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"Bestowal" of the Spirit Subsequent to Salvation

Salvation is given to man by a cooperative effort of the Triune God. The Bible reveals that God is a Trinity--one God subsisting eternally as three divine persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The distinctiveness of each personality is shown in Scripture. In John 14:26, the Father sends the Spirit; In John 15:26, Jesus sends the Spirit; In John 17:8 and 20:21, the Father sent Jesus (Beisner 39). In heaven, God the Father sent His Son to earth to sacrificially die on the cross for the sins of all people. After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to work in and to be bestowed upon those who become believers in Christ. Every miracle of salvation through faith in Christ is wrought in the life of an individual through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Scripture clearly shows that without the work and presence of the Holy Spirit no one can become born again nor become a Christian (John 3:5, Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 6:19, 12:3). Pearlman states, "One of the most comprehensive definitions of a Christian is that he is a man in whom the Holy Spirit dwells" (306). While all Christians have a definite work of the Holy Spirit in them upon salvation and an indwelling of the Holy Spirit at conversion, many believe in a "bestowal" of the Spirit subsequent to salvation and find support for this position in the Book of Acts.

Five episodes of the "bestowal" of the Spirit (also called baptism in the Holy Spirit) are described in the Book of Acts. The initial outpouring of the Spirit occurs on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is also experienced by a few Samaritans, Paul, Cornelius and his household, and twelve Ephesian disciples in Acts 8, 9, 10, and 19, respectively. In each case, there is supportive narrative illustrations to conclude that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is distinct from and subsequent to the reception of salvation by the individuals.

MacArthur contends that the New Testament epistles "contain instructions for believers throughout the church age" whereas the Book of Acts is only a "chronicle of the infant church's experiences" (171) and is "never intended to be a primary basis for church doctrine" (172). However, since the Book of Acts is inspired by God, its narrative history and frequent theological illustrations (taken together) are profitable for doctrine, according to Paul's teachings in 2 Tim. 3:16 and Rom. 15:4 (*Where We Stand* 150-51). In recent years, Stronstad and other Biblical scholars have been realizing that Luke's historiography "deals intentionally with theological issues" (Higgins, Dusing, and Tallman 155); thus predominant theological issues in the Book of Acts, such as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, surely form inspired doctrine. It is important to understand that Luke's and Paul's writings often deal with different issues of the Holy Spirit. Pinnock differentiates this by stating, "St. Luke [the author of Luke and Acts] speaks of a baptism of power for service which is not oriented to the soteriological work of the Spirit, which Paul often addresses" (vii). While the Book of Acts is used to support the doctrine of subsequence, the arguments are strengthened when other New Testament writings are considered to contrast the indwelling presence of the Spirit at salvation and the subsequent bestowal of the Spirit with power.

Smith observes that there are three different Greek prepositions in the New Testament to "designate the different relationships of the Spirit to the believer: *para* [translated as *with*], *en* [translated as *in*], and *epi* [translated as *upon*]" (95-96). In John 14:17, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit

is with (*para*) people prior to their conversion and will be in (*en*) them upon receiving Jesus as Savior. However, in reference to believers after Jesus' resurrection, Smith observes that the Holy Spirit would subsequently come upon (*epi*) them in a further experience in Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, 10:44, and 19:6 (96-97). This further empowering experience is first termed *baptism in the Holy Spirit* by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11, and his words are repeated by Jesus in Acts 1:5 and by Peter in Acts 11:16. "Scripture makes it clear there is an experience [at conversion] in which the Holy Spirit baptizes believers into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), and there is the [subsequent] experience in which Christ baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). These cannot refer to the same experience since the agent who does the baptizing and the element into which the candidate is baptized are different in each case" (*Where We Stand* 146). The former "has to do with the believer's position in Christ" while the latter "has to do with power for service" (Duffield and Cleave 278). The distinction between receiving the Holy Spirit at salvation and being immersed in the Holy Spirit is shown by the experiences of Christ's first disciples.

The first incident in the Book of Acts of the baptism in the Holy Spirit occurring subsequent to salvation occurs in chapter 2. The group of about 120 are believers in Christ prior to receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Many believe that the eleven disciples were converted even prior to Jesus' death since He tells them that their "names are recorded in heaven" (NASB Luke 10:20) and "you are already clean" (NASB John 15:3). After His resurrection, Jesus tells his New Covenant disciples, who are just touched by the Holy Spirit in John 20:22, to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5). Wood summarizes this first instance of subsequence well:

John 3:5 teaches that no one can be born again without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and in John 20:22 Jesus breathes the Spirit upon the disciples, thus conferring on them His finished atoning work through the Spirit. However, Acts 1:5 finds the Lord giving yet further direction to the disciples concerning a work of the Holy Spirit they had not yet experienced. (25)

