

# Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit



## 2 & a 3<sup>rd</sup> Views on “When”

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*"Explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words."*

1 Corinthians 2:13

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## Acts 2:37-40

**2:37**

**Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"**

**2:38**

**Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**2:39**

**For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."**

**2:40**

**And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."**

# Preface: “The Way”

This scripture passage is the conclusion of the sermon, which the apostle Peter preached in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost – the day, which is commonly, held to be the birthday of the Christian Church. At that time, Christianity, and its adherents – the Church - was known simply as “**The Way**”<sup>1</sup>. Jesus had declared Himself to be “**The Way, The Truth and The Life**”.<sup>2</sup> Through His death and resurrection, He opened up “**a new and living way**”<sup>3</sup> for those who trust and follow Him. And “He left us an example that we should follow in His steps”<sup>4</sup> as we walk with Him on this **Way of Life**. The Christianity Jesus founded is a way of living. It’s **The Way of Life**.

We see this **Way of Life** recorded in this passage in the Book of The Acts of the Apostles. This **Way of Life** was established by the Holy Spirit in the early Church for the Church. Acts 2, verse 37 reads: “**Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”**<sup>5</sup> In verses 38 through 40, it tells us that what the Holy Spirit had the early church to do was:

- ❖ repent
- ❖ be baptized

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 9:2, 18:25, 19:9, 23, 22:4, 24:14, 22

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 10:20

<sup>4</sup> I Peter 2:21

<sup>5</sup> All scripture quotations are from the NKJV, unless otherwise noted.

❖ receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

The majority view of Bible scholars (to which I concur) is that the Book of the Acts of the Apostles is to be interpreted as being historically “**descriptive**”, rather than “*prescriptive*” for the whole of the Church Age.<sup>6</sup> There is also a commonly-held hermeneutic principle regarding the necessity of discerning **the author’s intention** in the writing of a particular scripture passage. I understand Luke to be *describing what was prescribed* – i.e. commanded – by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter – namely, “repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”.

In a manner of speaking, we could say that which describes Christ Himself is “prescriptive” for the New Covenant, because Christ – in, by, and through “the law of Christ” or “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” - is the Canon<sup>7</sup> for the New Covenant, rather than “the letter”. Christ is the Pattern Son<sup>8</sup>.

In a marvelous way, God saw to it that Jesus of Nazareth would establish repentance, baptism and the receiving of the Holy Spirit as “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”, when He “fulfilled all righteousness” with John the Baptist at the Jordan River<sup>9</sup>: Jesus submitted to John’s

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. “How to read the Bible for All It’s Worth” by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, p. 124. Cf. pp. 126-130 for “6 Hermeneutical Principles for Interpreting Acts”.

<sup>7</sup> The “principle” or “rule” or “law”.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:14; Hebrews 2:10

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 3:13-17

“baptism of repentance”<sup>10</sup>, and the Holy Spirit came upon Him<sup>11</sup>. Thus, **The Way of Life** for us is through repentance, baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew 3:11; Acts 13:24, 19:4

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 3:13-17; Isaiah 11:2, 42:1; 1 John 5:6

<sup>12</sup> “The Way” series consists of: # 1: “*Repentance*”; # 2: “*The Meaning of Baptism*”; # 3: “*Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit*”. **Suggested Reading** in conjunction with this series entitled “The Way” – as an introduction: “*The Drawing of the Holy Spirit*”; and as a follow-up: “*You Must Be Born Again*”. For a complimentary .pdf copy of these or any other teaching article, email: [AtChristsTable@gmail.com](mailto:AtChristsTable@gmail.com)

# Introduction to Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit

In this teaching, we will consider the question: *When Do You Receive the Holy Spirit?* Specifically, we will be investigating whether believers receive the Holy Spirit **WHEN** they **believe** – making **receiving** *synonymous* with **believing**; or whether believers **receive** the Holy Spirit **AFTER** they **believe** – making **receiving** *subsequent* to **believing**.

