

Adult Bible Institute
Fall Semester, 2003
Spiritual Gifts Class, Session #9
Topic: “Unique Work of the Spirit in the Book of Acts”
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Introduction:

- A. Understanding some of the work of the Spirit that is unique to the apostolic age is critical. There are certain things the Spirit did that are fulfillment of prophecy and not meant to be repeated again and again in the church.
- B. Pentecost, itself, is a fulfillment of prophecy of the Feast of Weeks (celebrating the firstfruits of the wheat harvest) in Leviticus 23:15-22. The events of the Day of Pentecost are wrapped up in fulfillment of this prophecy and are not meant to be reproduced again and again.
- C. The four unique descendings of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, Acts 8, Acts 10 and Acts 19 are all tied to Jesus’ outline of how the church would be established in Acts 1:8 and in the bringing together in unity with Jewish Christians and the Apostles of three other groups with whom they had historic friction.
 - 1. The Samaritans. Acts 8.
 - 2. The Gentiles. Acts 10.
 - 3. The disciples of John the Baptist. Acts. 19.
- D. The miraculous sign gifts are evidence to the Jewish Church that God has indeed taken the Gospel to the hated Samaritans and the Gentiles. In Acts 19 they unify a small hold over group of John the Baptist’s disciples with the Jewish church led by the Apostles.
- E. All of this movement is outlined by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

I. WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM: Acts 2.

A. The Day of Pentecost---Feast of the Firstfruits of the Wheat Harvest.

1. Christians are often referred in the Gospels as “wheat.” (Example: The Parable of the Weeds in Matt. 13:24-30).
2. The gathering of the wheat symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.
3. They would take the firstfruits of the wheat and bake it into loaves of bread, symbolizing the blending together of individual believers into one body, neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:28), but all unified and one in Christ Jesus. This symbolism becomes the basis for the unique work of the Spirit during this foundational period of the church. He will break down walls and unify the church, as we shall see.

B. The work of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

1. He baptizes and fills people who are already saved. Acts 2:3.
2. This is accompanied by a dynamic manifestation and the miraculous sign gift of speaking in tongues.

II. WITNESSES IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA: Acts 8:1-17.

A. The Samaritans were hated by the Jews (see John 4:9).

B. The Holy Spirit comes baptizes and fills people who are already saved (Acts 8:14-17).

1. Important: The reason the Spirit delayed coming upon the Samaritans was so Peter and John, sent by the Jewish Elders in Jerusalem, could be there to verify that salvation had indeed gone to the Gentiles. The Spirit is breaking down walls of prejudice that would have taken generations and is unifying the church.

C. There is no record of authentication by miraculous sign gifts here. Yet something visible and dynamic had to have occurred as Peter and John and Simon the Sorcerer were able to see that the Holy Spirit had come upon the Samaritans (Acts 8:17-18).

III. WITNESSES TO THE GENTILES (UTTERMOST PARTS OF THE EARTH): Acts 10.

- A. The Apostle Paul would become the primary instrument for the fulfillment of this movement in taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. His ministry would be accompanied by sign gifts to verify his apostleship as born out in 2 Cor. 12:12.
- B. The first step in this move is the opening of the door to the Gentiles through Peter's preaching to Cornelius and his house. Again, we are talking about a group despised by the Jews.
 - 1. Peter, himself, shows this struggle with prejudice when he is confronted by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14 for separating himself from the Gentile Christians in Antioch.
- C. The Holy Spirit baptizes and fills these believers at conversion and gives the miraculous sign gift of tongues. This is done in the presence of Peter and is verification that the Gospel has gone out to the Gentiles.
 - 1. The whole purpose of this unique work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts is clearly demonstrated by Peter's "post-Cornelius" report to the elders at Jerusalem in Acts 11:1-18, a very critical text.
- D. Proof of the need for the Spirit to bring about unity by dramatic manifestation of Himself is seen in the ongoing struggle that the Jewish Christians had in accepting the Gentiles as spiritual equals.
 - 1. We've already mentioned Peter in Galatians 2:11-14.
 - 2. This struggle comes to a head in the first Church Council after Paul's First Missionary Journey in Acts 15.

IV. THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST: Acts 19:1-7.

- A. The need for unity here is in the fact that there had been historic friction between the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus. (see John 3:22-26).
- B. These 12 are already saved but the Holy Spirit baptizes and fills them after conversion in the presence of the Jewish Apostle Paul. This is verified through the sign gift of tongues.

V. IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS.

- A. The main focus of the miraculous spiritual gifts, particularly tongues, is to act as signs to the Jewish nation that Jesus is

the Christ, and that the Gospel of Jesus is going forth to all nations.

1. It is the Jews who require a sign (1 Cor. 1:22).

B. These unique descendings of the Holy Spirit and the move of the Gospel in this foundational period of the forming of the church is accompanied by these miraculous signs for verification. Once the Acts 1:8 blueprint of Jesus has occurred and these walls of prejudice have been broken down, the need for these sign gifts diminishes. What occurs concerning these sign gifts in the book of Acts is not meant to be a pattern for the church throughout the ages.

C. What is the pattern for the church throughout the ages and what is clearly emphasized in Acts and the rest of the New Testament is the need for the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers and the operation of the permanent ministry gifts (example---mercy, helps, giving, faith prophecy/teaching, etc.) that edify the body.