

The Lack of the Holy Spirit

The Lack of the Holy Spirit Leaves a Vacuum in the Churches

Something is missing! Something has been lost. Our Bibles tell us of a vibrant, thrilling, sensational salvation. There is a discrepancy somewhere...

This article will be a challenge to the honest seeker. It is not intended to promote a doctrine so much as an experience. Let the reader dismiss the testimonies of others, the claims of modern religions and find the staggering truth that so-called salvation today has little or nothing in common with the true Bible meaning of this all-important word.

It is the purpose of this article to illustrate the inevitable association of the "manifestation of the Spirit" with salvation, and to point out the human error of claiming to be "saved" while remaining outside the definition this word carries in the Bible.

Here is an illustration. To be a good apple is not to be an orange; to be a football fan is not necessarily to be a footballer. Similarly, to be a believer in the Bible, the story of the Cross or of Jesus Christ is not necessarily to be "saved". This fact is amply illustrated in the Bible.

God is Omnipotent

What was the God of the Old Testament like? What did He do? Well, we are certainly wealthy in Old Testament descriptions. God was kind, loving, and God was fierce, jealous and punishing. God was in the garden with Adam and in the flood with Noah. God created and planned; God spoke to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; He appeared in various supernatural ways for varying reasons. He was a

pillar of fire to the Israelites and a burning bush to Moses, and in a hundred ways God revealed Himself to mankind. God was active and challenging, ever ready to demonstrate His omnipotence. God honoured Elijah's prayer with fire from heaven. God refused to deviate from His own prophetic plan. He inhabited the tabernacle and the temple - miraculously. God promised to inhabit you and many others. Did He? Will He? Does He? God offers scriptural, prophesied proof of the receiving of His Spirit. This is Bible salvation.

The kingdom is the realm, Jesus Christ is Head of the kingdom, and He is King of the Church, and the Head of the Body. Jesus told His disciples: Pray, *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth..."* (MATT 6:10). He gave Peter (and his associates) the keys of the kingdom of heaven. This is the Gospel.

Paul wrote: *"For the kingdom of God is... righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."* (ROM 14:17). To Nicodemus, Jesus gave the warning: *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (JN 3:5). Indeed, our Lord emphasised that one could not even see the kingdom.

The Common Salvation

The Kingdom, the Body, and the Church are synonymous terms, just as with "salvation", or to be "born-again", "born of the Spirit", "born from above", "regenerated", "quickened", or "sealed". The Bible Christians were "indwelt" or inhabited by the Spirit of God. It was an obvious teaching that the salvation offered would be "common" to all

as with Israel; all were to drink the *"same spiritual drink."* (1.COR 10:4).

Imagine now as millions recite the prayer for the Kingdom of God to come on earth, while at the same time they reject the very way and only way God's Kingdom (Realm) can come. To Nicodemus it meant entry by baptism and the Spirit, and this despite his knowledge in Israel.

Again, after the warning that one must discern (see) the Lord's Body lest one should *"eat and drink unworthily"*. Paul reminds the Corinthians that it is by *"one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."* (1.COR 12:12-13).

Note too, the means of entry, the gifts and manifestation of God's power. Note the discrepancy in the modern Churches.

In short, the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom was an invitation to a personal experience of God's Spirit that would usher the repentant into a saved relationship with God.

The fundamental difference made between the "believer" and the "receiver" should be obvious. This vital difference is illustrated, but let us note that the Spirit of God is also offered in various terminology.

The New Testament tells of the Holy Ghost. Paul writes also of the Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God. Jesus declared that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him. John the Baptist saw *"the Spirit of God"* descending like a dove upon Jesus. Paul writes of *"the eternal Spirit"*, and assures the Ephesians that there is but *"one Spirit"*.

These and other terms are used at random throughout the Old and New Testaments. The point we make here is that there is one Spirit, and this despite the teaching of some that the Spirit of Christ is received at conversion, and the Holy Spirit is received as the "Pentecostal additive". This teaching is unsound and might well leave the seeker unsaved!

The Promise of the Spirit

Jesus said: *"If any man thirst (i.e. seek salvation), let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me (a believer, but not yet a receiver), as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should (Greek: 'mello' = would) receive, for the Holy Ghost (Spirit) was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified"*(JN 7:37-39).

This Scripture alone is a direct challenge to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ to ensure that they receive the Holy Spirit. But you might say: "I am sure the Lord has been with me in times of trial and stress." Yes, this may well be true, but Jesus said: *"...he (the Spirit) dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* (JN 14:17).

