



## **Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

2 & a 3<sup>rd</sup> Views on “When”



**TITLE & AUTHOR**

*Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit*  
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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**

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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> 1 Peter 2:21

do?" In verses 38 through 40, it tells us that what the Holy Spirit had the early church to do was:

- repent
- be baptized
- 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>5</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** – that is, what was 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"<sup>6</sup> or "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"<sup>7</sup> - is

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<sup>5</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>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:21, Galatians 6:2

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:2

the “Canon”<sup>8</sup> for the New Covenant, rather than “the letter”. Christ is the Pattern Son<sup>9</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>10</sup>: Jesus submitted to John’s “baptism of repentance”<sup>11</sup>, and the Holy Spirit came upon Him<sup>12</sup>. Thus, **The Way of Life** for us is through **repentance, baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit**.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The “principle” or “rule” or “law”.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:14; Hebrews 2:10

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 3:13-17

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

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 3:13-17; Isaiah 11:2, 42:1; 1 John 5:6

<sup>13</sup> “The Way” series consists of # 1: [\*“The Meaning of 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”\*](#).

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### **Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

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## *Introduction*

### *to Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit*

This article considers the question, “*When Do You Receive the Holy Spirit?*” Specifically, it investigates 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**.

There are basically two views on this matter – the traditional Evangelical view and the traditional Pentecostal view. The article presents these two views **and a third view** – which is a *comprehensive view* agreeing with certain aspects of the truth in both of the traditional views.

#### **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>14</sup> but**

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<sup>14</sup> Although, they certainly must receive the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9.

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.

I arrived at this **comprehensive 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, who was 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, nonetheless 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>15</sup>, it is also a very personal spiritual experience taking place

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9

between the Creator and each individual member of the New Creation.<sup>16</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>17</sup> Whereas, the records of the

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<sup>16</sup> Or creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10, 15, 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>17</sup> See my article, ["The Drawing of the Holy Spirit"](#).

Acts of the Apostles show that the **receiving** of the gift of the Holy Spirit is an immediate, perceptible event.

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 purport 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>18</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 8:9b that “those who do not have the Spirit of Christ<sup>19</sup> living in them are not Christians at all.”<sup>20</sup> Conversely, if you have the spirit of Christ, you are a Christian in the true sense of the word.<sup>21</sup> So ultimately, what we are discussing here is “**What or Who is a Christian?**”

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<sup>18</sup> If you are unchurched, I’m fairly certain it has not disturbed you.

<sup>19</sup> The titles Spirit of Christ and Holy Spirit both refer to the same Spirit of God, as God is one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:9, 11, 13, Ephesians 2:18, 4:4.

<sup>20</sup> *The New Living Translation. NASB:* “... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

<sup>21</sup> i.e. You do belong to Christ.

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 “Christian” – one who “belongs to Christ” - one who has **received** the Spirit of Christ.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, even demons are “believers”<sup>23</sup> but are obviously not “Christians”. Why? Because they have not **received** the Spirit of Christ.<sup>24</sup> From Scripture, 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 Scripture is that the salvation process includes:

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<sup>22</sup> Romans 8:9-11

<sup>23</sup> James 2:19

<sup>24</sup> Romans 8:9

- An experience of repentance and believing,<sup>25</sup>
- which can be<sup>26</sup> publicly expressed through water baptism,<sup>27</sup>
- and committed to by discipleship to Christ,<sup>28</sup>
- as God removes the penalty of sin and the sin nature.<sup>29</sup>
- Then (which, in the “apostolic descriptions”<sup>30</sup>, happens immediately following water baptism), the experience of **receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit** – namely, the “Spirit of Christ”,<sup>31</sup> “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”,<sup>32</sup> who gives “newness of life”,<sup>33</sup> brings forth the “new birth” of the “new creation”,<sup>34</sup> regenerates, seals and anoints,<sup>35</sup> and baptizes into Christ, His Spirit, and His Body,<sup>36</sup> as well as, empowers with the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Acts 2:38, 20:21

<sup>26</sup> In the first century, water baptism was a public ritual.

<sup>27</sup> Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:9-10

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

<sup>29</sup> Luke 24:47, Romans 5:10, 6:6

<sup>30</sup> This is a phrase which we will deal with later in the article. While “Apostolic Descriptions” is not synonymous with the phrase “The Pattern of Christ”, it is not contrary to it; but rather, offers examples of “The Pattern of Christ”.

<sup>31</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>32</sup> Romans 8:2

<sup>33</sup> John 6:63, Romans 6:4

<sup>34</sup> John 1:13, 3:3-7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>35</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

<sup>36</sup> Acts 1:4-8, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27

<sup>37</sup> Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Galatians 5:22-23

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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.

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:

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. <sup>10</sup>And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

*The New Living Translation* renders v. 9b in this way:  
"... those who do not have the Spirit of Christ<sup>38</sup> living in them are not Christians at all."<sup>39</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*. According to the apostle Paul, a Christian is one who “belongs to Christ”. A Christian is one who “has the Spirit of Christ”.