## PLEASE NOTE:

Firstly, by making a survey of the New Testament scriptures, we will be **DESCRIBING** when most believers received the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, our goal is **NOT** to *prescribe* a “letter” as to when believers “must” receive the Holy Spirit,<sup>13</sup> but rather, to see Christ as the Pattern of the New Covenant – namely, “the Law of Christ”, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ”. Please remember this as you read the rest of this article.

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<sup>13</sup> Although, they certainly **MUST** receive the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9.

There are basically two views on this matter – the traditional Evangelical<sup>14</sup> view and the traditional Pentecostal<sup>15</sup> view. I'll present these two views and a third view – which is a *comprehensive* view agreeing with certain aspects of the truth in both the traditional views. I arrived at this third view after a study of the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as recorded throughout the whole of the Acts of the Apostles. I later found a confirmation to my findings in the writings of David Pawson, a seasoned Bible teacher in the UK – specifically in his two books: *The Normal Christian Birth* and *Jesus Baptises in One Holy Spirit*. In the Foreword of the latter, Dr. Mark Stibbe refers to this view as a “comprehensive view of conversion-initiation which comprises repentance of sin, faith in Christ, water baptism, and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit”.

What we are dealing with here is the mystery of *regeneration*. It is of utmost importance that, through intensive study of the Scriptures, we wrestle with this mystery, while, at the same time, remain humble enough to realize that we cannot understand, none-the-less communicate, every aspect of the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. While the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit is normative for every believer in the Church<sup>16</sup>, it is also a very personal spiritual experience taking

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<sup>14</sup> Concerning the hard-to-define term, *Evangelical*: The contemporary usage of the term derives from a 20th century movement which was perceived as the middle ground between the theological liberalism in the Mainline Protestant denominations and the cultural separatism of Fundamentalist Christianity. In North American usage the term "evangelicals" is nearly always used in this sense.

<sup>15</sup> Concerning the less difficult-to-define term, *Pentecostal*: Pentecostalism is a fundamentalist religious movement within Christianity that places special emphasis on the direct personal experience of God through the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as shown in the Biblical account of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9



place between the Creator and each individual member of the New Creation.<sup>17</sup> If we have an earnest desire, we can measure our personal experience against the Scriptures. But, again, I don't think we can "pin down" in human language the whole of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

This *comprehensive view* does not fully agree with either the traditional Evangelical view or the traditional Pentecostal view, both of which have aspects of truth. But the *comprehensive view* does agree with those aspects of truth in both views. Two half-truths do not make a whole truth. Half truths are always lacking the *essential ingredient* which is *the key that opens the door* to the whole truth. Both the Evangelical view and Pentecostal view contain half truths. The *comprehensive view* takes both these half truths and adds *the key* that I believe brings us to the whole truth about **believing** and **receiving** the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here's *the key*: **Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily happen at the same time one begins to believe on Jesus Christ.** Just one reason why I think this should be obvious is because the beginning of **believing** is difficult to pinpoint since it is a gradual, imperceptible process.<sup>18</sup> Whereas, the records of the Acts of the Apostles show that the **receiving** of the gift of the Holy Spirit is an immediate, perceptible event.

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<sup>17</sup> Or *creature*. II Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10, 15, 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>18</sup> Cf. My article, "The Drawing of the Holy Spirit". For a complimentary .pdf copy of this or any of my teaching articles, email: [AtChrist'sTable@gmail.com](mailto:AtChrist'sTable@gmail.com)

The phrase, “receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit”, comprises the following: Regeneration (or New Birth), the Holy Spirit’s Pledge, Testimony, Sealing, and Anointing, as well as the Baptism in/with the Holy Spirit. *I believe that the New Testament scriptures show that these things do not necessarily happen at the same time one begins to believe on Jesus Christ.* If what I just said is disturbing to you,<sup>19</sup> what I am about to say next will be even more disturbing to you: *I don’t believe that the Scriptures say we become Christians when we begin to believe on Jesus Christ. I believe they tell us that we become Christians when we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:9 “... those who do not have the Spirit of Christ<sup>20</sup> living in them are not Christians at all.”<sup>21</sup> Conversely, if you have the spirit of Christ, you are a Christian in the true sense of the word.<sup>22</sup> So ultimately, what we are discussing here is What or Who is a Christian?

