

## Coming of the Holy Spirit

### Acts 2:1—13

The giving of the Holy Spirit was quite an event, replete with signs, wonders, sounds and visual manifestations. These were observed by Jews who had traveled to Jerusalem from as far away as Rome (almost 1,500 miles by air). The Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem for three feasts during the year, Passover, Pentecost and Booths (Deuteronomy 16:16) so there were many Jews from all over the region who had gathered in Jerusalem to observe the feast of Pentecost.

A few days before Pentecost, the 11 Disciples, under the leadership of Peter, found it necessary to choose a new Disciple to replace Judas who had transgressed and fell from his position (Acts 1:25). It was necessary to have 12 Disciples because they were going to rule from 12 thrones in the Millennial Kingdom (Matthew 19:28). The Disciples were promised to have this special place of authority given to them to replace the religious leaders, who had rejected Jesus as their Messiah (Matthew 21:43). Chapter two picks up a few days after the Disciples chose their new member.

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Pictures often depict the giving of the Holy Spirit by showing a good-sized room of people with flames shooting out of their head. It's understandable how artists would be lead to paint these types of images, a careful reading gives a slightly different picture.

By reading the last few verses of Chapter 1, and continuing on into Chapter 2, the impression is that only the 12 Disciples are in view at this point. Once they had their 12 members, it seems logical that they would be the first to received the Holy Spirit before the other believers did. Remember that they were given the Holy Spirit in John 20, however, this was for a special work that the Disciples were tasked with in remitting or retaining sins. This was not a fulfillment of the general promise of the Holy Spirit going to all believing Israel. On this day of Pentecost, they seemed to be the first ones in Israel to receive the Holy Spirit in a very public manner and with some very specific and visible demonstrations that there was something very special happening.

As the Disciples were waiting, as instructed (Acts 1:4), The Holy Spirit suddenly came upon them with a sound of a mighty rushing wind and divided tongues, in the manner of a flame of fire, came and rested on each of them. They then began to speak in foreign languages understandable to the many visitors observing Pentecost. The events surrounding the coming of the Holy Spirit were so conspicuous that it was soon noised through the whole area. It's also possible that the noise of the coming Holy Spirit alerted people to something strange going on. The word for spirit is *pneuma*, which can mean wind, so it was appropriate that they heard the sound of a strong wind with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

As people began to gather, they were amazed that they could hear the Disciples speaking in their own language. Again, I believe that the Disciples are the only one who, at this point, have received the Holy Spirit. This would set them apart as the leaders of those who would follow after them in receiving the Holy Spirit.

### Tongues

One gift of the Holy Spirit is the ability to speak in tongues. Much is made of this in charismatic circles, and it is often used as an indication of whether or not a person has received the Holy Spirit. They define this language as the language of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Speaking in tongues at Pentecost was only about speaking in a foreign language, one that had not been studied. This is why those who heard their native language and dialect were so amazed. Charismatics who speak in tongues never speak in a known foreign language but instead claim they are speaking a

“heavenly language.” Obviously, it is not possible for a person to fake speaking in an existing foreign language, which is why Charismatics perhaps choose to speak in a “heavenly” language. Doing so makes it impossible to verify what they are saying. If they truly had the gift of tongues, as we see demonstrated in Acts 2, they would be able to speak a foreign tongue fluently. The very fact that they are unable to do this, as demonstrated in Scripture, should give pause to their claims.

They do claim to speak in a heavenly language, one that comes from the Holy Spirit, as He gives them utterance (Romans 8:26). One problem with this is that there is no biblical evidence that there is a special heavenly or angelic language. Any time angels spoke to men, they did so in Hebrew. The one verse that seems to acknowledge the language of angels is found in 1 Corinthians 13:1. However, the concept of speaking in an angelic tongue is not at all in view in this verse. Paul is merely saying that praying without having love is worthless. Love is more important than the most eloquent of prayers.

Although the charismatics emphasize speaking in tongues, and claim it is the greatest gift given to us by the Holy Spirit because it helps build our faith and activates the fruit of the Spirit, Paul continually deemphasizes this gift. First Paul says that speaking in tongues is a sign for unbelievers, not to those within the church. This was said within the context of a prophecy given by Isaiah, that God would use foreign tongues to persuade unbelieving Israel to believe Him. Paul would rather speak five understandable words than 10,000 in an unknown language (1 Corinthians 14:19—22).

The benefit of speaking in tongues is minimized while the gift of prophecy and teaching is boosted (2 Corinthians 14:6). The gift of tongues was often misused in the church, and Paul had to teach them to stop using the gift of tongues if certain conditions were not met (1 Corinthians 14:4, 12—14, 19). If they didn't follow these rules, then tongues shouldn't be used.

Paul says that these spiritual gifts would come to an end when the “perfect” is come (1 Corinthians 13:8). Charismatics define this “perfect” as Jesus Christ, or the eternal state. However, according to Paul, these gifts ceased within his lifetime. The same man who healed many people early in his ministry was unable to heal Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), and told Timothy to take some wine for his stomach's sake and his many infirmities (1 Timothy 5:23). We also are told of Trophimus being taken sick on Paul's last journey (2 Timothy 4:20). If nothing had changed since his earlier ministry, he would have only needed to send his handkerchief to these men to heal them (Acts 19:11—12).

This passage in Acts 19 was about the time that Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians, and spiritual gifts were obviously still a major part of Paul's ministry. However, it's interesting that by this time there was a change in the program of baptism, signaling that sign gifts, like baptism, would soon disappear (1 Corinthians 1:14—17). It's also interesting that all of Paul's later books lack mention of sign gifts being actively used, another indication that they had passed away.

When Paul says that these gifts will pass away when the perfect comes, he is speaking of something being completed (1 Corinthians 13:8—13). Paul compares his present reality as partial knowledge, but when full knowledge is revealed, then he will not know in part, but will have been complete knowledge. The perfect will come when full knowledge has been revealed.

This idea is emphasized in verses 11—12 when Paul compares partial knowledge with looking into a mirror that only shows an obscure image, like a fogged over mirror after taking a shower. He then speaks of the perfect image as if looking at someone face to face. The first mirror is what Paul felt like when God's full revelation in Scripture had not yet been complete. The second mirror is God's word revealed in its entirety. When we knew all that God was going to tell us, He stopped revealing Himself through all the sign gifts.

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