, "You look different, like you're *glowing* a little."

Several addictions I had were effortlessly gone. I didn't even realize it at first. It was nothing I had done; **they were just gone.**

Many years later I came to realize that before Jesus, I was a sociopath. Officially it is Antisocial Personality Disorder. It is a recognized mental illness. I was healed of a mental illness before I ever knew I had it.

Pam had recently come back to the Lord. He healed so many things. It was incredible to experience the forgiveness of sin. I definitely had that joy, joy, joy down in my heart.

Until I didn't...

About a month after I gave my life to Jesus, the brother who had led me in the Sinner's Prayer handed me a stack of cassette tapes from a Calvary Chapel pastor on the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and His gifts. He told me I needed this "special baptism" as a second work if I wanted to really serve the Lord. I remember feeling unsettled and confused. Hadn't I already received everything I needed in Christ when I was saved?

To quote Marlin, “Happy feeling gone!”

I was beyond discouraged. What had been going on for the previous thirty days? It made me feel that my salvation wasn't enough and that I was somehow incomplete without this extra experience. In an instant I went from being Spirit-*filled* to Spirit-*flawed*. I wouldn't take the tapes.

This is an example of the difference between what commentators call the *subsequent* or the *simultaneous* receiving of the baptism with the Holy Spirit:

- The **subsequent** view is treasured by Pentecostals & Charismatics. A believer is saved and indwelt by the Spirit at conversion. Later he receives the baptism with the Spirit as a separate and distinct experience, usually evidenced by speaking in tongues.
- The **simultaneous** view is rigorously defended by Reformed, Baptist, OPC, PCA, and many others. The Holy Spirit is received fully at the moment of salvation; baptism in the Spirit and salvation are one event.

In about 30 minutes time, all of this will either be cleared up for you, or you will be more confused than ever!

The apostle Paul encounters twelve disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus. What happens next is extraordinary.

Act 19:1 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples
Act 19:2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”

What was it about these guys that tipped off Paul that something was off?

- Did Paul ask them a series of questions? (Maybe he had them take the Spiritual Gifts Assessment).
- Did he have the gift of discernment?
- Did he receive a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit?

The way Paul worded his question shows that he thought the in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with salvation. They should have received the Spirit when they believed.

We agree. It **is** simultaneous, not subsequent. "You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Romans 8:9).

These disciples of John were "believers," but they were Spirit-deficient. When Paul prayed for them, and laid his hands on them, they received the in-dwelling Holy Spirit.

Isn't this the exact opposite of what we just said the Bible teaches about receiving the Spirit simultaneously?

No, not really. But we must go back a little ways in salvation history to understand why.

God revealed to Abraham that unbelievers in all dispensations, from the Garden of Eden through the Millennial Kingdom, are saved by believing God. "And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6).

Paul quotes it in Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, and James refers to it in James 2:23.

The more-or-less 12 were saved; but like all OT saints, *they did not have the Holy Spirit in-dwelling them.*

In fact, they **could not** have that relationship with Him. The permanent indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the major unconditional promise of the New Covenant God made with Israel.

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - **I will** put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and **I will** be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Ezekiel adds, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... A new heart also will I give you, **and a new spirit will I put within you... And I will put my Spirit within you,** and cause you to walk in my statutes..." (36:24-28).

These were *future* promises made to the nation of Israel for the Last Days. OT believers *could not* receive the permanent in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit because it was not available to them.

When God the Father sent Jesus to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, He began to fulfill the promises of the New Covenant,

The Jews refused Jesus. He came to His own and they received Him not. He ascended back into Heaven without establishing the promised Kingdom.

The Kingdom was postponed. We live in the age between the two comings of Jesus. It is called the Church Age. It is a mystery that is nowhere revealed in the OT.

During the postponement of His direct dealings with the nation of Israel, the Church begins to enjoy the promises of the New Covenant, and especially the things Jeremiah & Ezekiel had promised.

Talking to His disciples on the night before He was crucified, Jesus put it in these terms: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper... **He dwells with you and will be in you**" (John 14:17).

Jesus distinguished between the Spirit's OT ministry ("with you") and His *future indwelling* ("in you"), which would begin after His death, resurrection, and ascension, on the Day of Pentecost.

The twelve disciples of John said they had "not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." The ministry of John the Baptist was the proclamation that Someone was coming after him who would, among other things, "baptize with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). *You could not be around John for more than a few minutes and not hear about the baptism with the Holy Spirit.* This would be especially true of disciples.