Both the Evangelical and Pentecostal views hold that one becomes a Christian, that is, becomes born again or regenerated, sealed, and anointed by the Holy Spirit the moment one begins to **believe** on Jesus Christ. I suggest that all this does not necessarily happen the moment one believes on Jesus Christ. One could therefore say that I make a distinction between a “believer” – one who may profess and even begin to follow Christ – and a

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<sup>19</sup> If you are *unchurched*, I’m fairly certain it has not disturbed you.

<sup>20</sup> The titles *Spirit of Christ* and *Holy Spirit* both refer to the same Spirit of God, as God is one Spirit. I Corinthians 12:9, 11, 13, Ephesians 2:18, 4:4.

<sup>21</sup> *The New Living Translation. NASB:* “... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

<sup>22</sup> i.e. You do belong to Christ.

“Christian” – one who “belongs to Christ” - one who has **received** the Spirit of Christ.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, even demons are “believers”<sup>24</sup> but are obviously not “Christians”. Why? Because they have not **received** the Spirit of Christ.<sup>25</sup> From the scriptures, I understand a *Christian* to be one who has been born of the Spirit, regenerated, sealed, and anointed by the Holy Spirit, BUT I hold that this does not necessarily take place the moment one **believes** on Jesus Christ, but rather, when one **receives** the Spirit of Christ. In other words, **believing** and **receiving** are not *synonymous*; rather **receiving** is *subsequent* to **believing**.

My understanding from the Scriptures is that the salvation process includes:

- An experience of repentance and believing,<sup>26</sup>
- which can be<sup>27</sup> publicly expressed through water baptism,<sup>28</sup>
- and committed to by discipleship to Christ,<sup>29</sup>
- as God removes the penalty of sin and the sin nature.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Romans 8:9-11

<sup>24</sup> James 2:19

<sup>25</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>26</sup> Acts 2:38, 20:21

<sup>27</sup> In the first century, water baptism was a public ritual.

<sup>28</sup> Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9-10

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>30</sup> Luke 24:47, Romans 5:10, 6:6

- Then (which, in the “Apostolic Descriptions”<sup>31</sup>, happens immediately following water baptism), the experience of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit – namely, the “Spirit of Christ”,<sup>32</sup> “the Spirit of the life of Christ”,<sup>33</sup> Who gives “newness of life”,<sup>34</sup> brings forth the “new birth” of the “new creation”,<sup>35</sup> regenerates, seals and anoints,<sup>36</sup> and baptizes into Christ, His Spirit, and His Body,<sup>37</sup> as well as, empowers with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>38</sup>

We will be looking at the specifics of the various views and making comparisons. More importantly, we will be taking an in-depth look at the New Testament scriptures and the pattern that is evident in the Acts of the Apostles, as we reconsider this mystery of *regeneration* specifically in the context of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. The intention of this lengthy introduction has been an attempt to fully engage your attention to some issues and the overarching significance of this mystery and spiritual experience of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>31</sup> This is a phrase which we will deal with later in the article. While “Apostolic Descriptions” are NOT synonymous with the phrase “THE PATTERN OF CHRIST”, it is NOT contrary to it; but rather, act as examples of “THE PATTERN OF CHRIST”.

