

The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

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Description

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Transcript

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 sermonType: "expository" topics: - name: "Holy Spirit" slug: "holy-spirit" - name: "Pentecost" slug: "pentecost" bibleRefs: outline: - heading: "The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts" - heading: "The Holy Spirit's Presence in the Church" - heading: "The Holy Spirit's Work in the Church" - heading: "The Holy Spirit's Gift to Believers" faq: - q: "What is the significance of the Holy Spirit's presence in the Book of Acts?" a: "The Holy Spirit's presence in the Book of Acts marks the birthday of the Church and is the administrator in the Church, guiding and empowering believers for service and witness." - q: "How does the Holy Spirit work in the lives of believers?" a: "The Holy Spirit fills, guides, and empowers believers for service and witness, giving them power to act in obedience to God's will." - q: "What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Church?" a: "The Holy Spirit is the administrator in the Church, guiding and empowering believers for service and witness, and is the source of all true ministry for Christ." - q: "How do believers receive the Holy Spirit?" a: "Believers receive the Holy Spirit by faith, through the hearing of the Gospel message, and are filled with the Holy Spirit through obedience to God's will." - q: "What is the significance of the Holy

Spirit's gift of tongues?" a: "The gift of tongues is a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence and power, but is not a necessary evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in every believer's life." quotes: - "He filled the Lord's servants, guided them, fitted them, gave them power and sustained them in trials and in suffering." - "The Holy Spirit is the administrator in the Church, guiding and empowering believers for service and witness." - "Believers receive the Holy Spirit by faith, through the hearing of the Gospel message, and are filled with the Holy Spirit through obedience to God's will." applicationPoints: - "Believers should seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit through obedience to God's will." - "The Holy Spirit's presence and power are essential for effective service and witness." - "Faith in the Gospel message is the means by which believers receive the Holy Spirit." keywords: - "Holy Spirit" - "Book of Acts" - "Church" - "Spirit-filled" - "Gift of tongues" - "Faith" - "Obedience" - "Service" - "Witness" - "Ministry" ---

THE Book of Acts gives the historical account of the fulfillment of the promises of our Lord as to the other Comforter. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, came down to earth. That historical day marks the birthday of the Church. After this great event we see Him present with His people, as well as upon them and in them. He filled the Lord's servants, guided them, fitted them, gave them power and sustained them in trials and in suffering. In the affairs of the gathered company, representing the Church, we trace His activities; He is the administrator in the Church. Over fifty times He is mentioned in Acts, so that we might call this book " the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit." As it is a historical book we do not find any doctrines concerning the Spirit of God. But we discover in it practical illustrations of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit found else- where in the New Testament. Everything the Lord Jesus Christ promised the Holy Spirit would be for His disciples is seen fulfilled.

Acts 1:2

Chapter 1:2. This is an interesting passage for it teaches us that our Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection gave to His apostles commandment through the Holy Spirit. The risen Christ speaks and acts by the Holy Spirit as He did in the days of His humiliation. It is a blessed evidence that we also shall have the Holy Spirit after our resurrection and glorification. Then, delivered from this old body, the Holy Spirit needs no longer to restrain and mortify the flesh, and His power will be fully displayed in the eternal service of God. What a day of glory that will be!

Acts 1:5-8

Chapter 1:5-8. Two statements as to the Holy Spirit are found in these verses. He reminds them of John who baptized with water "but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." Nothing is said here of fire, as already explained in our comment on Matthew 3:11, 2. The second statement is "but ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." It is significant that they asked the Lord the question as to the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. The thought must have arisen in their minds, when that baptism takes place, will the promised kingdom also come? He did not tell them that they erred, that there will be no such kingdom, or that the church takes the place of the kingdom. He told them that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons when the kingdom comes. They were called to do another work, they were to be His witnesses. But this witness bearing would begin with the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would enable them to act in power.

A waiting, or as it has been called, a tarrying meeting, followed for ten days. Misguided believers frequently appoint and call a "waiting meeting" for the purpose of having "another Pentecost," another outpouring of the Holy Spirit. They act in ignorance, not realizing that this meeting in Acts 1 is unique and

can never be repeated. There can never be "another Pentecost," just as there cannot be another birth of Christ, another death of Christ and another resurrection of Christ.