In reference to John 20:22 where Jesus imparts a "spiritual benefit" to His disciples, "Some scholars believe this was a conversion experience, an actual reception of the Holy Spirit" (Tourville 537). Schatzmann comments that John 20:22 alludes to Gen. 2:7 where God breathed life:

Now Jesus breathed life into His own. Some interpret the statement **Receive the Holy Spirit** as symbolic and as anticipating Pentecost. Others understand the Greek to denote immediacy in the sense of "receive right now," and view the day of the Lord's resurrection as marking the transition from the terms of the Old Covenant to those of the New Covenant. The old creation began with the breath of God; now the new creation begins with the breath of God the Son. (1613)

The phrase "receive the Holy Spirit" in John 20:22, "establishes that the Spirit, *at that historical moment*, entered and began to live in the disciples" to regenerate them. Having been "indwelt and regenerated by the Holy Spirit before the Day of Pentecost" (Stamps 1627), the disciples are told by Jesus to wait for the promise of the Father (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5, 8)--the baptism in the Holy Spirit that will come upon them and empower them on the Day of Pentecost. The rest of the group of 120 were surely believers in Christ too. After Jesus' ascension they gathered together with the eleven apostles: "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer" (NASB Acts 1:14) for ten days prior to the Day of Pentecost. In Acts chapter 2, the 120 disciples of Christ (including the eleven apostles) are subsequently baptized in the Holy Spirit, speak in other tongues, and are empowered to witness boldly for the Lord Jesus.

The second incident of the baptism in the Holy Spirit occurring subsequent to salvation is in

Acts chapter 8, where some Samaritans are saved under Philip's ministry (Acts 8:5-8,12) and then baptized with the Holy Spirit several days later under the ministry of Peter and John (Acts 8:14-17). It is clear that these Samaritan men and women are converted "when they believed Philip preaching the good news," and their faith is expressed by their baptism in water (NASB Acts 8:12). News reaches Peter and John in Jerusalem via a messenger from Samaria that many Samaritans "received the word of God," thus Peter and John then journey from Jerusalem to Samaria to pray for the Samaritans to "receive the Holy Spirit, for He had not yet fallen upon any of them" (NASB Acts 8:14-16). "The mention of prayer leaves room for the possibility, indeed of the probability, that some hours or even days of prayer by Peter and John among the Samaritans preceded their laying on of hands" (Wood 144). The Holy Spirit is received by the Samaritans, and Simon sees or hears some physical evidence that the "Spirit was bestowed" (Acts 8:18). This experience occurs subsequent to their salvation.

The third incident of a baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation occurs in Acts chapter 9. "Paul was converted on the road to Damascus by a personal vision of the resurrected Christ--Acts 9:3-9. He was baptized with the Holy Ghost under the ministry of Ananias three days later (Acts 9:17-19)" (Duffield and Cleave 306). Moreover, Wood says that Paul "is converted on the road to Damascus (9:3-6) as he recognizes the Lordship of Jesus and obediently follows His directives" (155). Three days later Paul receives the "filling with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17) which is most definitely the same experience that he imparts to the Ephesian believers in Acts 19:6 (Wood 155) who then speak in tongues as evidence of receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It is evident that Paul received the bestowal of the Holy Spirit as Paul declares in 1 Cor. 14:18 that he speaks in tongues more than all. Clearly, Paul received the bestowal of the Holy Spirit subsequent to his salvation.

The fourth incident of the baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation occurs in Acts chapter 10, approximately 10 years after the Day of Pentecost (Higgins, Dusing, and Tallman 151). Unlike the other four episodes in Acts, the people in this episode do not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at a significantly "later time" from their salvation, but the gift is still "subsequent" to their salvation experience. According to Agnew, "the word *subsequent* speaks, not so much of the length of the time interval, but of the order of occurrence--'following in time, or as a result' " (440). After Peter calls for faith in Christ and while Peter was still preaching, Cornelius the Gentile and his family and friends in Caesarea experience salvation and forgiveness of sins as evidenced by the Holy Spirit falling upon them and their speaking in tongues (Acts 10:43-46). "The subsequent nature of the coming of the Holy Spirit is identified by Peter in using the aorist participle in his likening the event to Pentecost: 'God therefore gave them the same gift as he did to us also *after believing* in the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 11:17, italics added)" (Agnew 441). Furthermore, Peter testifies at the Jerusalem Council that "God bore witness to them [that they were believers], giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us [as believers]" (NASB Acts 15:8; Agnew 441). Horton is convinced that the baptism of the Holy Spirit "witnessed to the fact that they were already believers" (*What* 158). Williams also emphasizes that "Priority is still given to the Caesareans' believing before the falling of the Holy Spirit, even if the latter follows immediately upon the other." In the case of Cornelius' household, there is not a chronological separation between salvation and the baptism with the Holy Spirit; however, Williams articulates that there is a "logical subsequence . . . that even if salvation and baptism in the Spirit are at the same moment, salvation (conversion, regeneration) precedes Spirit baptism" (43).