<sup>32</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>33</sup> Romans 8:2

<sup>34</sup> John 6:63, Romans 6:4

<sup>35</sup> John 1:13, 3:3-7, II Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>36</sup> II Corinthians 1:21-22

<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:4-8, I Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27

<sup>38</sup> Acts 1:8, I Corinthians 12:4-7, Galatians 5:22-23

At this point, allow me to just put forth these questions for your personal consideration:

- Have you repented of sin?
- Have you exercised faith towards God?
- Have you begun to trust and depend upon Christ?
- Have you been baptized into Christ?
- Have you received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

# Romans 8:9-11

Let's read again what the apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans:

**“... those who do not have the Spirit of Christ<sup>39</sup> living in them are not Christians at all.”<sup>40</sup>**

Conversely, if you *do* have the Spirit of Christ, you are a Christian in the true sense of the word – that is you “belong to Christ”, as it is translated in the *New American Standard Bible*. A Christian is one who “belongs to Christ”. A Christian is one who “has the Spirit of Christ”. This is what the apostle John wrote about “having Christ”:

**“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”<sup>41</sup>**

When one HAS the Spirit of Christ, Who gives the life of Christ,<sup>42</sup> then one HAS the Christian life in the truest sense of the word.

Both the Evangelical and Pentecostal view claim that this happens WHEN one begins to believe on Jesus Christ. The Evangelical view would

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<sup>39</sup> The titles *Spirit of Christ* and *Holy Spirit* both refer to the same Spirit of God, as God is one Spirit. I Corinthians 12:9, 11, 13, Ephesians 2:18, 4:4.

<sup>40</sup> Romans 8:9 *The New Living Translation*. NASB: “... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

<sup>41</sup> I John 5:11-12

<sup>42</sup> John 6:62, II Corinthians 3:6

then go on to say that the baptism of the Holy Spirit also happens AT THE SAME TIME – thus asserting that the believing and receiving are *simultaneous* - and that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are *synonymous*. Whereas the Pentecostal view would also say that one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit WHEN one believes, but that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a “*second experience*” that only happens AFTER one believes – thus asserting that there are “two receivings” – one WHEN you believe, and another one AFTER you believe.

In Scripture, there is no precedent for “two receivings” of the Holy Spirit. Like the Evangelical view, the *comprehensive view* maintains there is only one receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit and that is *synonymous* with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But, unlike the Evangelical view (and the Pentecostal view), the *comprehensive view* maintains that this happens AFTER one believes. This seems, to me, to be a clear and simple explanation of the so-called “second experience” of the “two receivings”, namely: one believes on Christ, but doesn’t experience a receiving of the Holy Spirit; and then sometime AFTER, one does experience receiving the Holy Spirit (for the first and only time).

Both the Evangelical and Pentecostal views use certain scriptures on which to base their position – let’s take a look at their “proof texts”:

# John 20:22

**“And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”**

This particular verse is more controversial than the other four passages we will be looking at. The reason why is this: Here, in the Gospel of John, on the evening of Jesus’ resurrection, before His ascension,<sup>43</sup> and before - seven weeks before - the Day of Pentecost (which was the day designated by Christ for the out-pouring and the disciples’ baptism in the Holy Spirit,<sup>44</sup>), *it seems to be implying* that receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and being baptized in the Holy Spirit are two different events, and that the disciples apparently had “two receivings”, as the Pentecostal view would have it. Did the disciples actually receive the gift of the Holy Spirit on the evening of Easter Sunday? If they did, we need to ask the question: Were they regenerated at that time? According to the Evangelical and Pentecostal views, they should have already been regenerated, when they had first believed approximately three years earlier.<sup>45</sup> Also, if the disciples actually did have “two receivings”, there is no reason to believe that this would be a precedent for believers - there is no mention of “two receivings” anywhere else in the Scriptures. One should never try to establish a doctrine on a single verse of Scripture. We will be looking at many Scripture

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<sup>43</sup> John 20:17

<sup>44</sup> Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8

<sup>45</sup> John 1:12, 13:10



references throughout the Acts of the Apostles - which is descriptive of the Church, not the Gospels<sup>46</sup> – and in every instance, there is only one receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Again, did the disciples receive the gift of the Holy Spirit on Easter Sunday? I think not:

- John tells us that Jesus breathed. He doesn't tell us that He breathed *into the disciples* – the word “them” should be in *italics* in your Bible, as it is not in the Greek text. When God breathed *into Adam*, He did not find it necessary to command Adam to “receive” the life-giving Spirit.<sup>47</sup> If Jesus had breathed the Spirit *into the disciples* that evening, He may have rather used the indicative mood in saying, “Now that you have received ...”, instead of the command, “Receive...”. Also, the gospel account doesn't tell us that the disciples somehow obeyed His command to “receive” at that time.
- There may be an inference, but there is no definite statement that the disciples, if fact, received the Holy Spirit at this time. And there is no indication of any

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<sup>46</sup> The Acts of the Apostles represent recorded history during the New Covenant; whereas, the Gospels represent a transition period between the Old and the New Covenants. One may understand Jesus of Nazareth to be walking in the New Covenant, but everyone else, including the disciples were still walking under the Old Covenant. i.e. The Holy Spirit was IN Jesus of Nazareth, but the Holy Spirit was still only WITH the disciples: John 14:16-17 (+18-20).

<sup>47</sup> Genesis 2:7

subsequent “effects” of having received the Holy Spirit, as there are throughout the Acts of the Apostles when people received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- Only 10 disciples were present – Judas was gone, and Thomas wasn’t present. What about Thomas and the other 120 disciples who were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost? If the 10 had their “first receiving” that evening, when did all the other disciples have their “first receiving” of the Holy Spirit?
- Jesus had said that the Spirit would not be given until after He departed, and that the disciples were to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit.<sup>48</sup> And Peter said that only after Jesus ascended to the Father, and only after Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit, was the Spirit poured out.<sup>49</sup> And it should suffice to say that John, the apostle who wrote, “ ... He breathed ... and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit", had written earlier in his gospel “... for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> John 16:7, Luke 24:39, Acts 1:4

<sup>49</sup> John 16:7, Acts 2:33

<sup>50</sup> John 7:39

So then, what was going on that evening? I think this is what the verse plainly says: “Jesus breathed” – He gave a sign; and said, “Receive” – He gave a command. He made a gesture as a sign of the Holy Spirit, the “Breath of God”, and gave a command to receive the Holy Spirit. But receive when? When He had said – on the Day of Pentecost.<sup>51</sup> Just as He did in the upper room with the breaking of bread (before His body was broken) and the pouring out of the wine (before His blood was shed), Jesus was making a prophetic gesture in preparation for the Day of Pentecost, when the disciples would hear the “Breath of God” as a wind blowing into the upper room.

Now, the other “proof texts” for the Evangelical and Pentecostal views:

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<sup>51</sup> Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8

## Acts 19:2

**“He (Paul) said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ And they said to him, ‘No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’”**

If Paul had thought they were Christians, that is, if believing and receiving were *simultaneous* and *synonymous*, why would he have asked that particular question? “Did you receive” and “when you believed” are both in the Greek aorist tense, which refers to two different points in time (not one and the same). This is why the King James Version accurately translates it thus: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”

## 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

**“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”**

These verses tell us that the Pledge, Anointing and Sealing are given with the Holy Spirit; but they do not tell us WHEN the Holy Spirit is given. These verses do not say that this happens at the same time as believing. The subject matter of these verses is “what”, not “when”.

## Galatians 3:2

**“... did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?”**

This verse does not ask “Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when* you heard with faith?” The verse says, “**by** hearing with faith”. The subject matter of this verse is not “when”, but “how”. Like everything in God, the gift of the Holy Spirit is received **by** faith, but not necessarily *when you begin to believe* on Jesus Christ.

# Ephesians 1:13

**“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation - having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”**

This verse tells us that they “were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit” “AFTER listening to the gospel”, and AFTER they had “also believed” what they had listened to. It does not say they were “sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit” WHEN they believed. It clearly says AFTER listening and believing. To conclude that they were sealed WHEN they believed can be nothing more than an assumption that is contrary to what is written in the verse. In fact, the tense of the Greek indicates the exact opposite: “having believed” is an aorist participle. And “were sealed” is an aorist verb. The aorist tense indicates that these were *two different points in time*, not one and the same time. Also, the aorist participle indicates antecedent action – namely, the “believing” happened BEFORE the “receiving”.

