

Spirit of Confusion? Part 1

Kyle Click

In today's religious world there are many different ideas about what the Bible says on things like faith, salvation, and church organization. With so many differing views on such things, people who are searching for God can easily get lost in the weeds of religious dogma. The most confusing of these doctrinal topics in the "Christianity" culture today is the Holy Spirit. It seems nearly every manmade denomination has a different idea of who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in our lives today. In this first article, we will discuss who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in the book of Acts. Part 2 will discuss the various views of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives today that are found in the churches of Christ.

Before we jump into Acts let's introduce the idea of the "measure of the Holy Spirit" found in the gospel of John. In John 3:34 it says, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure." In other words, Jesus got the full measure of the Holy Spirit. Now let's let this Biblical term help us understand the different "measures" of the Holy Spirit's power that are illustrated in Acts and how different people got different measures.

First, there is the measure of the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." This was given only to the apostles in Acts 2:1-4 and Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:1-11:18. In Acts 2, the apostles were given the Holy Spirit to give them the power to confirm the word through miracles to the ones they were preaching to (Mark 16:20). The purpose of Cornelius being baptized was to prove to the Jews that Gentiles could be saved (Acts 10:44).

The second measure of the Holy Spirit is the "laying on of hands measure." This was when an apostle laid hands on a person to impart a miraculous gift. This could only be transferred from an apostle to an individual and the individual could not pass that gift on. Once the apostles and the ones who had the laying on of hands measure had died, the source of the miracles died with them. There are five examples of laying on of hands in Scripture, Stephen, Philip, and others in Acts 6:6-8; disciples in Acts 8:18; Acts 19:5, 6; Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:6.

The third and final measure is the indwelling of the Spirit. This is the measure the author believes New Testament Christians have today. In Acts 2:47, Peter gives two promises, forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 5:32 says those who obey God have the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1:13, 14 as well as 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22 mention that the Holy Spirit is a seal and a pledge. A down payment or earnest for what is to come in our reward. How do baptized Christians know they have the indwelling Holy Spirit? In the same way we know we have forgiveness of sin, through faith (Ephesians 3:16-19).

In a world of religious confusion, it's easy to get misled about something like the Holy Spirit, especially when there are so many opinions and ideas floating around. However, if we get back to the Bible and understand the context of these important verses that mention the Holy Spirit, we can have an understanding of this amazing promise that our Almighty God has given us.