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<sup>38</sup> The titles “Spirit of Christ” and “Holy Spirit” both refer to the same Spirit of God, as God is one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:9, 11, 13, Ephesians 2:18, 4:4.

<sup>39</sup> *NASB*: “... if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

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>40</sup>

When one **has** the Spirit of Christ, who gives the life of Christ,<sup>41</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 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.

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<sup>40</sup> 1 John 5:11-12

<sup>41</sup> John 6:62, 2 Corinthians 3:6

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>42</sup> and 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>43</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>44</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

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<sup>42</sup> John 20:17

<sup>43</sup> Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8

<sup>44</sup> John 1:12, 13:10

of “two receivings” anywhere else in Scripture. One should never try to establish a doctrine on a single verse of Scripture. We will be looking at many Scripture references throughout the Acts of the Apostles which are descriptive of the Church. (But that is not the case in the Gospels.<sup>45</sup>) In every instance in the Acts of the Apostles, 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>46</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

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<sup>45</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. That is, the Holy Spirit was **in** Jesus of Nazareth, but the Holy Spirit was still only **with** the disciples: John 14:16-17 (and vv. 18-20).

<sup>46</sup> Genesis 2:7

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, in fact, received the Holy Spirit at this time. And there is no indication of any 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>47</sup> And Peter is recorded as saying that only after Jesus ascended to the Father, and only after Jesus received the promise of the Holy Spirit, was the Spirit poured out on people.<sup>48</sup> And it should suffice to indicate that John, the apostle who wrote, “ ... He breathed ... and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’”, had written

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<sup>47</sup> John 16:7, Luke 24:39, Acts 1:4

<sup>48</sup> John 16:7, Acts 2:33

earlier in his gospel “... for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”<sup>49</sup>

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 specified: on the Day of Pentecost.<sup>50</sup> Just as He did celebrating His last Passover by breaking bread (before His body was broken) and by pouring out of wine (before His blood was shed),<sup>51</sup> in John 20:22, 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, other “proof texts” for the Evangelical and Pentecostal views:

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<sup>49</sup> John 7:39

<sup>50</sup> Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8

<sup>51</sup> Luke 22:7-20; Cf., Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; John 13:1-30, 18:28, 19:14

## 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*

“<sup>21</sup> Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup> who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

These verses tell us that the Guarantee, 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 trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."<sup>52</sup>

This verse tells us that they “were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit” “**after** hearing the word of truth (the gospel)”, and **after** they had “also trusted (believed)” what they had heard. It does not say they were “sealed with the Holy Spirit” **when** they believed. It clearly says **after** hearing 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 grammar indicates the exact opposite: “Having trusted (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,

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<sup>52</sup> NASB: “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.”

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>53</sup>

This has been written to be an example for us.<sup>54</sup> Jesus had been instructing His disciples on prayer<sup>55</sup> - persisting in prayer, by continuing to keep on "asking, seeking and knocking"<sup>56</sup> – specifically asking for the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</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>58</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> Luke 11:11-13

<sup>54</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:11

<sup>55</sup> Luke 11:1-4

<sup>56</sup> Luke 11:5-10

<sup>57</sup> Luke 11:13

<sup>58</sup> Acts 1:12-14, Cf., Acts 2:1

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## A 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>59</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>60</sup>

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<sup>59</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>60</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>61</sup> or “The Normal Christian Birth” process.<sup>62</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>63</sup>: While “**Apostolic Descriptions**” is not synonymous with the phrase “The Pattern of Christ”, it is not contrary to it; but rather, offers examples of “The Pattern of Christ”.

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<sup>61</sup> A term traditionally used by the traditional churches.

<sup>62</sup> A phrase coined by British minister and author, David Pawson.

<sup>63</sup> Footnote 32.

# *The Jerusalem Converts*

## Acts 2:37-38

“<sup>37</sup>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>38</sup>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.’”

### *Verse 37*

- “Now when they heard this...” That is, “after hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation...”<sup>64</sup> in Peter’s sermon<sup>65</sup>, they **repented** and **believed**:
- “... they were cut to the heart...”<sup>66</sup>: There was a conviction of the Holy Spirit<sup>67</sup> - the beginning of **repentance**.
- This was accompanied by **belief** <sup>68</sup>.
- “... and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’”<sup>69</sup>: This conviction and **initial belief** was then

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<sup>64</sup> Ephesians 1:13

<sup>65</sup> Acts 2:14-36

<sup>66</sup> Acts 2:37

<sup>67</sup> John 16:7-11

<sup>68</sup> Acts 2:41 “Then those who gladly received the word were baptized...”

<sup>69</sup> Acts 2:37

- followed by an active turning from sin to God – “the fruits of **repentance**”.<sup>70</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>71</sup>, that is, **baptism**. Again, the aorist imperative participle is used – indicating two particular events at two particular points in time, namely, **repentance** and **baptism**, which, in this sense, are two distinct experiences.<sup>72</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>70</sup> Acts 2:41-42; Cf., Matthew 3:8 and James 2:14

<sup>71</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.