Another thought - Jesus said:

**“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”<sup>52</sup>**

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<sup>52</sup> Luke 11:11-13

This has been written for an example for us.<sup>53</sup> Jesus had been instructing His disciples on prayer<sup>54</sup> - persisting in prayer, by continuing to keep on “asking, seeking and knocking”<sup>55</sup> – specifically asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>56</sup> This is exactly what His disciples did in the upper room for 10 days between the time Jesus ascended into heaven and the time “when the Day of Pentecost had fully come”.<sup>57</sup> AFTER the disciples had begun to believe on and follow Jesus, having been water baptized, they then prayed to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>53</sup> I Corinthians 10:11

<sup>54</sup> Luke 11:1-4

<sup>55</sup> Luke 11:5-10

<sup>56</sup> Luke 11:13

<sup>57</sup> Acts 1:12-14, (Acts 2:1)



# Review

We have been investigating whether believers **receive** the Holy Spirit **WHEN** they **believe** – making **receiving** *simultaneous* (and *synonymous*) with **believing**; or whether believers **receive** the Holy Spirit **AFTER** they **believe** – making **receiving** *subsequent* to **believing**. We have been discussing the two traditional views on the matter - the Evangelical and Pentecostal views – and have introduced a third and *comprehensive view*.<sup>58</sup> We have considered the key to understanding the whole issue to be this: **Receiving** the gift of the Holy Spirit does not necessarily happen at the same time one begins to **believe** on Jesus Christ. And we pointed out the fact that the New Testament scriptures do not say that we become *Christians* when we begin to **believe** on Jesus Christ, but rather that we become *Christians* when we **receive** the gift of the Holy Spirit, thus making a distinction between a “believer” – one who may profess and even begin to follow Christ – and a “Christian” – one who has **received** the Spirit of Christ.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> This *comprehensive view* does not fully agree with either the traditional Evangelical view or the traditional Pentecostal view, which both have aspects of truth. But the *comprehensive view* does agree with those aspects of truth in both views.

<sup>59</sup> Romans 8:9-11

# Apostolic Descriptions

We will now begin to survey the Acts of the Apostles to see *Apostolic Descriptions*. By this term, I mean descriptions in The Acts of the Apostles which emerged in “Christian Initiation”<sup>60</sup> or “The Normal Christian Birth” process.<sup>61</sup> As we survey the Acts of the Apostles, looking specifically in chapters 2, 8, 10, and 19 where people “received the gift of the Holy Spirit”, we will find the descriptions to be consistent:

- They repented
- and believed.
- They were then baptized.
- And then, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But, before we proceed, I would like to repeat something here which I stated in a footnote earlier<sup>62</sup>: While “Apostolic Descriptions” are NOT synonymous with the phrase “THE PATTERN OF CHRIST”, it is NOT contrary to it; but rather, act as examples of “THE PATTERN OF CHRIST”.

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<sup>60</sup> A term traditionally used by the traditional churches.

<sup>61</sup> A phrase coined by British minister and author, David Pawson.

<sup>62</sup> Footnote 31, p.12.

# The Jerusalem Converts: Acts 2:37-38

## Verse 37:

- **“Now when they heard this...”** That is, “after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”<sup>63</sup> in Peter’s sermon<sup>64</sup>, they **repented and believed**:
- **“... they were pierced to the heart...”**: There was a conviction of the Holy Spirit<sup>65</sup> - the beginning of **repentance**.
- This was accompanied by **belief** <sup>66</sup>.
- **“... and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”**: This conviction and **initial belief** was then
- followed by an active turning from sin to God – “the fruits of **repentance**”.<sup>67</sup>

## Verse 38:

**”Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”**

- Peter (like Paul) called for a public confession and demonstration of **repentance and belief** in Christ<sup>68</sup>, that is, **baptism**. Again, the aorist imperative participle is used – indicating two particular events at two

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<sup>63</sup> Ephesians 1:13

<sup>64</sup> Acts 2:14-36

<sup>65</sup> John 16:7-11

<sup>66</sup> Acts 2:41 “So then, those who had *received his word* were baptized....”

