

3. The Holy Spirit upon the church

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The third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is, without a doubt, the most misunderstood One in the Godhead by many believers and unbelievers alike.

Within Christianity, the doctrines for the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit can be separated by the two polar opposite views. One group believes that some of the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit are no longer available since we have the complete Bible. But charismatic denominations tend to run wild with the doctrines of the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit away from what the Bible teaches.

In case you are wondering where Calvary Chapel stands on this matter, we stand right between two of these opposite ends where the Bible tells us to stand. We believe that all the gifts and works of the Holy Spirit are still available to the believers of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

At the same time we must use them within the biblical boundary as the Holy Spirit leads us. And believers should not use excuses for their weird behaviors as the work of the Holy Spirit. Because exercising the Holy Spirit's gift is under the control of the individual believer.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

In chapter 2, the history of the early church starts with the fire – the fire from the Holy Spirit.

A. THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Acts 2:1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Please allow me to explain the background of this very important Jewish holiday, the Day of Pentecost.

The word 'Pentagon' came from Greek. And from its same Greek origin, the word 'Pentecost' also came and it means "fiftieth". This Jewish feast was held fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits which was first recorded in Leviticus 23. As I taught you guys before, the calendar of Jewish feasts in Leviticus 23 is a portrait of Jesus Christ and His work.

Let me draw three sets of parallels between the OT and NT here:

1) Passover pictures His death as the Lamb of God.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

1 Corinthians 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

2) The Feast of Firstfruits pictures His resurrection from the dead.

1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

3) The Feast of Pentecost that was fifty days after Firstfruits, pictures the formation of the church.

At Pentecost, the Jews celebrated the giving of the Law, but Christians celebrate it because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to the church.

The Feast of Firstfruits took place on the day after the Sabbath following Passover, which means it was always on Sunday since the Sabbath is the seventh day, Saturday. Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week which was Sunday, and now, Pentecost also took place on Sunday.

Christians assemble and worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because on that day our Lord arose from the dead, but it was also the day on which the Holy Spirit came upon the church. A couple of good reasons for us to get together to remember and worship the Lord on Sundays, wouldn't you think?

One more thing, on the Feast of Firstfruits, the priest waved a bundle of grain before the Lord; but on Pentecost, he presented two loaves of bread. Why? Because at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit baptized two groups of believers – the Jews and the Gentiles and united them into one body of Christ.

But the fact that there was leaven in the loaves indicates the presence of sin in the church on earth. The church will not be perfect until it gets to heaven.

B. THE RUSHING MIGHTY WIND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

Where were they? I believe that they were the Outer Court, a.k.a. the Gentile Court of the temple. I am sure that the attendance at the temple during the Day of Pentecost would be like the Disneyland on Memorial Day in America. Some may object to my comment by saying, "The text says, 'the whole house.'" First, the temple was known as the 'house of God' in the OT, and secondly, how many houses do you know that allow over three thousand people to mingle around? The temple was the obvious answer.

Many esteemed Christian pastors, biblical scholars, and believers of the main denominations understand and interpret the Bible accurately the most of the time, but when it comes to the work of the Holy Spirit, they often allow their denominations' guidelines to get in their ways.

C. BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

We acknowledge a three-fold relationship between the Holy Spirit and the believer that is represented by three Greek prepositions – 'para', 'en', and 'epi.'

1) The Holy Spirit is with us – "para"

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

By His divine omnipresent nature, the Holy Spirit is with us – believers and unbelievers alike.

For unbelievers, the Holy Spirit's presence is unknown to them, and they could care less about Him. As a matter of fact, they don't want His presence in their carnal lives because He convicts them through their own conscience, or the Bible verses they've heard before, or born-again Christians around them.

But in this case, 'with you' speaks of the 'para' relationship, the coming alongside the believers.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is the One convicting an unbeliever of his sin, convincing him that Jesus Christ is the only answer. The Holy Spirit is constantly testifying of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. We also believe that the moment a person receives the witness of the Holy Spirit, Jesus takes away his sin.

2) The Holy Spirit is in us – "en"

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

We believe that every born-again believer of God has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. A believer is under the command of the Scriptures to yield his body to the control of the Holy Spirit and to be constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

We also believe that the Holy Spirit provides the power in the life of the believer to give him victory over sin and over the flesh. We are taught to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. The Holy Spirit is the power over the flesh life, giving us power over our fallen nature. He is the power in our life to transform us into the image of Jesus Christ.

3) The Holy Spirit is upon us – "epi"

Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

So far, both sides – the main denominations of Christianity and the charismatic denominations would agree on the above two doctrines without any issue. But this is where they go to their own extremes.

We believe that this third relationship between the Holy Spirit and a believer is separate and distinct from the first two. The word is 'epi' in the Greek, which means 'upon' or 'over.' Our lives are not just a vessel containing the Spirit, but rather they become channels by which the Spirit flows forth to touch the world around us.

The main denomination theologians would insist that this is where believers receive the Holy Spirit and being baptized by the Holy Spirit. In other words, they put "in" and "upon" as the same category. But we see two clearly distinctive steps in what the Lord Jesus did with His disciples.

John 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

I believe that when Jesus breathed on them they received the Holy Spirit.

Some people claim, "Well, that was just a symbolic action." Show me the Scripture where we are told that this was just symbolic! There's no Scriptural support for that.

I believe that at that moment the disciples were born-again by the Spirit of God just as God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and gave a physical life to him in Genesis 2.

Then Jesus told His disciples that they were to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father which He had been talking to them about.

Acts 1:5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

This 'coming upon' in v8 has been referred to as the baptism of the Holy Spirit in v5 in Acts chapter 1.

When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, He doesn't just give us the "Holy Ghost goose-bump" as our Charismatic friends often refer. He does it to us so that we minister to others as channels of His blessing. It is like we as a cup receiving a torrent of Living Water from the Lord and fill our cup and overflow to bless other believers.

This experience is usually separate from salvation, but it can happen at the same time of salvation, like in the case of the house of Cornelius in Acts 10.

So we believe that there is an experience with the Holy Spirit that is distinct from conversion and indwelling. Some call it baptism. Some call it being filled with the Spirit. Some call it the empowering of the Spirit. It doesn't matter what we call it, the main thing is that we need to have it. We could argue over theological terms, but the experience is described as a gushing forth of torrents of Living Water from our innermost being because the Holy Spirit comes upon us.

When would this happen? It will happen when we, from the inner most being, stop being selfish and yield ourselves to the Lord and ask Him to take over our lives. It is one thing to receive Jesus as your Savior, but it is another thing for you to make Him be the Lord of your life forever.

By the way, speaking in tongues IS NOT the baptism of the Holy Spirit as Charismatic Bible teachers argue. It is nothing more than a side product that can happen. Not every believer has this Holy Spirit's gift, nor does the Bible tell us that it is a mandatory for all believers. We will learn more about this 'speaking in tongue' later time.

D. APPLICATIONS

1) Is Jesus not only the Savior, but also the Lord of your life?

2) Did you yield yourself to the indwelling Holy Spirit so that He can come upon (empower, fill, or baptize) you with His power so that He can minister to others through you?