Acts 1:16

Chapter 1:16. Peter in addressing the assembled company speaks of the fact that the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David had revealed the tragedy of Judas. The action which followed in putting another brother into the apostolate in place of the traitor was perfectly in order and not a mistake, as some teach.

Acts 2:1-13

Chapter 2:1-13. The great day of Pentecost had come and the Holy Spirit was given to them. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." There were outward signs; a rushing mighty wind filled the house and cloven tongues as of fire, sat upon each of them. A new dispensation is inaugurated with outward signs, just as the law dispensation in its beginning was accompanied by similar phenomena (Heb. 12:18-19). The rushing mighty wind was the symbol that He had come to fill and to possess each heart, as well as to fill the house, that is the church. Upon our Lord the Spirit had come in the form of a dove; upon each of the assembled company He came not as a dove, but in the form of cloven tongues like as of fire. He came on the Lord in the shape of a dove, because He was not to make His voice heard in the streets. But His disciples were to give the testimony, the Word with power, which is like a consuming fire. The two outward signs witnessed to the internal gift they had received. Then they spoke in different languages, which was a miracle produced by the Spirit of God. They became the mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit, uttering in at least sixteen different languages the praises of God.

It was the oral manifestation of the parted tongues of fire. It proclaimed outwardly the great fact that the Holy Spirit would make known the Gospel to all the nations under heaven, and though no Gentiles were present when all this took place, the languages of the Gentiles were heard, and that from Jewish lips. They did not preach the Gospel-message. Peter did that in the native tongue, they all understood. The gift of tongues was an ecstatic utterance, a sign to all of the supernatural person who had come to their hearts. We look in vain through this book for the evidence that these believers continued speaking these different languages. The error of Pentecostalism which claims that this sign gift must today be the evidence to each Christian that he has the Holy Spirit is more fully dealt with in other parts of this volume.

Acts 2:14-36

Chapter 2:14-36. In his bold testimony Peter, the erstwhile denier of Christ, manifests the power of the Holy Spirit. His inspired testimony shows what witness the Holy Spirit will bear through the believer, when He is unhindered. Peter preached the Word and through the Word he preached the Person, the Work and the Glory of Christ. The Spirit-filled believer will do the same today. When certain Christians claim the filling with the Spirit and then speak always of their own experiences, their feeling, their emotions and exhort others to "seek" these things, it is a good evidence that whatever they possess it is not the real filling with the Spirit.

Peter quotes the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2) to his Jewish hearers. It must be noticed in quoting Joel he is led by the Spirit of God not to use the phrase so frequently used in the New Testament "that it might be fulfilled." He said "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." As we have seen in the first chapter of this work the prophecy of Joel is to be fulfilled in the future, when Israel is restored and the, kingdom is

restored to them. As they were all Jews, to whom the promise is given as a nation, Peter reminded them that something like what they saw and heard now had been predicted by Joel, in connection with the Day of the Lord, the visible and glorious manifestation of the Lord.

The second time Peter mentions the Holy Spirit in his address is in verse 33. He teaches that the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth is the evidence that Christ is risen from among the dead and that He is exalted at the right hand of God.

Acts 2:38

Chapter 2:38. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Spirit." This was spoken in answer to the question of the people "What shall we do?" Repentance and baptism are the conditions Peter names. These conditions fulfilled, result in the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. These words wrongly interpreted have led to much confusion. The words with which Peter answered the question of his co-religionists are being used by certain sects in making water-baptism a saving ordinance. To understand Peter's words we must remember that he addressed those who had openly rejected Jesus, as the promised Messiah. They had, therefore, openly to acknowledge their wrong and openly own Him as the Messiah, whom they had disowned by delivering Him into the hands of lawless men. Repentance means in their case to own their guilt in having opposed and rejected the Lord Jesus. Baptism in His name was the outward expression of this repentance. How great the difference when Peter preached to Gentiles (Chapter 10). Of this more later. The last verses of the second chapter show what the Holy Spirit had accomplished in uniting them into a company, the Church, the body of Christ.