<sup>67</sup> Acts 2:41-42 (Matthew 3:8 and James 2:14)

<sup>68</sup> If one is baptized, but has not really repented, then one merely “got wet” - likewise, if one is baptized, but has not really believed. Romans 10:9-10

particular points in time, namely, **repentance** and **baptism**, which, in this sense, are two distinct experiences.<sup>69</sup>

➤ Peter's pattern for the Jerusalem converts: "**Repent**" (at one point in time), "**be baptized**" (at another point in time), and (at a future point in time) "**you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**".

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<sup>69</sup> Mark 16:16

# The Samaritan Converts: Acts 8:12-24

## Verse 12:

**“But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized....”**

- **First they believed; then they were baptized.** They did not receive the Holy Spirit when they were water baptized (nor when they first believed).<sup>70</sup>

## Verses 14-17:

**14” Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, 15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. 16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.”**

- It is worth noting that they had not received the gift of the Holy Spirit *when they believed*.
- The phrase “fallen upon” in verse 16 equates to the word “receiving” in verse 17. The other words which Luke used to describe this experience are: “receive”, “receiving”, “received”<sup>71</sup>, “fallen upon”<sup>72</sup>, “bestowed”<sup>73</sup>, along

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<sup>70</sup> Acts 8:16

<sup>71</sup> Acts 8:15, 17, 19, and the “received” of Acts 10:47 equates to the “fell upon” of Acts 10:44.

<sup>72</sup> Acts 8:16

<sup>73</sup> Acts 8:18

with, “baptized with the Holy Spirit”<sup>74</sup>, “filled with the Holy Spirit”<sup>75</sup>, “fell upon”<sup>76</sup>, “poured out on”<sup>77</sup>, and “came upon”.<sup>78</sup>

## Verses 13 & 18-24

**13” Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.... 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." 20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21" You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." 24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."**

- Simon Magnus is an example of someone who believes, is baptized, and “continues” in Christ,<sup>79</sup> but has not yet received the Holy Spirit.<sup>80</sup>
- Now in Simon Magnus’ case, which does not necessarily apply to others, he never did receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The reason: his

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<sup>74</sup> Acts 1:5

<sup>75</sup> Acts 2:4

<sup>76</sup> Acts 10:44, 11:15

<sup>77</sup> Acts 10:45

<sup>78</sup> Acts 19:6

<sup>79</sup> Acts 8:13

<sup>80</sup> Acts 8:18-21

repentance was not sufficient in the sight of God.<sup>81</sup> He wanted the free gift and power of the Holy Spirit, but apparently did not want to **repent**.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Acts 8:22-23

<sup>82</sup> Acts 8:24 In fact, Simon Magnus apparently went on to establish a movement of Jewish-type Gnosticism. (Eusebius, *History*: II, 13:1-8, Justin Martyr, *Apology*: I, 26, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*: I, 23:1-2, Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*: p. 359, Goppelt, *Jesus, Paul and Judaism* (Nelson): p. 176-178.

# The Gentile Converts at Cornelius' House: Acts 10:44-48

*(It would be good for the reader to read the story in its entirety – Acts 10:1-11:18 – but, following, is a synopsis.):*

Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman centurion, along with his relatives and close friends had already begun the process of repenting.<sup>83</sup> God sent Peter to them that they might hear and believe “the message of truth, the gospel of salvation” and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>84</sup>

## Acts 10:44-46

**44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.**

➤ The Gentile Converts had received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## Acts 10:47-48

**Then Peter answered, 47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?" 48 And**

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<sup>83</sup> Acts 10:1-33

<sup>84</sup> Ephesians 1:13, Acts 10:34-43



**he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.”**

➤ So, they had repented, believed, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and then immediately *afterwards*, they were water baptized. That is, they were water baptized *after* receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, instead of *before* receiving. This is a departure from the other descriptions seen throughout the Acts of the Apostles. Why this variation? Because Peter and “all the circumcised believers that came with him” had to first be convinced of this new dispensation<sup>85</sup> by the sovereign act of God giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles for the first time in human history.<sup>86</sup> This was a “first” for Peter – he had “never been this way before”.<sup>87</sup>

There is something worth noting in **Acts 11:15**:

**"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning."**

➤ The “beginning” Peter is referring to is the Day of Pentecost, not the evening of the Lord’s resurrection.