<sup>72</sup> Mark 16:16

# *The Samaritan Converts*

## Acts 8:12-24

“<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. <sup>13</sup> Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. <sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, <sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. <sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’ <sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! <sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.’ <sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’”

## *Verse 12*

“<sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were 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>73</sup>

## *Verses 14-17*

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, <sup>15</sup> who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup> For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid hands on them, and they received 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”,

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<sup>73</sup> Acts 8:16

“receiving”, “received”<sup>74</sup>, “fallen upon”<sup>75</sup>, “bestowed”<sup>76</sup>, along with, “baptized with the Holy Spirit”<sup>77</sup>, “filled with the Holy Spirit”<sup>78</sup>, “fell upon”<sup>79</sup>, “poured out on”<sup>80</sup>, and “came upon”.<sup>81</sup>

### *Verses 13 & 18-24*

<sup>13</sup> Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done....

<sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.' <sup>20</sup> But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! <sup>21</sup> You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this your wickedness and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup> For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.' <sup>24</sup> Then Simon answered and said, 'Pray to the Lord for me,

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<sup>74</sup> Acts 8:15, 17, 19, and the “received” of Acts 10:47 equates to the “fell upon” of Acts 10:44.

<sup>75</sup> Acts 8:16

<sup>76</sup> Acts 8:18

<sup>77</sup> Acts 1:5

<sup>78</sup> Acts 2:4

<sup>79</sup> Acts 10:44, 11:15

<sup>80</sup> Acts 10:45

<sup>81</sup> Acts 19:6

that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’”

- Simon Magnus is an example of someone who **believes, is baptized, and “continues” in Christ,**<sup>82</sup> but has **not yet received the Holy Spirit.**<sup>83</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 **repentance** was not sufficient in the sight of God.<sup>84</sup> He wanted the free gift and power of the Holy Spirit but apparently did not want to **repent.**<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Acts 8:13

<sup>83</sup> Acts 8:18-21

<sup>84</sup> Acts 8:22-23

<sup>85</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

“<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup> ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

*(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>86</sup> God sent Peter to them that they might hear and **believe** “the word of truth, the gospel of salvation” and **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Acts 10:1-33

<sup>87</sup> Ephesians 1:13, Acts 10:34-43

## Acts 10:44-46

“<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.”

- The Gentile Converts had **received the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

## Acts 10:47-48

“Then Peter answered, <sup>47</sup> ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?’ <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay 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>88</sup> by this sovereign act of God giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles for the first time in human history.<sup>89</sup> This was a “first” for Peter – he had “never been this way before”.<sup>90</sup>

- There is something worth noting in **Acts 11:15**:  
“And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as 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>88</sup> Definition: A divinely appointed order or age, and its administration among humanity and the world.

<sup>89</sup> Acts 11:1-18

<sup>90</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**: “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?”
  - Both the disciples and the Gentile believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit “after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> 14 years after publishing this article, I published the book, [\*“CHANGED: A Closer Look into Things Pertaining to Conversion”\*](#) containing a section entitled, [\*“The Meaning of Baptism”\*](#), wherein I explain: In the New Covenant, which Peter did not fully understand at the time of visiting the house of Cornelius, baptism in **water** (a hangover from the Jewish rituals of the Old Covenant) is not necessary for receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. However, there is a spiritual baptism. The more accurate understanding would be that **the spiritual baptism into Christ** is one with receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, with repentance and faith toward God being pre-requisite.

# *John the Baptist's Converts at Ephesus*

## Acts 19:1-6

“<sup>1</sup> And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So, they said, “Into John’s baptism.” <sup>4</sup> 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.” <sup>5</sup> When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

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>92</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

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<sup>92</sup> Acts 18:24-28

also not yet received the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that Paul was able to discern this upon meeting them.

### *Acts 19:5-6*

“<sup>5</sup> When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.”

“When they heard this...” – that is, “the hearing of faith”<sup>93</sup>  
“after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of salvation”,<sup>94</sup> **then they were water baptized, and then they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

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<sup>93</sup> Galatians 3:2

<sup>94</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 Scripture, 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>95</sup> If we have an earnest desire, we can measure our personal experience against Scripture. 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 is 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 by encouraging you with the words of Jesus to pray to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:

"<sup>11</sup> If a son asks for [a] bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? <sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> 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>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Or "creature". 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Ephesians 2:10, 15, 4:24, Colossians 3:10

<sup>96</sup> Luke 11:11-13

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Bill Furioso and his wife, Frances, have been married for more than 40 years, and have two children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Bill and Frances served as missionaries in South Africa for thirteen years making disciples, establishing churches, and training church leaders. Over a span of 40 years, they also traveled extensively in an itinerant Bible teaching ministry which took them to hundreds of gatherings on four continents ministering in churches, conferences, spiritual formation seminars, and home gatherings. They have shepherded several churches, disciplined many to Christ, and mentored church leaders in the USA and abroad.

Being an avid student by nature, Bill has done both formal and informal study in various fields including Education, Music, Philosophy and Theology. As a writer, he has authored many publications which are distributed worldwide. Because of Bill's disabilities resulting from a spinal cord injury, he can no longer travel, so their ministries of writing, recording, distributing, mentoring, and correspondence are now shared primarily via the Internet...

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