Acts 4:8

Chapter 4:8. In fulfillment of the words of the Lord, what should happen when they are brought before the authorities, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit for this occasion, and was enabled to speak words of wisdom and power. Let us notice there was not "another baptism with the Holy Spirit" but there was another filling. There was only one baptism, the significance of it the reader will find explained in 1 Cor. 12:13. But there are many fillings, daily, whenever He is needed in the believer's service and witness.

Acts 4:31

Chapter 4:31. This passage illustrates what we have stated. They returned to their own company and after they prayed and had expressed their determination to continue in their witness for Him, asking "that with all boldness they may speak the Word," the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter also received another filling. As a result they spoke the Word of God more boldly. The Spirit of God gave them strength to suffer and to continue to witness in spite of the threatenings of the enemy.

Acts 5:3, 9

Chapter 5:3, 9. Ananias, with Sapphira, his wife, lied against the Holy Spirit and tempted (tested) Him. They committed a sin unto death (physical death). The swift judgment reminds of the judgment which came upon the two sons of Aaron, when they came into the presence of the Lord with strange fire. The same Holy One, in the person of the Holy Spirit, dwells in the midst of the assembled company; He dwells within, against evil. May we, as God's children, remember always that in us dwells He that is holy and if we sin we sin against Him and grieve Him. The sudden death of both was a mighty, convincing testimony to

all, believers and the unbelieving Jews, of His presence. As a result fear pervades each heart, both within and without. Such a godly fear not to offend the indwelling guest should be our daily portion.

Acts 5:32

Chapter 5:32. Peter with the other apostles bears another great witness before the council. He mentions the Holy Spirit as given to them that obey Him. The obedience is the obedience of faith, in believing on Him whom God has sent.

Acts 6:3, 5, 10

Chapter 6:3, 5, 10. Here the Holy Spirit acts as the administrator in the church. It is a practical illustration of the different gifts He has given to be exercised in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4). The men to be chosen were to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Stephen is especially mentioned as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, not because he was a learned and able man, but because He was filled with the Spirit, they were not able to resist him.

Acts 7:51, 55

Chapter 7:51, 55. Stephen in his great testimony, the final national testimony born in Jerusalem, characterized Israel's past history as a history of resisting the Holy Spirit. When he had finished the testimony and "they gnashed on him with their teeth" we read "But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The Holy Spirit filling the believer directs the believer's heart and mind to Christ above, sitting at the right hand of God (Col. 3:1-3).

Acts 8:15-17

Chapter 8:15-17. Peter and John went to Samaria and "prayed for them (the Samaritan converts), that they might receive the Holy Spirit." The gift of the Spirit had been withholden from these converts and only after these two apostles came and laid hands on them did they receive the Spirit. This is, to many, another puzzling passage, while others have built upon it erroneous doctrines. The Samaritan believers had to be brought into union with those in Jerusalem, so much the more because there existed a schism between Samaria and Jerusalem. Samaria had rejected the authority of Jerusalem; instead of worshipping at an appointed place they worshipped on a mountain. This controversy had to be ended as far as the converts were concerned. It was therefore divinely ordered that the gift of the Spirit in their case should not be bestowed till the two apostles came from Jerusalem. This meant some kind of a submission to Jerusalem. If the Holy Spirit had been imparted unto them at once it might have resulted in a continuance of the existing rivalry. Nowhere in the church-epistles, in which its fullest meaning is revealed, is there a word said about receiving the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, or that one who trusts in Christ and is born again should seek" the gift, or baptism of the Spirit afterwards. The case of wicked Simon Magus, who wanted to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit, chapter viii:18-19, needs no comment. The Holy Spirit is the gift of grace, neither money, nor works, can secure this gift.

Acts 8:29, 39

Chapter 8:29, 39. Philip, one of the seven deacons chosen, was led by the Spirit to join himself to the chariot on the road to Gaza, after an angel had directed to leave Samaria. The Holy Spirit spoke to him. After the conversion and baptism of the eunuch had taken place "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip

that the eunuch saw him no more." And Philip was found at Azotus, twenty miles north of Gaza. A similar action of the Spirit of God occurred in the experience of Ezekiel. It was not some undefinable "spiritual" catching away, but a physical experience. It foreshadows the coming event when the true church on earth, her testimony-finished, will be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The Spirit of God will have a part in that (Rom. 8: 11).