It would be like someone asking you about the rapture and you answering "At calvaryhanford we never hear anything about the rapture!"

These guys had not heard that Jesus had sent the gift - God the Holy Spirit.

Act 19:3 And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

I take "John's baptism" to include his entire ministry. These had repented of sin, been baptized in the Jordan, and were getting themselves ready for their King & His Earthly Kingdom. They were saved and had been prepared by John to enter & enjoy the gift of the Holy Spirit within them.

Act 19:4 Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."

Act 19:5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Act 19:6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

Act 19:7 Now the men were about twelve in all.

It wasn't really a two-stage process. OT believers who looked forward to the Kingdom received the baptism of the Holy Spirit when they believed He had been sent.

"Tongues. Why does it always have to be tongues?"

Let's talk about the always controversial & instantly divisive phenomena of tongues in the Book of Acts.

If you receive what I say next, you will no longer struggle with speaking in tongues.

There are two different phenomena that can be labeled "tongues."

1. On the Day of Pentecost, God the Holy Spirit came to permanently in-dwell individual believers *and* the corporate Church. We read in Acts chapter 2, "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other **tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under Heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because **everyone heard them speak in his own language**. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how *is it that* **we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?** Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." (2:4-11). Underline "**we hear, each in our own language in which we were born.**"
2. Later on, in First Corinthians, Paul gives his teaching on a liturgy for orderly worship. Concerning tongues, he says this: "For he who speaks in a tongue **does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries**" (14:2). Underline "**does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him.**"

These are two different speech phenomena, very carefully described so as to avoid confusion. One is known human languages, the other... Let's just call it unintelligible praise to God.

Is salvation and the receiving of God the Holy Spirit, always accompanied by either speaking Swahili, or by your own mystery language? Nope. Not I'm the NT. It happened often, but not always.

The three thousand who were saved on the Day of Pentecost, the Ethiopian Eunuch, the Philippian jailer, Lydia, and Paul himself, did not speak with *any* type of tongues at the time they were saved.

Acts 1:4-5 "Wait for the Promise of the Father... you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

One of the Pentecostal denominations doctrinal statement reads, "All believers are entitled to and should ardently expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire." Isn't that what the believers did?

They waited because this phenomena was calendared by God to occur on Pentecost.

Waiting and earnest praying had nothing to do with God sending the Holy Spirit. He was the gift God gave the Church on its birthday.

Acts 2:38-39 "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized... and you shall receive the **gift** of the Holy Spirit. For the **promise** is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off..."

The Holy Spirit taking residence in me is both a *promise* and a *gift*. I have nothing to do with it, but to receive it. There is no amount of waiting or praying or making myself holy as a prerequisite. Have you ever been told that a holy God can only fill a holy vessel? Not true. God saves believing sinners.

Pentecostal scholar Gordon Fee says this about the early Christians: "What we *must* understand is that the Spirit was the *chief* element, the primary ingredient, of this New Covenant existence. For them, it was not merely a matter of getting saved, forgiven, and prepared for Heaven. It was above all else to receive the Spirit, to walk into the New Age with Him. They simply would not have understood our Pentecostal

terminology - 'Spirit-filled Christian.' They did not think of Christian initiation as a two-stage process. For them, to be Christian meant to have the Spirit. Nowhere does the New Testament say, "Get saved, and then be filled with the Spirit."

Paul spoke with these disciples of John and knew that they were not filled with the Spirit. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

If Paul were alive today, he wouldn't ask that question. It would be rhetorical. Believing & receiving the Holy Spirit go together in the Church Age.

Paul would ask believers, "Having begun in the Spirit, are you being made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

We begin our Christian walk filled with prayer, joy, and devotion to God's Word, only to let the world slip back in. We pursue recognition, comfort, or earthly success over dependence on the Spirit. We rely on our own strength rather than trusting God's power. In essence, we're trying to perfect what only the Spirit can perfect.

🔪 When someone gets saved, we don't want to tell them they are lacking anything - especially the fullness of God the Holy Spirit.

🔪 Neither should you explain to them that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a formality. John MacArthur, for example, taught that it was "the act of Christ, through the Spirit, placing the believer into the Body of Christ at conversion." Read that again and again and you'll see that the Holy Spirit is hardly even involved in baptizing people with His power.

Do you really want to water-down the words Jesus, who said, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:38-39).