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<sup>85</sup> Definition: A divinely appointed order or age, and its administration among humanity and the world.

<sup>86</sup> Acts 11:1-18

<sup>87</sup> We see that God had attempted to prepare Peter for this new dispensation through a vision: Acts 10:9-17 & 11:4-12. We can see that this was also a necessity with the apostle Paul: In his conversion experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), he immediately responds to the encounter with the risen Christ with *repentance* and *belief* (verses 5 & 9). After three days, he is water baptized - apparently after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. I understand the explanation for this departure from the other descriptions in the Book of Acts to be this: The Lord’s equipping of Paul, “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 1:5, 11:13, Galatians 2:8, I Timothy 2:7) and “a Hebrew of Hebrews... a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5). That is, like the apostle Peter, Paul needed to first receive revelation and understanding of this new dispensation of the giving of the Holy Spirit to Gentiles.

And there is also something worth noting in **Acts 11:17**:

**"Therefore, if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"**

- Both the disciples and the Gentile believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit **"after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ"**.

# John the Baptist's Converts at Ephesus: Acts 19:1-6

**1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when<sup>88</sup> you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."**

In Ephesus, Apollos preached John's baptism for repentance. This was the extent of his understanding until Aquila and Priscilla "explained to him the way of God more accurately" – that is, "demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ".<sup>89</sup> The disciples that Paul met in Ephesus had become disciples of John the Baptist through Apollos' preaching John's baptism for repentance. They had repented, but had not yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore had also not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that Paul was able to discern this upon meeting them.

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<sup>88</sup> The KJV more accurately translates the phrase "since ye believed".

<sup>89</sup> Acts 18:24-28

## Acts 19:5-6

**5 "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying."**

➤ "When they heard this..." – that is, "the hearing of faith"<sup>90</sup> "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of salvation",<sup>91</sup> **then they were water baptized, and then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

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<sup>90</sup> Galatians 3:2

<sup>91</sup> Ephesians 1:13

# Conclusion

So, we have surveyed the Acts of the Apostles of people “receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit”, looking specifically at the Jerusalem converts in chapter 2, the Samaritan converts in chapter 8, the Gentile converts at Cornelius’ house in chapter 10, and the disciples of John the Baptist in Ephesus in chapter 19, and found this common description:

- They repented,
- and believed.
- They were baptized,
- and received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In considering the question “When do you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit?”, I’ve done my “honest best” to present an accurate answer from the New Testament scriptures, hoping that would be helpful in your journey of faith. But I would like to repeat something I said earlier:

What is being dealt with here is the mystery of *regeneration*. It is of utmost importance that, through intensive study of the Scriptures, we wrestle with this mystery, while, at the same time, remain humble enough to realize that we cannot understand, none-the-less communicate, every aspect of the supernatural workings of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. While the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit is normative for every believer in the Church, it is also a very personal spiritual experience taking

place between the Creator and each individual member of the New Creation.<sup>92</sup> If we have an earnest desire, we can measure our personal experience against the Scriptures; but, again, I don't think we can "pin down" in human language the whole of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. So, what's more important to me than your agreement with this view, is that you would, in fact, actually receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, I'd like to end this section the way we ended the last section – by encouraging with the words of Jesus to pray to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:

**“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”<sup>93</sup>**

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<sup>92</sup> Or *creature*. II Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10, 15, 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>93</sup> Luke 11:11-13

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~ At Christ's Table ~



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