

How Does the Holy Spirit Dwell in Us?

Many people today believe they receive the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit through the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”. This “baptism” is separate and apart from water baptism for the remission of sins. They know they have received the full amount of the Holy Spirit when they are able to speak in tongues (although I think some people are drifting away from that belief). They believe the Holy Spirit guides them and reveals things to them in their walk of life.

I am going to assume for a minute that the Holy Spirit literally indwells my physical body. This brings up several questions:

1. Many places in God’s Word tell us the Holy Spirit is in Christians but where does it teach that the Holy Spirit (deity) literally dwells in my physical body?

Here are a few verses that show others being in someone:

- 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...”

We have no problem understanding that Satan, Christ, and God do not literally dwell in us. These are figures of speech. However, when it comes to the Holy Spirit, why do people want to take that one literally and say He is literally dwelling in us?

2. If the Holy Spirit is literally inside of me revealing things to me, what is He revealing that is not already in God’s Word?

If the Holy Spirit is revealing things to me today then II Timothy 3:16-17 and II Peter 1:3 are simply not true. These verses tell us that the 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 I need the Holy Spirit literally inside me in addition to the Word of God, then the Word of God is not sufficient. Why not just have the Holy Spirit in each of us and forget the written Word of God?

Secondly, if the Holy Spirit is revealing things to me that are not in God's Word already, then He is in direct violation of Galatians 1:6-9, which says if anyone teaches something different than what the Apostles had already taught in the first century, they would be cursed.

In addition, if the Holy Spirit is revealing things to me personally but not to someone else, does not that make Him a respecter of persons which God's Word teaches the godhead is not a respecter of persons?

Finally, if the Holy Spirit tells me one thing but tells someone else a different thing, then what do I do? It does not seem right that I can tell the other person they are wrong and that was not the Holy Spirit speaking to them because they could say the same thing to me. This is the danger with this belief. It gives everyone claiming to be a Christian a license to do whatever they want because they can simply say they "feel like" the Holy Spirit spoke to them. With the written Word of God, we have a set standard to go by in black and white that does not change.

3. If the Holy Spirit is literally inside of me, what is He doing in there?

- I cannot see, smell, taste, touch, or hear Him.
- He does not affect my free will.
- He does not keep me from sinning.
- He does not physically protect me because I will die.
- He does not give me faith or knowledge because Romans 10:17 and II Timothy 2:15 says that studying the written Word of God does that.
- Should I assume when I have a spiritual emotion or thought that it is the Holy Spirit nudging me? How can I be sure that emotion or thought is not from my own mind and heart?

How can I really know whether the Holy Spirit guided me to some decision in my life and it was not just time and chance as Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 9:11?

4. If the Holy Spirit is literally inside of me, then why can I not perform miracles?

I know why. Because I Corinthians 13 teaches us that miracles were only temporary—in the first century. Zechariah 13:2ff also teaches that such things as prophesying and demon possession would end during the first century. Once the written Word of God was complete, miracles ceased. I, nor anyone else, can perform supernatural acts today. Some say if I have received the Holy Spirit, I will know by being able to speak in tongues. Why this gift? I mean no offense but I believe it is because it is a gift that can be easily faked. However, I Corinthians 12 talks about nine different spiritual gifts and how they did not all receive the same spiritual gift from the Holy Spirit which means they did not all speak in tongues. And a person speaking in tongues today can be disproven because speaking in tongues in the New Testament meant being able to speak a language you have never studied before (Acts 2:5ff). Many today try to say it is some kind of heavenly gibberish.

5. If I do not have the Holy Spirit literally inside me, then what does Acts 2:38 really mean?

In Acts 2:38, Peter told the people in Jerusalem to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and **they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**. Some think this means that everyone receives the Holy Spirit as a gift when they are baptized for the remission of sins. However, here are two examples to show that is not the case.

- In Acts 8:14ff there were Samaritans who had been baptized—just like Acts 2:38 said—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 was baptized received the Holy Spirit. They said they did not know anything about the Holy Spirit. Paul found out they were baptized with John's baptism. 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.

These two examples show that not everyone that was baptized received the Holy Spirit and shows that the only way people (except the Apostles) received the Holy Spirit was by the laying on of the Apostles' hands (with the exception of Cornelius possibly).

I know there were many people in the New Testament who received “the gift of the Holy Spirit”. However, I believe that the gift was the Holy Spirit giving them the power to perform miracles—not giving Himself as the gift. In Acts 1:5 Jesus told the Apostles that John baptized with water but they (the Apostles) would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 8 He told them they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them. I believe this shows that “baptized with Holy Spirit” means “receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them”. This is also another passage to show that there is no “baptism of the Holy Spirit” today because we know from Ephesians 4:4-6 that there is now only ONE baptism—not TWO.

We know the Apostles (and only the Apostles) were “baptized with the Holy Spirit”. In other words, they were fully immersed. They got all the gifts including the power to pass on that power to others by laying their hands on others.

So who received the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38? Everyone? No. Only those the Apostles laid their hands on and only a portion of the Holy Spirit's power—one spiritual gift. Once the Apostles died, there was no longer a mode of transmission.

6. What was the purpose of the giving of the Holy Spirit's power in the first century?

It was to give people the ability to perform miracles to establish the church (Romans 1:11) and to confirm the Word (Mark 16:20). The Lord's church has been established and we have had

the completed written Word of God for almost 2,000 years now. I Corinthians 13:8ff shows us that once that happened, there was no longer any need for miracles so they ceased in the first century. We cannot be getting the Holy Spirit in the same way those in the first century did.

Conclusion: The Holy Spirit does dwell in faithful Christians but the question is how? I do not believe the Scriptures teach it is a literal physical indwelling but rather a figurative indwelling. The Holy Spirit is in us when we read and study God's Word and obey God faithfully. Just like Christ dwells in us and God dwells in us when we obey.