

QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

22 Who Is the Spirit that We Seek?

Editors Note: This lesson was not originally included in the corpus of work that Pastor Christensen prepared under the overarching title, **Questions We Want Answered**. He prepared it separately for a church membership class. The editor thought that it would be very helpful to include it in this book.

WHAT WE BELIEVE:

We believe in one God, creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.

INTRODUCTION:

The beauty of the Christian faith is that the God who is worshipped is not a distant deity greatly separated from the lives of His people. The Christian God is triune and in the person of the Holy Spirit He actually dwells within those who believe the gospel. (See I Corinthians 3:16; Naos meaning sanctuary)

After Jesus arose from the dead and ascended into heaven on Pentecost Day, He sent the Holy Spirit to reside in the hearts of believers. This amazing event is described in Acts 2 with its visible and audible signs. When it was over, one impression remained. Believers were under the Spirit's Control and Jesus Christ dwelt within them. The purpose of this study is to better understand the person and work of the Holy Spirit as described in the above statement of faith. Six discernable truths arise for our consideration.

I. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CURRENT:

The Holy Spirit has come and He is still here. It is important to distinguish the abiding elements of Pentecost which are vital, internal and permanent. Pentecost is then perpetuated in our lives while not being historically repeated. There are certain incidental and external elements of Pentecost which were not meant to be necessary to the ongoing of the life and ministry of the church.

These observable occurrences belong to a particular historic scene and we seek not a repetition of that historic Pentecost. They are:

1. The physical presence of the whole church in one place.
 2. The sound of a mighty, rushing wind.
 3. The divided tongues of flame which rested on the foreheads of those present.
 4. The speaking of languages from all nations without an interpreter so that the message spoken was understood.
 5. The fact that the Holy Spirit could be permanently owned but once.
- Pentecost, in this sense, is an unrepeatable happening. It took place at a prior arranged time (Acts 2:1), fulfilled an Old Testament type (Leviticus 23:15-22), at an appointed place (Luke 24:49), to a particular body of people (Acts 1:14). It introduced a new order. An outstanding sign was needed to prove the inclusion of the Gentiles into the family of God. (Acts 2:38-39)

On the other hand, Pentecost affords the benefits of the Holy Spirit to perform the ministries of the Spirit in the age of the Spirit. Those repeatable characteristics of Pentecost we seek are:

1. The comfort the Lord Jesus had promised.
2. The peace He promised.
3. The teaching He promised.
4. The power he promised in witness.
5. The spiritual unity among believers.
6. The work of God in making people like Christ.

II. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CHRIST CENTERED:

The Spirit is present to glorify Jesus according to Christ's plain teaching recorded in John 16:13-14. Not only do we need to understand what remains of Pentecostal power, but we must understand at all times why the Spirit was sent in the first place. Not to do so will lead to a very unfortunate distortion in the Christian life.

The Spirit's ministry is not to glorify Himself or any mortal person. We may dismiss immediately competitive or comparative experiences of the Spirit's ministry as being purely carnal. The true test of any manifestation is Christ's glorification, not the Spirit's power or man's exercise of this or that gift. It has been well said, "The Holy Spirit seems to have a passion for anonymity."

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CONVICTION:

The words of our statement are based on those of the Lord recorded in John 16:7-11 where He said the Spirit would minister in three areas. The sin spoken of is the sin of not believing on Jesus. (John 15:22) The righteousness is that of Christ who fulfilled the law, it is righteousness made available but not accepted. The judgment is that of Calvary where the Prince of the world was defeated, judged and cast out. This is the work of the Spirit. It is to turn men to Christ, and to convince them that judgment is not future, it is past.

The work of the Holy Spirit issuing in spiritual regeneration has to do with the imparting of new life. It is **instantaneous**. In John 1:13, 3:3, 5, 7 we have the Aorist tense which stresses an event not a process. In I John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4, 18 we have the imperfect tense which has the meaning of a single, decisive activity with lasting results. It is also **nonexperiential**, not based on the past. It is an act of God.

IV. THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IS COMPULSARY:

Here I want to make an observation concerning the so called "baptism of the Holy Spirit." First, the phrase "baptism of the Holy Spirit" does not occur in Scripture. There are similar expressions. (Mark 1:8; Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16) The word "baptize" comes from the Greek and to us transliterated by the change of a single letter. Words change with the passing of time and we must be certain of the early usage which was both **ceremonial** and **metaphorical**. The ceremonial usage was literal and primary, to dip, plunge, immerse. (Matthew 3:16) Metaphorically the word meant a change of identity. (I Corinthians 10:2; Matthew 3:11, 20:22; Romans 6:3; I Corinthians 12:13) In this regard people are baptized by the Holy Spirit the moment they put their faith in Christ. There is no other way to become a part of the Body of Christ.

V. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CONSTRUCTIVE:

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to give gifts which are spiritual abilities, beyond the natural, freely given to all believers as a means of revealing Christ in a meaningful way to others for their salvation and edification. Gifts must evangelize or edify. They are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11; I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30, and Romans 12:6-8. In regard to an "unknown tongue" it is reasonable not to limit the Holy Spirit's power by denying the possibility of such a demonstration. However, any such exhibition of the Spirit's power must glorify Christ, edify His people, and be confined to the precise stipulations of Scripture.

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IS CONDITIONAL:

It is difficult for many to think of every Christian being baptized by the Holy Spirit. We have the historical Pentecost with its supernatural signs looming in our minds. The unusual signs were no more a part of the baptism than what happened to Saul on the Damascus Road is a part of every conversion. This was a unique initiatory experience. The result of the baptism was the fullness of the Holy Spirit which was to be the continuing, permanent result, to be the norm. (Acts 6:3, 7:55, 11:24, 13:52) We are urged to be filled with the Spirit, to be Spirit controlled. No New Testament sermon or command urges believers to be baptized with the Spirit. The filling depends upon yielding to the Holy Spirit, dealing with known sin in our lives, making restitution, believing God, obedience, and the employment of Scripture and prayer.

VII. THE HOLY SPIRITS WORK IN OUR SANCTIFICATION:

Sanctification means the setting apart of something for its intended use. From the believer's point of view it is the gracious work of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in setting the believer apart for God's own glory and service. Three kinds of sanctification are described in Scripture. Long have theologians spoken of positional sanctification (I Corinthians 1:2), and practical or progressive sanctification (John 17:17). The latter has to do with our lives each day as the Holy Spirit works within us. One such operation of the Spirit is to distribute spiritual gifts to all believers.

I. Do Not Confuse the Gifts of the Spirit With the Fruit of the Spirit:

1. A gift of the Holy Spirit is a spiritual ability, beyond the natural, freely given to believers as a means of revealing Christ in a tangible way for their edification or salvation.

II. It Is Important for Us to Know About Spiritual Gifts:

1. Paul does not want us to be ignorant. (I Corinthians 12:1)
2. It is important in the functioning of the Body of Christ.
(I Corinthians 12:7)

III. Gifts Are Distributed by the Ascended Christ:

1. In Ephesians 4:7-10 Paul quotes Psalm 68:8
2. Christ's ascension is as a victory march. In the celebration gifts are given.
3. Our gifts come to us at an extremely high price.

IV. Gifts Are Distributed to Every Individual Believer:

1. You have at least one spiritual gift. (Ephesians 4:7; I Corinthians 12:7, 11; I Peter 4:10)
2. You may have more than one but not all the gifts.
(I Corinthians 12:15-21, 29-30)
3. Your gift is essential to the functioning of the church.
(I Corinthians 12:14-18)
4. According to the gift or gifts one possesses and the degree of development, each believer can be viewed as having various capacities for service.

V. Gifts Are Distributed for the Well-Being of Others:

1. Not for self-edification, but for others. (I Corinthians 12:7, 13:4)
2. Others are poorer and left without when we do not exercise our gifts.

VI. Gifts Are Distributed Through the Holy Spirit Sovereignly:

1. One does not dictate to the giver of the gifts.
2. This is not done at random, but according to God's plan for your life.

VII. Gifts Are Distributed at the Time of Salvation:

1. Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. If you do not have the Holy Spirit, you cannot have His gifts.
2. We receive the Holy Spirit at the time of conversion.
3. We can distinguish between natural talent and spiritual gifts.

VIII. Gifts Are Distributed on the Basis of Grace:

1. Not on the basis of spiritual maturity. (I Corinthians 1:7, 3:1-3, 12:4-6)
2. Not on the basis of education.

CONCLUSION

We have a responsibility to keep in step with the Spirit. We need to guard against resisting, quenching, tempting, lying to, grieving, or defiling the temple of the Spirit. As those who are sanctified progressively and practically, we need to discover, develop and use our spiritual gift (gifts).

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