Acts 9:17

Chapter 9:17. Saul, the great persecutor of the church, converted by seeing the Lord in the glory light on the road to Damascus, received the Holy Spirit when the Lord sent Ananias to him, and this disciple put his hand on him. The influential Pharisee and son of a Pharisee, Saul, the commissioned enemy of the truth and of Christ, in possession of documents from the high-priest, had to make this experience for his humiliation. Blind for three days, the Lord sent to him an humble disciple and used him as the channel in blessing Saul and in receiving the Holy Spirit.

Acts 9:31

Chapter 9:31. After Saul's conversion the churches had rest, "Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied." The comfort of the Holy Spirit means His gracious help in all our walk and service.

Acts 10:19

Chapter 10:19. A vision had been given to Peter on the housetop of Simon, the tanner. While Peter meditated on it, to ascertain its meaning, the Spirit of God informed Peter that three men were downstairs, and told him to go with them, assuring him they were sent by Himself. Peter brushed his Jewish prejudice aside when he found they were Gentiles. He is obedient to the Spirit.

Acts 10:38, 44, 45, 47

Chapter 10:38, 44, 45, 47. In preaching his first sermon to the Gentiles Peter refers only once to the Holy Spirit in a historical way. "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power." After speaking of His death and resurrection and His coming judgeship, Peter said, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins." At this point his address was suddenly ended. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word." Peter and his companions were astonished, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit. In order to leave no room for doubt, to convince Peter and his Jewish companions, that the same gift was given to the Gentiles, and that there was no difference, they also spoke in tongues, magnifying God. Peter did not use the word "repentance" once. In Acts ii he told the Jews to repent and be baptized; neither repentance nor water baptism are mentioned here. The assembled company believed the Word and that is sufficient for salvation and the gift of the Spirit. There was no process of seeking, surrendering, examining themselves, giving up, praying for it, to receive the Holy Spirit. It was solely by the hearing of faith, in believing the Gospel message that the Holy Spirit was given to these Gentile believers. It is so still (Gal. 3:2).

Acts 11:15, 16

Chapter 11:15, 16. Peter rehearsed the facts in Jerusalem of what had happened in the house of Cornelius when they received the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:24 and 28

Chapter 11:24 and 28. The first verse speaks of Barnabas as a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; such every believer should be. In verse 28 we have the first mention of Agabus who predicted by the Spirit a great drought throughout the world. Such predictions are possible with the Spirit of God, who knows all things, and when the Word of God was still uncompleted, they were quite in order in connection with the establishment of the church. A second prediction, by Agabus, is recorded later.

Acts 13:2, 4, 9

Chapter 13:2, 4, 9. This chapter contains the record of a new beginning, the first great missionary effort to carry the Gospel to the regions beyond. In Antioch, the great Gentile center of the church, a number of prophets and teachers were together ministering to the Lord and fasting. Ministering to the Lord means that they were engaged in prayer. It was at this time when the voice of the Holy Spirit was heard in their midst. "The Holy Spirit said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Here is the order: prayer and fasting, followed by the direction given by the Holy Spirit. Every other true missionary movement in the church has started in the same way. The Holy Spirit, as the administrator in the church, is seen here calling the instruments He desires to use, to the work He has for them. This is the source of all true ministry for Christ. In the fourth verse we read that, when they departed in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit, they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit, not by the church or by a missionary society. As the Holy Spirit had called them into a special work and sent them forth, He also guided them and used them in the places they visited. Saul, whose name is from now on Paul, was filled with the Holy Spirit and with the discernment the Spirit gave to him, pronounced judgment upon Elymas, Bar-Jesus, the instrument of Satan to keep the Gospel away from the Gentile Deputy. Here is the gift of the Holy Spirit in discerning the spirits.

Acts 13:52

Chapter 13:52. In this verse we find another filling with the Spirit. They were persecuted and expelled. They suffered for Christ's sake and as they departed they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 15:8, 28

Chapter 15:8, 28. These are incidental references to the Holy Spirit; the one in connection with Peter's rehearsal of the gift of the Spirit bestowed upon the Gentiles; the other in connection with the document sent forth from this first General Church council.