Let us now note the interchangeable terms used for the salvation experience.

John the Baptist said: *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance:... he (Jesus) shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."* (MATT 3:11).

Jesus said to His disciples: *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you..."* (ACTS 1:8). This event is described in Chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, where they were filled with the Holy Ghost. These terms are obviously synonymous.

Another enlightening scripture is found in Ephesians 1, where Paul declares: *"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed (saved) with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest (assurance) of our inheritance (salvation) until the redemption of*

the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (EPH 1:12-14).

Be Not Beguiled!

Paul said: *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit... or another gospel..."* (2.COR 11:3-4).

Some have argued that the Ethiopian (ACTS 8) gives no record of receiving the Holy Ghost. We venture to say that this Philip of the Samaria revival would have left the eunuch in no doubt about the Holy Spirit if he explained (as he did) the Scripture first. Indeed Paul recognised only one Gospel, declaring: *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."* (GAL 1:8).

One thing is sure, that is that there is only one Gospel. An honest approach to the Bible definition of the Gospel will solve this anomaly once and for all.

What Did Joel Mean?

"But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh..." (ACTS 2:16-17).

What was Joel speaking of? He spoke of the pouring out of God's Spirit in the "latter days". Joel declared of God: *"And ye shall know (by this) that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God... and whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered (saved)."* (JOEL 2:27-32).

The crowd at this first Pentecostal outpouring was amazed. Peter explained what was happening. This, he declared, was that which was promised: *"...the promise of the Holy Ghost... which ye now see and hear."* (ACTS 2:33).

What Does the Bible Mean when it states Tongues Shall Cease?

Often we endeavour to bring a prophecy to fulfilment before time. We criticise the Jehovah's Witnesses for claiming that Christ has already returned simply because a

number of Scriptures promise His return. It is true, as the Word declares: *"...whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."* (1.COR 13:8).

The apostle Paul had just reminded the Church of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The professing church strenuously denies that the word of knowledge has vanished, but meanwhile stoutly affirms that tongues have ceased.

"That Which is Perfect"

To read on in this chapter is to keep the verse within the context: *"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."* (1.COR 13:10).

Critics of speaking in tongues have offered every conceivable identification of the coming of *"that which is perfect"* but to read on further is to find a ready-made solution: *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face..."* (Verse 12). If our appreciation, experience and representation of Christ is a "face-to-face" one now, why need He return? A truly Spirit-filled Christian will admit that our faith is as yet insignificant compared with the revelation that will come with the second advent of Jesus Christ. This is confirmed in the second half of this same verse: *"...now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."*

God's Gift Immutable

We cannot wrest these Scriptures from their context. God has left the Church with the gifts of His Spirit, and so shall it be until Christ returns.

Paul's reference to *"putting away childish things"* (Verse 11) could hardly refer to tongues. In fact, this was not so. His reference here was to their lack of understanding of spiritual gifts within the Church. Their zeal for the exercise of God's Spirit had allowed disorder within their meetings. Paul's exhortation was to bring order back. He continues then to identify tongues within the Church.

"Be Not Children"

The concluding remarks made by Paul should have some meaning for those who attack tongues. He says: *"But if any man be ignorant,*

let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." (1.COR 14:38-39). This comes as rather conclusive when the whole matter is introduced by the same writer with the injunction: *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."* (1.COR 12:1).

Right in the middle of this message to the Corinthians concerning the gifts operating within the Church, Paul adds: *"Brethren, be not children in understanding ... but in understanding be men."* (1.COR 14:20).

To oppose tongues is to oppose the positive manifestation of God's Spirit within the Church. The

Church is the Body of Christ - what, then, is our attitude towards His Body?

What was it?

SPEAKING IN TONGUES is not just the God-given sign which confirms our believing as we receive the Holy Spirit (MK 16:17); and it is not only a sign to the unbelievers who hear the gift of tongues in the church and recognise the presence of God in the manifestation. These signs (Greek: 'semelon'; 'semaphore' = signs) authenticate the Gospel being preached where the signs occur (MK 16:20).

More importantly, after the initial confirmation of our Holy Spirit

baptism, our continuing ability to speak in tongues provides us with a valuable prayer-language. In fact, as we pray in tongues ("praying in the Spirit", as Paul calls it) it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is speaking through us. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities (our weaknesses): for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* (ROM 8:26).

No wonder Paul could say: *"I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all."* (1.COR 14:18).

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CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 888, COFFS HARBOUR N.S.W. 2450, AUSTRALIA