

The Holy Spirit

Acts 2:38, "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.**" If I read this verse alone without further study, I would conclude that when I was baptized, I received the Holy Spirit as a gift. However, after studying God's Word about the Holy Spirit, I realize that would have been an erroneous conclusion. The only way the Holy Spirit was given to anyone in the New Testament was from Christ to the Apostles (through baptism of the Holy Spirit) and from the Apostles to some people (through the Apostles laying their hands on them). Since, according to Ephesians 4:4-6, there is now only one baptism (water baptism) and with all the Apostles gone by the end of the first century, there is no longer a mode of transmission. No one today is filled with the Holy Spirit with the ability to perform miracles.

The Apostles were Baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost

In John 7:37-39, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to the Apostles because Jesus had not yet ascended into Heaven. In Luke 24:49ff, right before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He told the Apostles to go wait in Jerusalem "until you are endued with power from on high". In Acts 1:5, Jesus told the Apostles "but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." In Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, the Apostles (and only the Apostles) were baptized (immersed) with the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had promised. Acts 2:1ff, "When the Day of Pentecost was fully come, they [Apostles—Acts 1:26] were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages] as the Spirit gave them utterance." Side note: Speaking in tongues meant being able to miraculously speak in another language that they had never studied. It did not mean some kind of heavenly gibberish. In Acts 2:5ff, when the Jews heard this rushing mighty wind, they came together and were confused because they heard the Apostles, who were Galileans, speaking in their own native languages. Based on this short study, I can conclude that the Apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. They were the only ones who were ever baptized with the Holy Spirit—then and now.

Not Everyone Who was Baptized Received the Holy Spirit

In Acts 8:14ff, there were Samaritans who had been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus—just like Acts 2:38 says—but did NOT have the Holy Spirit. When the Apostles, Peter and John, laid their hands on them, then they received the Holy Spirit. When a man named Simon, who had already been baptized, saw that by the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given, he tried to buy this gift. In Acts 19:1ff Paul asked a group of Christians if they had received the Holy Spirit when they were baptized. This would have been a useless question if everyone that is baptized receives the Holy Spirit. They said they did not know anything about the Holy Spirit. Paul found out they were baptized in John's name. He taught them about Jesus and they were baptized in the name of Jesus. Then he laid his hands on them and they received

the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues and prophesied. Why would Paul need to lay his hands on them in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit if everyone receives the Holy Spirit when they are baptized? Based on this short study, I can conclude that not everyone who was baptized received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was Given to Some by the Apostles Only in the First Century

After more study, I have concluded that Acts 2:38 is actually two separate events:

1. Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and
2. You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Number one applies to everyone then and now—all men need to repent and be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of sins. However, Peter and the other Apostles were talking to the people there on the Day of Pentecost. An important thing about being a Bible student is context. I must read what's before and after this verse and keep it in the context. What did Peter say before Acts 2:38? He stood up in verse 14 and began preaching. In verse 16 he said what was happening *at that time* was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in Joel 2 where God said He would "pour out His Spirit on all flesh". This was the beginning of the miraculous—prophecy, visions, dreams, tongues, etc. Also, the gift is not the Holy Spirit Himself. The gift is the Holy Spirit giving His power to perform miracles. In verse 39, Peter said that the promise of the miraculous was to them and to their children standing there and afar off—so only 1 generation—in the first century only. This event was a temporary giving of the power of the Holy Spirit to some—as many as the Lord our God will call—not everyone and not for all times. During the first century not everyone could perform miracles—only those that God chose—only those that the Apostles laid their hands on. The power of the Holy Spirit (i.e. ability to perform miracles) was limited to the first century for a particular purpose and time. The purpose of miracles was to confirm the Word of God (Mark 16:15-20). The timeframe for miracles was limited to the first century when the Word of God was complete (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

No One Today is Filled with the Holy Spirit and Able to Perform Miracles

From this study, I know that no one today has the power of the Holy Spirit to perform miracles. However, many people today believe they have the Holy Spirit Himself literally inside them. If the Holy Spirit is literally inside children of God, what is He doing there? We cannot feel, hear, smell, touch, or taste Him and we cannot perform any miracles. Here are different beliefs I have heard about the Holy Spirit literally dwelling inside children of God:

- He reveals things to me.
 - What things would He reveal to you that are not already in God's Word? If He is revealing things to you then II Timothy 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:3 are not true. These verses tell us that the written Word of God gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness and is sufficient to make us complete and equipped for

every good work. If we need the Holy Spirit literally inside us in addition to the Word of God, then the Word of God is NOT sufficient.

- If the Holy Spirit is telling my Pentecostal friend to eat a gluten free diet but He is not telling me anything, doesn't that make the Holy Spirit a respecter of persons which God's Word specifically says He is not?
- He helps me not to sin.
 - If the Holy Spirit is literally inside us to keep us from sinning, then why do we continue to sin?
 - When we do sin, is it our fault or the Holy Spirit's fault?
- He helps me be a better Christian.
 - If the Holy Spirit is literally inside us to make us better Christians (like a spiritual steroid), then He is affecting our free will which is against everything that the Bible teaches.
- He protects me.
 - If the Holy Spirit is in us to protect us, then why do Christians have just as much pain and suffering as everyone else?
- He gives me faith.
 - Romans 10:17 says that faith comes by hearing the Word of God—not a spiritual steroid from the Holy Spirit.
- As a preacher, He leads me so I know what to say.
 - If the Holy Spirit tells preachers what to say, then why are there so many preachers teaching so many different doctrines that contradict each other?

How is the Holy Spirit in Us Today?

So, if the Holy Spirit is not literally inside children of God, then what is the meaning of all the verses that say He is in us? Let's look at other passages that talk about others being in us:

- Acts 5:3, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart..."
- Romans 8:10, "And if Christ is in you..."
- Galatians 2:20, "...but Christ liveth in me..."
- Galatians 4:19, "...until Christ is formed in you..."
- Ephesians 3:17, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts..."
- Ephesians 4:6, "one God and Father of all, who is..., in you all..."
- Philippians 2:13, "...for it is God who works in you..."
- Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you..."
- I John 3:24, "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him."
- I John 4:12, "If we love one another, God abides in us..."

There does not seem to be any problem understanding that these verses are figurative. Satan is not literally inside us. Christ is not literally inside us. God is not literally inside us. Yet, many want to believe that the Holy Spirit is literally inside us.

The best way I know how to describe how the Holy Spirit is in us is like this. When a loved one dies, it's common for us to say that they will always be with us—be in us. What do we mean? We mean that we knew that person, what they did, what they said and we will always remember them. What if someone died that I never met? Could I say that? Of course I could not. I did not know them. I don't know what they said and what they did during their life. It's the same concept with the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit who gave us the written Word of God that we have today. II Peter 1:21 tells us that holy men of God spoke (and wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (in their case miraculously). If we read and study God's Word, given to us by the Holy Spirit, then we have the Holy Spirit in us because we know what He said and what He did. However, if we do not know God's Word at all, we cannot make the claim that we have the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit works in us only through the Word of God.

Conclusion:

God has given us everything we need to get to Heaven. He gave us His complete written Word. He gave us the life of His only begotten Son. He gave us the plan of salvation. He gave us free will to choose whether to obey Him or not. He gave us an avenue to talk to Him through prayer. He gave us evidence of His existence in everything we see around us. However, He did not give us deity literally inside our mortal bodies to add to or take away from the written Word or to affect our free will or manipulate us in any way. After all, there must be something we must do on our own.