We must not overlook the closing verses of the fifteenth chapter, though the Spirit is not mentioned. Barnabas and Paul became separated. Paul had suggested to go forth again and to visit the same places to see how the brethren were getting along. Barnabas wanted to take again John Mark, who had left them in the first part of their journey. Paul refused and a sharp contention resulted. Why this failure? There is no record of any prayer, nor of the Spirit's voice. The guidance by the Holy Spirit is impossible without prayer and true waiting on the Lord.

Acts 16:6, 7

Chapter 16:6, 7. The Holy Spirit is seen here acting in forbidding them to go to certain places, though the intention of the messengers was the very best. He did not allow them to go their own path. He knows when and where to send the servants of the Lord.

Acts 19:2, 6

Chapter 19:2, 6. The disciples whom Paul found at Ephesus were disciples of John the Baptist. The question Paul asked of them has been misused even by good and well meaning teachers of the truth and as a result many have been misled into serious error. These brethren teach that the disciples were Christians, but they had never received the Holy Spirit. From this they reason that one may be saved, born again and not have the Spirit. They preach from this text: "Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?" They tell their hearers their own experience and exhort them to make a similar experience by seeking the gift of the Spirit. At the same time they lay down certain rules how they may receive the Spirit. All this is fundamentally wrong. When we examine the testimony concerning the Holy Spirit in the epistles we shall discover that there is no such thing as a sinner saved by grace, born again and destitute of the Spirit, nor is there a single exhortation anywhere in these epistles that a believer should receive the Spirit in a certain "second blessing" experience.

In the first place there is a little word in the question of Paul which we are obliged to change. The word "since" means in the original "when." The question then is "Did ye receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Paul makes the gift of the Holy Spirit the test of true discipleship. If they were true believers they received the Spirit when they believed, in the act of believing. If they did not have the Spirit it was an evidence that they were not true believers. They acknowledged this fact and Paul gave them the full truth. Having believed they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they received the Holy Spirit, spoke with tongues and prophesied. This is the third and last time we read of speaking with tongues in the book of Acts. The disciples numbered twelve. They stand evidently for the tribes of Israel in dispersion, hence the same supernatural evidence followed the reception of the Spirit in their case. Of the many thousands who were saved among the Gentiles and received the Holy Spirit nothing is said that they received the gift of tongues.

Acts 19:21

Chapter 19:21. The word "spirit" occurs in this verse. Did Paul purpose in his own spirit to go to Jerusalem again, or did he purpose in the Holy Spirit? Was he led to visit again the city of his fathers by the Holy Spirit or did he do it on his own initiative? We shall find that it was not the Holy Spirit who led him to go back to Jerusalem.

Acts 20:22,23,28

Chapter 20:22,23,28. Here is the first evidence that Paul purposed in his own spirit. The Holy Spirit witnessed in every city, probably through others, that bonds and afflictions were in store for him. The Lord had told him "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles." The order had been, beginning at Jerusalem. Jerusalem had heard and had rejected. Therefore the Holy Spirit did not lead Paul to go back to the city.

In verse 28 the Holy Spirit is again seen as the appointing power in the Church.

Acts 21:4,11

Chapter 21:4,11. These verses contain two solemn warnings given by the Spirit through others. Disciples said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem, Agabus appears once more as a prophet. He bound himself with Paul's girdle and said that Paul would be bound and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Why did Paul go? It was his all-consuming love for his brethren and his kinsmen

(Rom. 9:3). His strange actions in Jerusalem which resulted in his arrest and other incidents, such as the claim he made of being a Pharisee and his refuge under Roman citizenship, show that he did not act in the Spirit. The lesson is that the warnings of the Holy Spirit must be heeded.

Acts 28:25

Chapter 28:25. This is the last reference in Acts to the Holy Spirit. Paul quotes from the sixth chapter of Isaiah showing that the Holy Spirit had predicted the judicial blindness of the people Israel and their rejection. Then the Holy Spirit spoke through him to the assembled Jews that the salvation of God is to be sent to the Gentiles.

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