The fifth incident of a baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation occurs in Acts chapter 19 with twelve disciples in Ephesus, approximately twenty-five years after the Jerusalem

Pentecost (Wood 309). It is possible that these "disciples" in Acts 19:1 refer to the disciples of John the Baptist who had been baptized by John (Acts 19:3), and thus they are not Christians when Paul met them. However, since the word "disciples" refers to Christians everywhere else in Acts, "it is more likely that the disciples Paul met in Ephesus were indeed Christians but had not experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit" (Vinyard 14: 99). Bruce declares, "The idea that there was a group of disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus (against whom, incidentally, the fourth Evangelist is alleged to polemicize) has no substantial evidence in its favor, certainly not in the Fourth Gospel." Furthermore, "Had Luke meant to indicate that they were disciples of John the Baptist . . . he would have said so explicitly" (363). Regardless of their spiritual condition when Paul first met them, the Holy Spirit still comes upon them subsequent to their salvation, baptism in water (indicating faith was evident to Paul), and the laying on of hands by Paul (Acts 19:5-6). Paul's question "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (NASB Acts 19:2) also implies that he regards the disciples as believers in Christ since the question literally reads in the Greek as "having believed, did you receive?" (Horton, *New* 447). Since Paul knew that all believers have the "indwelling Spirit from the moment of their belief, conversion and regeneration (Ro. 8:9)," his question refers to "the baptism in the Holy Spirit for power and ministry" (Stamps 1686). "The very question implies the possibility of believing in Christ without an accompanying reception [baptism] of the Holy Spirit" (Williams 43). Horton expresses, "The whole impression of Acts 19:2 is that since these disciples claimed to be believers, the baptism in the Holy Spirit should have been the next step, a distinct step after the believing, though not necessarily separated from it by a long time" (*What* 161). In the end, the twelve Ephesian disciples receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit subsequent to their salvation, regardless of whether they are converted by Paul or (more probably) they are converted prior to meeting Paul.

While the Book of Acts "describes" only the previous five experiences of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, some writers have mistakenly stated that Acts 2:37-41 "describes" the experience of the group of 3,000 people receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation (Stott 28-29; MacArthur 178). First, although Acts 2:41 describes the 3,000 people receiving the word and being baptized, it gives no specific "description" of an actual bestowal of the Holy Spirit nor of them receiving the promised gift, though "the spiritual warmth of the church thereafter testifies to it (Acts 2:41-47)" (Agnew 441). Second, in Acts 2:38 Peter does not give a prediction of what will actually take place automatically upon repenting or being baptized; instead, he describes what actions must take place after repentance. The question posed by the 3,000 in Acts 2:37, "What shall we do?" is "in the future tense, not of prediction, 'What will we do?' but of requirement, 'What shall [must] we do?'" This is the same tense as Peter's response that uses "the volitional nature of the verb 'receive'--'You shall' [must] reach out and 'take the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Agnew 441). Horton agrees that the Greek word for the verb "receive" in Acts 2:38 is better translated "take", thus the 3,000 are to actively take (*What* 147-48) or to "claim the gift of the Spirit" after experiencing genuine repentance (Herring 124). In summary, Acts 2:37-41 does not describe a sixth baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts, but it does give a command for all believers in all places at all times to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit after experiencing repentance and faith in Christ.

"Traditionally, the Church has associated the baptism in the Holy Spirit with conversion and has identified it with incorporation into the body of Christ" (Stronsad 1). The belief that the bestowal of the Spirit is subsequent to salvation is advocated mostly in classical Pentecostal denominations and by many Charismatics who belong to "mainline denominations or are part of an independent group." Burgess and McGee further express:

"Pentecostals" subscribe to a work of grace subsequent to conversion in which Spirit

baptism is evidenced by glossolalia (i.e., speaking in tongues); for some this baptism must also follow another act of grace, sanctification. "Charismatics," however, do not always advocate either the necessity of a second work of grace or the evidence of glossolalia as an affirmation of Spirit baptism. Yet both emphasize the present work of the Spirit through gifts in the life of the individual and the church. (1)

This writer's essay has shown the Biblical basis for belief in the doctrine of subsequence that is held by many Christians. Based on the pattern of the five incidents of the "bestowal" of the Spirit in the Book of Acts, Duffield and Cleave conclude that "The Baptism with the Holy Ghost is a definite experience, subsequent to salvation, whereby the Third Person of the Godhead comes upon the believer to anoint and energize him for special service" (307). "One is left to conclude [from the Book of Acts] that the baptism with the Spirit could occur immediately after salvation was received (10:44-45; 11:17), or an interval of several days (9:17) or even longer (2:4; 8:14-17; 19:1-6) might come between salvation and the baptism in the Spirit" (Wood 308).

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